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The Cutting Edge

The Society of American Fight Directors

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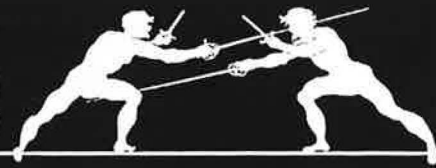
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The Cutting Edge



Newsletter for the Society of American Fight Directors

Volume V, Number 3 ♦ May/June 1994



NEW VOICE ON THE 800

The SAFD 800 number remains the same, but will soon be answered by membership representative Ricki G. Ravitts in New York City. The transfer of the line from Raether to Ravitts will take place sometime in August. Again, the phone number is unchanged.

Members, please confine your calls to *reasonable* hours, remembering that Ricki is on Eastern Time!

PAST DUE DEADLINES

John Robert Beardsley sends thanks to all Regional Reps. and Committee Chairs for getting their reports in to him by June 1.

For those experiencing sudden stabs of guilt, get in touch with J.R. *immediately* (before the NSCW) and let him know what is happening within your region and/or on your committee. Reach him at:

P.O. Box 891
Inverness, CA 94937
(415) 669-1710

INSURANCE UPDATE

Cheech Bradford is no longer with Disc Insurance, but they are still willing to write personal liability policies for SAFD members who are interested. The new contact person is:

Tina Pastorius
Disc Insurance
3500 W. Olive, Suite 1180
Burbank, CA 91505

Sometimes it's good to shake things up ... changes in the SAFD

A NUMBER OF CHANGES IN SAFD general operations will go into effect in August due to the resignation of Fight Master Richard Raether as SAFD Secretary/Treasurer.

"There have been a lot of changes in the organization since I came on board as an officer. Membership has doubled, and there are more services offered to members, i.e. the 800 hot line, the *Cutting Edge*, discounts to SAFD workshops, etc. Unfortunately, my job has grown in complexity and I can no longer put in the time needed. I do want to emphasize that I intend to remain very active in the SAFD. I've enjoyed my time in office enormously and plan to continue working for, and contributing to, the SAFD."

Both the secretary and treasurer are offices appointed by the SAFD

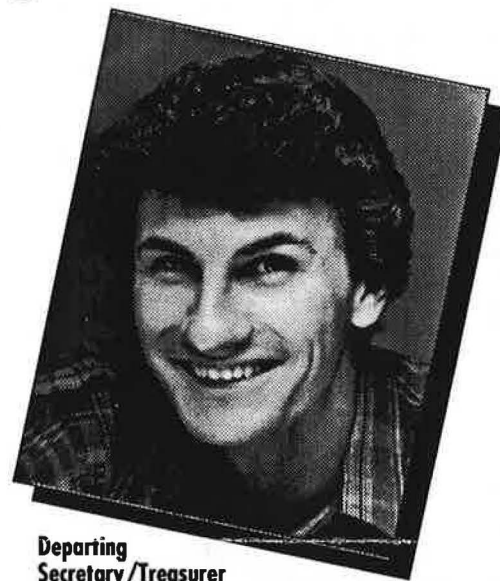
New editor for the Cutting Edge

RALPH ANDERSON WILL TAKE over as editor of the SAFD bi-monthly newsletter, the *Cutting Edge* with the publication of the July/August issue.

"I hope that no one thinks that the entire Raether family is abandoning ship," says current Editor Margaret Raether. "I am remaining on as Editor of the *Fight Master* magazine; Richard is still on the hook as Associate Editor, and I will be working on other graphic design projects for the SAFD."

Ralph is a certified teacher based in New York and, like Margaret, a computer whiz. Contact Ralph at:

465 West 49th Street #1B
New York, NY 10019-7239
(212) 247-5393



Departing
Secretary/Treasurer
Richard Raether

President. Richard was the first to hold the combined positions when he was appointed by then-President Joseph Martinez in 1989. Current President Drew Fracher has decided to split the two positions so that no individual is over-burdened.

