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The Cutting Edge

The Society of American Fight Directors

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## **The Cutting Edge, January/February 1992, Vol. 3 Issue 1**

The Society of American Fight Directors

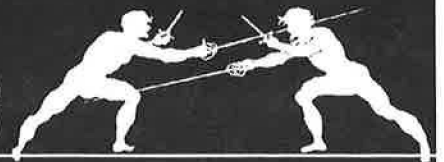
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# The Cutting Edge



Newsletter for the Society of American Fight Directors

Volume III, Number 1 ♦ January/February 1992

## F Y I

### FACE-LIFT

Notice anything different about the way I look? Always a loaded question, right? The *Cutting Edge*, at the ripe old age of two, has had a face-lift in honor of SAFD's 15th birthday and also just *because*.

### GOING TO THE SETC?

If you are planning to be at the Southeastern Theater Conference, SAFD needs your help. Susan Eviston will be there with boxes of SAFD t-shirts, caps and pins, but she will be seven months pregnant (Congratulations!) and could use a hand with the aforementioned boxes.

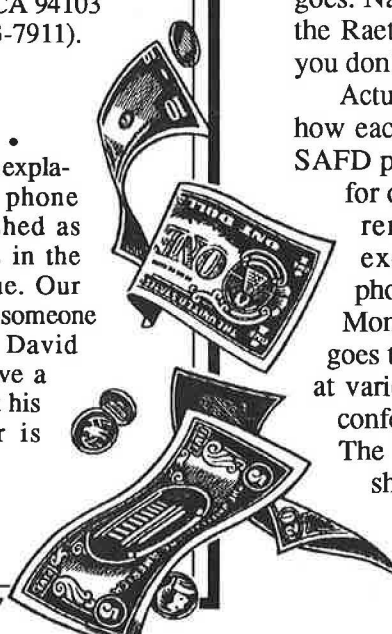
SETC will be in Orlando, Florida from March 5-8. Let us prove that chivalry is not dead. Call Susan at 606-431-8983.

### THANKS, FRED!

Say thank you to Fred Thorsen at American Fencers Supply for their new discounts to SAFD certified teachers and fight masters. For more information, contact Fred at 1180 Folsom St., San Francisco, CA 94103 (phone: 415-863-7911).

### MENTAL BLACKOUT . . .

That's the only explanation for the phone number published as David Leong's in the Nov./Dec. issue. Our apologies go to someone named Cindy. David does indeed have a new address but his phone number is unchanged: 212-382-3535.

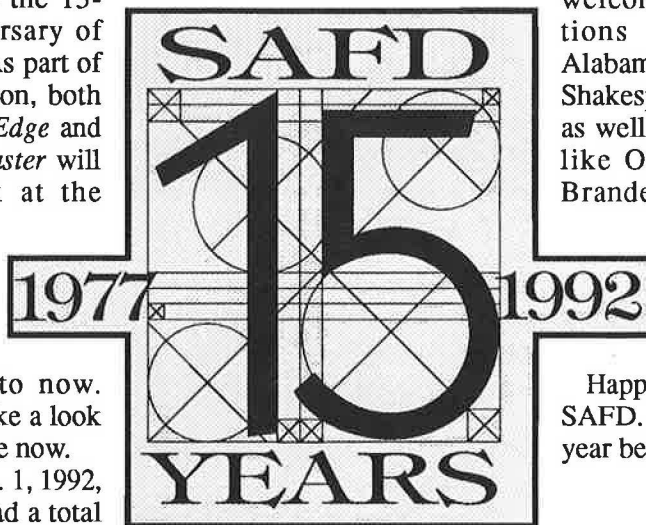


## SAFD celebrates a 15-year anniversary

YOU'LL BE SEEING THIS LOGO A great deal during the coming year.

1992 marks the 15-year anniversary of the SAFD. As part of the celebration, both the *Cutting Edge* and the *Fight Master* will look back at the years since 1977, and examine SAFD's journey from then to now. First, let's take a look at who we are now.

As of Jan. 1, 1992, the SAFD had a total membership of 339.



Besides its actor/ combatants, teachers, and fight masters, SAFD has recently welcomed organizations such as the Alabama and Orlando Shakespeare festivals, as well as universities like Ohio, Webster, Brandeis, Michigan, Carnegie-Mellon, and Washington as members of SAFD.

Happy 15th birthday, SAFD. May your 15th year be your best yet.