Taking over for Richard as treasurer will be Certified Teacher Mark Guinn, based in Louisiana. The new SAFD secretary will be Certified Teacher Mark Olsen, based in Texas.

The SAFD hot line, which has been based in the Raether home, is also changing hands (See "F.Y.I.").

Richard is under contract through July of 1985 as Associate Artistic Director and Interim Producing Director for New American Theater, a small Equity playhouse in his home town of Rockford.

"I urge all members to give their support to the new officers, who are — like all the officers — volunteers who are working in their spare time," said Richard, "Please bear with us as we go through this transition."



Profile
 CERTIFIED TEACHER
CHARLES CONWELL
 by David "Pops" Doersch

MENTION STAGE COMBAT WITHIN the Philadelphia theatre community, and Charles Conwell's name is sure to come up. One of the American pioneers of stage combat, and long a fixture at the University of the Arts, Philadelphia, Charles is a teacher of depth, quality, and innovative approach, and a professional choreographer whose credits include Yale Rep, the Pennsylvania Ballet, and the Metropolitan Opera.

Growing up, Charles idolized José Ferrer and Stuart Granger. As a student at Northwestern University in the mid-60s, Charles was introduced to competitive foil and saber, and soon found himself staging the murder in *Richard II*. He had, at that time, no formal stage combat training, but he persevered and began a lifelong union of his two passions, swordplay and theatre.

His first stage combat class was a year later (29 years ago) at the Colorado Shakespeare Festival, where he also performed and fought in their production of *Coriolanus*.

Charles pursued graduate studies at Brandeis University from 1968-1970. Although he staged the violence in *Henry IV, part 1* (with Morris Carnovsky as Falstaff) he received no stage combat training. In May 1970, Charles got his MFA and his draft notice in the same week.

"In May 1970, Charles got his MFA and his draft notice in the same week."

The next four years found Charles in San Antonio, Texas as a physical education instructor in the Air Force. He also directed eleven plays for a local theatre company off-base.

Discharge papers in hand, Charles moved to New York. In the next two years, he directed five plays off-off Broadway, and was a combatant in

the New York Shakespeare Festival's production of *Henry V*, directed by Joseph Papp, with fight direction by Erik Fredricksen.

Charles continued to pursue his career and paid the bills by working as a professional tree surgeon, driving a large green dump truck with the logo "The Limb Lopper" emblazoned on the side.

In 1982, Charles was offered a job as stage combat instructor at Temple University, and, although he felt unprepared, he accepted. He poured over Joseph Martinez' book, *Combat Mime*, and taught his unarmed class exclusively from that text. Future Certified Teacher Brad Waller was a student.

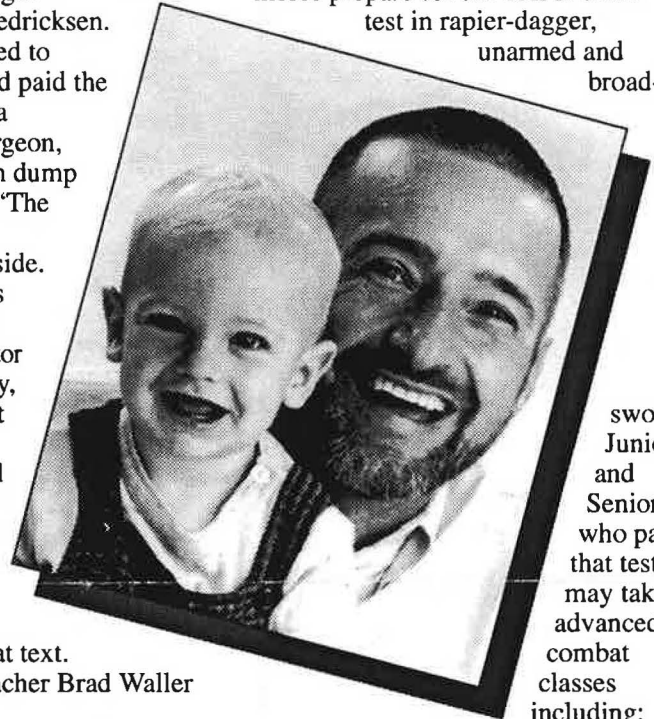
In 1983, Charles conducted an SAFD fight test, flying in Fight Master J. Allen Suddeth to adjudicate. Charles tested along with his students, passed, and joined the SAFD.

At the urging of Payson Burt, Charles attended the 1984 National Stage Combat Workshop, arriving in his "Limb Lopper" dump truck.

In 1985, Charles was hired as an assistant professor by the University of the Arts, Philadelphia, teaching script analysis and stage combat. Here, Charles developed what is arguably the first-ever degree in stage combat: a BFA, emphasis Stage Combat.

This unique program trains students intensively in stage combat and related skills. Freshman acting

majors learn the basics of unarmed, knife, saber and single rapier. Sophomores prepare for the SAFD skills test in rapier-dagger, unarmed and broad-



sword. Juniors and Seniors who pass that test, may take advanced combat classes including:

sword & shield, sword & buckler, rapier & cloak, quarterstaff, katana, smallsword and epee. Seniors who are interested in careers in fight direction have the opportunity to teach and choreograph under Charles' supervision.

In 1987, Charles wrote "Patton and his Saber," the first of seven articles for the *Fight Master*, including his 1990 interview with fight director, William Hobbs and, in 1991, Charles' interview with his great childhood idol, José Ferrer.

Married in 1987 to Marcia Saunders, Charles is the proud father of Colin Conwell with whom he regularly fences with plastic swords and whiffle bats.

Stage combat pioneer, actor, director, choreographer, Charles has forged a distinguished career. But he also has ambitions for the future. He wants to play Captain Hook opposite his son's Peter Pan.



ARE YOU ON LINE?

The SAFD is trying to get some idea of how many members have computers, modems, etc.

If you have a computer and especially, if you have access to a modem or are thinking of getting one, please take a moment to call 1-800-659-6579 and leave a message:

Your name. Your computer.
Do you have a modem?

WORKSHOP INFO.

SAFD
National Stage Combat Workshops
July 11-29 Las Vegas NV
Contact: Linda McCollum
(702) 895-3662



**Tai Chi Ch'uan
& Alexander Technique**
July 30-August 14
Southern Methodist University
Contact: the Ft. Burgwin office
(214) 768-3657



The Globe Fighters
Patrick Crean Workshop '94
September 26-27
Washington, DC
Contact: Michael Johnson
(202) 291-4565



Imagination Unlimited
presents
**Fundamentals Workshop of
Special Effects Artistry**
Sept. 19-Oct. 1
1930-3 S. Havana Street
Aurora, CO 80014
1-800-FX/STUNT



Gascon Center for Stage Combat
**Stage Combat Workshop
and Showcase**
Westside Fencing Center
8735 Washington Blvd.
Culver City, CA 90232
(310) 204-2688



J.R. Robinson is directing scenes and choreographing the violence the New York Renaissance Faire this summer (approx. 30 fights).

John M. Callahan spent time as a visiting professor at Doncaster College in Doncaster, England where he taught a session on hand-to-hand stage combat.

Paul Steger performed Ariel in *The Tempest* for Nebraska Repertory Theatre, choreographed *Twelfth Night*, *Tango*, *American Buffalo*, *True West*, and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, and directed *13 Rue De L'Amour*. Up next for Paul is Wisconsin Shakespeare Festival where he will choreograph and act in *Three Musketeers* and *Henry V* & act in *Much Ado About Nothing*.

Robert Chapin stars with Joe Don Baker and Carol Alt in *Ring of Steel*, an action/adventure film out from MCA Universal this spring. The screenplay, which Robert also wrote, centers around an Olympic fencer blackmailed into becoming a modern-day Gladiator.