## Where does it all go?

AS YOU MAKE OUT YOUR DUES checks (And you're all doing that about now—*aren't you?*) you might like to know where your hard-earned money goes. Naturally, the lion's share goes to the Raether Fun-in-Acapulco Fund, but you don't want to hear about that.

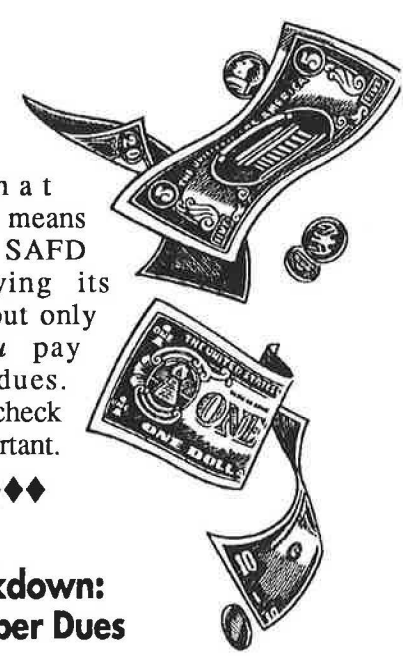
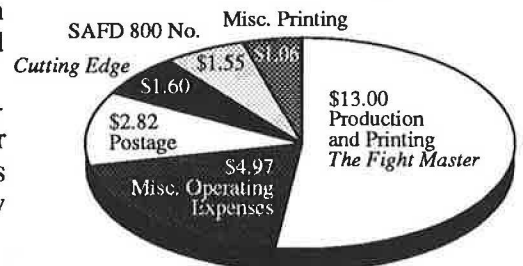
Actually, the pie chart at right shows how each member's \$25 breaks down. SAFD publication expenses accounts for over half of your dues, with the remainder going toward such exciting items as postage and phone. So much for Acapulco . . . Money earned from fight test fees goes to pay for SAFD representation at various theatrical conventions and conferences.

The National Stage Combat Workshop pays for itself. Any leftover profit from the NSCW gets plowed back in as new equipment and advertising.

What all this means is that SAFD is paying its bills, but only if *you* pay your dues. Every check is important.



### Breakdown: Member Dues



Profile  
 CERTIFIED ACTOR/COMBATANT  
**MICHAEL G. CHIN**

“My worst stage combat nightmare was my first job as choreographer,” Mike Chin laughs. “It was a show at La Mama. At my first rehearsal, I showed the actors the fight and one of them just wasn’t getting it. So I said, ‘Step back—back!’ and I stepped in to demonstrate the move with his partner. As I finished, I looked back and realized that the first actor had stepped back all right . . . right off the platform and knocked himself unconscious.”

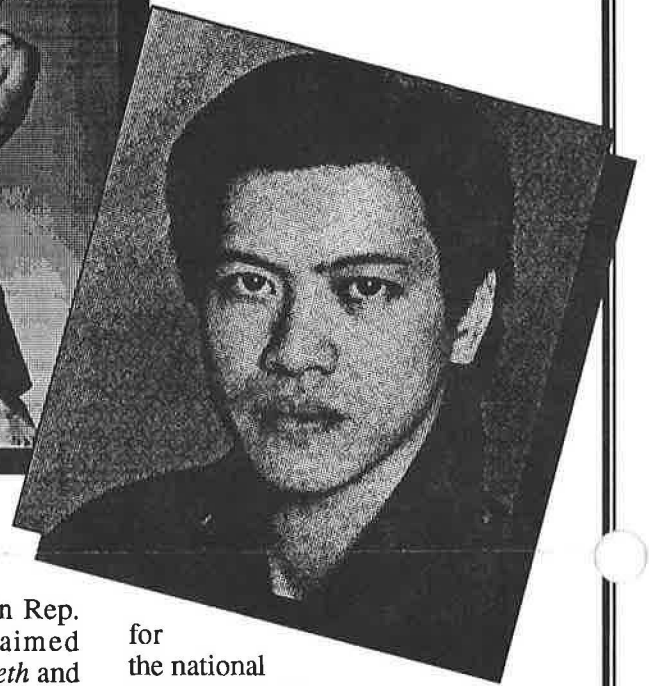
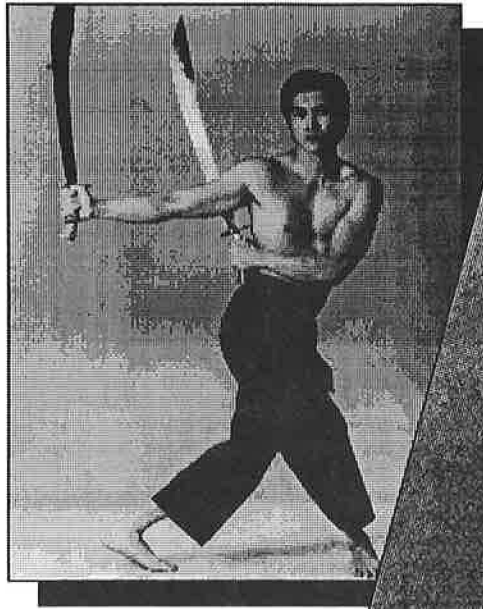
Happily, Mike was undaunted by this auspicious beginning, and saw the production safely through opening night. After all, Mike’s whole stage combat career got off to kind of an unusual start.

Mike Chin is one actor who can truly say he got involved with stage combat after getting involved with murder. The murder was fictional, the brainchild of *Murder To Go*, a New York-based company that specializes in audience participation murder mysteries.

*Mike Chin . . . got involved with stage combat after getting involved with murder.*

Steve Vaughan (SAFD certified teacher) was staging a fight for a *Murder To Go* script, and called the Pan Asian Rep. looking for an actor with an athletic background who would be interested in performing the fight. Mike, a long-time member of Pan Asian Rep. with a martial arts background, got the job.

“I did that show and about a month later, I did another *Murder To Go* with Allen Suddeth.” Although Mike knew that Steve and Allen



were “fight guys,” he wasn’t immediately drawn into that world.

Then, in 1985, Pan Asian Rep. mounted their acclaimed production of *Shogun Macbeth* and hired David Leong to choreograph. Mike played Donalbain and was also the fight captain.

Backstage, *Shogun Macbeth* had its humorous side. “The show was first produced in Houston and the Pan Asian Rep. decided to rent the armor from that production. When it arrived, we realized that it had been built for some very large Texan actors. I’m the biggest guy in Pan Asian Rep at 5’ 8”. We were swimming!”

After touring *Shogun Macbeth*, Mike studied stage combat seriously. “David Leong got me involved in SAFD,” Mike recalls, “I took class at A.C.T.S. (Actors Combat Training School) with Allen Suddeth. Then I certified as an actor/ combatant in 1988 and joined SAFD.”

“I saw in the *Fight Master* that they were looking for journeymen

for the national workshop in Vegas; I applied . . . and I’ve worked at the NSCW the past four years.”

Mike’s training has paid off in his acting career. “I did an episode of *The Equalizer* where my character gets shot by Edward Woodward; he blows me away with an uzi! I got paid an additional fee because I was able to do my own fall.”

Mike is full of enthusiasm for his experiences at the last several NSCWs. “It’s great; learning from the different masters with different styles.” His future plans include teacher certification.

Although it took some time for Mike to become deeply immersed in stage combat, he now appears to be in for the long haul.







For deluded members who thought **Martin English** was a respectable college professor type, he reveals his true colors as a prison guard on *America's Most Wanted* on Feb. 28 and a pipe bomber on *Rescue 911*.

**Michael Kamtman** kept his sword arm in shape at the North Carolina Shakespeare Festival where he was fight captain for *Julius Caesar* (J.A. Suddeth's choreography) and *As You Like It*, in which Michael was cast as Orlando. Michael also choreographed two fights for NCSF's tour show, *Globeworks*.

**Jonathan Howell** (Best Actor/Combatant at the 1991 AACW and a fight master in the British Society of Fight Directors) received rave reviews for his fight direction for *Romeo and Juliet* at England's Northern Ballet Theatre. *The Times* wrote, "The fights are dirty: no polite duelling, but kicks, scratches, nasty weapons... and a lot of gore."

**Peter Moore** played Pale in *Burn This* at the New Classic Theatre in Minneapolis, where he is artistic director. He also recently staged fights for *I Hate Hamlet* at the Dallas Theatre Center.

**John Cashman** is working with **Richard Lane** at Academy of the Sword in San Francisco, where in addition to teaching, he is the production director, booking workshops and lecture/demos.

In addition, he co-wrote a play with a friend entitled *Duels and Assassinations* and, what's more, got it produced (the hard part). Currently, he's staging violence for *Extremities* at Santa Clara University.