Meanwhile, Robert is working on a Theatrical Combat Workshop at the Westside Fencing Center in Los Angeles. Interested members contact Robert at (310) 821-1496.

Drew Fracher has survived a recent gig playing Abraham and getting severely beaten (well, that's what he claims) performing J. Allen Suddeth's choreography in *Romeo and Juliet* at Actor's Theatre of Louisville. Prior to that Drew staged fights for Othello at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival. This month, he's directing and choreographing *Henry IV, part 1* at the Kentucky Shakespeare Festival.

Robert Scranton travels to Austria with the U.S. team to compete in the World Fencing Masters championships. Good luck, Robert!

Brad Baker and **Robin Armstrong** just finished co-directing *Stefanie Herd*, the world premier of Mark Medoff's (*Children of a Lesser God*, *City of Joy*) new play. Robin also choreographed the fights and the roller-blading swans (!).

Richard Lane has been nominated for a Bay Area Theatre Critic's Award for his fight direction in *The Royal Hunt of the Sun* at TheatreWorks. Richard was also assistant director. Congratulations.

Other recent choreography gigs for Richard include staging fights for *Carmen* (Memphis Grand Opera) and *I Puritani* and *Der Meistersinger* at San Francisco Opera.

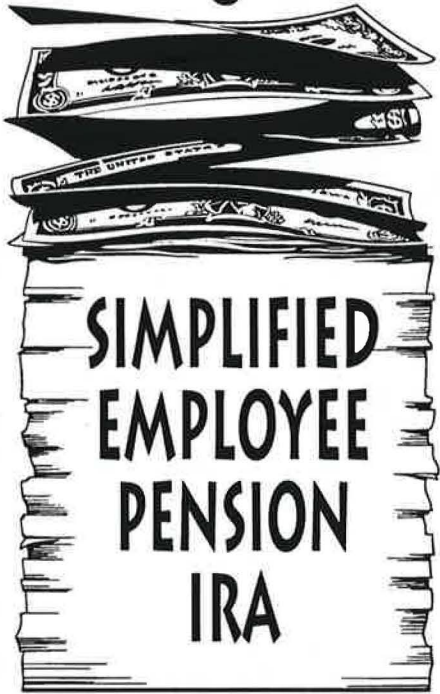
Jenine Smith recently relocated to Pittsburgh where she is an Ensemble Member at the Pittsburgh Theatre Laboratories. She's attending the Celebration Barn Choreography Workshop this summer.

Regan Forman is playing Maid Marian in the *Robin Hood Stunt Show* in Saint Louis this summer. She recently choreographed fights for *Chaotica* as part of the Franklin Furnace Arising Artists Show.

Nicholas Sandys is off to Fort Worth for Shakespeare in the Park, performing in and choreographing fights for *Romeo and Juliet* and *Comedy of Errors*.

Steven Earl Edwards played both Geoffrey and Dr. Fine in a nine-week run of *Six Degrees of Separation* at the Horizon Theatre Company in Atlanta.

Planning for retirement: SEP-IRA



SAFD MEMBERS WHO ARE SELF employed and have no retirement plan of any sort, there is a fairly new type of Individual Retirement Account available designed to fit your needs.

It is called a Simplified Employee Pension-IRA (SEP-IRA) and is available through various mutual fund trust companies. It requires a minimal initial investment and funds may be deposited on whatever schedule fits your lifestyle. It's much more flexible than a standard IRA and is designed specifically for the self-employed.

For more information contact:

INVESCO TRUST FUNDS
P.O. Box 173706
Denver, CO 80217-3706
1-800-525-8085



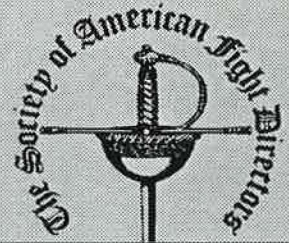
The Cutting Edge

is concocted bimonthly by
Margaret and Richard Raether .

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Submissions should be sent to:

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