**Chuck Conwell** has a brand-new son, Colin Talbot Conwell, born January 25. Congratulations, Dad.

**David Woolley** and **Doug Mumaw** continue to tour the country with their comedy act, *The Swordsmen*. Meanwhile, back in Chicago, David is choreographing *Macbeth* at Shakespeare Rep. and Arthur Kopitt's *Phantom* at Candlelight Dinner Theatre. David's stage combat students at Columbia took their certification test in January.

Doug is also choreographing the Scottish play. His production is in Harrisburg, VA where he will also act in *Tamburlaine* and teach movement at James Madison University.

**Stephen Gray** is teaching a certification class and choreographing *The Rover* at Ohio State University.

**Mike and Nicole Harsch** took their act, *The Crossed Swords*, to the Ohio Ren. Fest. in September and performed at several conventions in the South and Midwest. 1992 marks their sixth year performing at (and their fifth years as fight directors) the Georgia Ren. Fest.

**Dexter Fidler** recently choreographed Sierra Repertory's *Hamlet* and *King Lear*, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* for University of San Francisco, and *Macbeth* for Off-Book Productions. Dexter is currently teaching foil for the Halberstadt Fencers Club.

**Robin McFarquhar** is playing the ghost in *Hamlet*, as well as staging the fights. Then he's off to Idaho (from Illinois) to choreograph *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*. He's also teaching stage combat at Millikin University this semester as well as at University of Illinois. Sounds as if Robin will need all his ghostly powers to keep it all juggling.

**Richard Raether** recently staged the fights for *The Three Musketeers* at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

**Brian Byrnes** brought us fights for Christmas with his choreography for a theatrical (not the ballet) production of *The Nutcracker* at Hope Theatre. So much for peace on earth.

**John Robert Beardsley** has been active conducting workshops and spreading the word at most of the American College Theatre Festivals.

**Mark Olsen** is currently staging fights for *Man of La Mancha* at Miami University. Prior to that he was "Blackspider" (arachnophobia, anyone?) in Cincinnati Ensemble's *Jack & the Beanstalk*. He'll change hats again this spring when he directs *My Fair Lady* at Wright State, where he coordinates the acting program (and teaches stage combat).

**Steve Vaughan** is currently staging violence for *Fences* at Studio Arena in Buffalo and *Treasure Island* for Rochester Children's Theatre. In between, he teaches at Niagara U., U. of Rochester & SUNY-Brockport.

**David Engel** and **Stephen "Popeye" Eliasson** will be performing a neo-contemporary combat guerrilla street-theatre tour of major theater festivals in Europe from May to September. They seek any theatrical contacts or leads members may be able to pass on. Contact them at: 1042 N. Winchester, #3, Chicago, IL 60622-9993 (Ph. 312-489-0179). "No lead is too trivial to pursue."

**Ralph Anderson** reports that Actors In Action (formerly Fights R Us) has changed its name for the very last time. They are the New York Fight Ensemble and have a new home at 85 Chambers Street, where they work out on Monday nights. SAFD visitors are always welcome, call Ralph at 212-247-5393.



# "I don't know what I am any more!"

TO EVERYONE WHO HAS SENT IN their dues and filled out their little survey form, a heartfelt thank you. Now, some members enclosed questions about their membership classification.

Personally, I hate the whole idea of membership classification. Please, everyone, get this straight. Although the SAFD offers certification at three levels: actor/combatant, teacher, and fight master—certification has *nothing*, repeat, *nothing* to do with membership.

Fight master is the only certification that lists membership as a requirement. Here's the official policy: pay your dues and you're a member (a "friend"). If you pass a certification test and renew your certification every three years, you're certified and classed as an actor/combatant, teacher, or fight master.

Associate members (a classification

dropped in 1987, have had the option of applying for certification as a teacher or switching to friend.

My point is this, although the SAFD supports its certified actor/combatants and certified teachers, nobody needs to fret about their membership status. The category of "friend" could just as easily be "general" (and maybe should be).

It is not a punishment or a disgrace to be a friend. In fact, who—but your secretary/treasurer, who has it on his computer—even knows or cares what your membership classification is?

No one is out to demean the talent of non-certified teachers, or the skills of a member who hasn't gotten around to re-certifying. I hope this clears up some misunderstandings. We're *all* members, in this boat together.



## The Cutting Edge

is concocted bimonthly by Margaret and Richard Raether with sporadic help from Brian Anderson.

*The Cutting Edge* is a publication of the Society of American Fight Directors

Submissions should be sent to:

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