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The Cutting Edge

The Society of American Fight Directors

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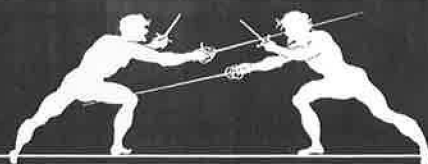
The Cutting Edge, September/October 1996, Vol. 7 Issue 3

The Society of American Fight Directors

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NEW EDITOR

The Cutting Edge is now being put together down Mississippi way by David "Pops" Doersch. Any submissions should be sent to:

David Doersch
1177 Highway 334
Oxford, MS 38655
ddoersch@olemiss.edu

T-SHIRTS & STUFF

Official SAFD T-Shirts, Tank Tops, Water Bottles, Caps, Jackets, etc. are now available at reasonable prices from Alex Daye in Miami. You can call Alex at (954) 438-3423.

NEW SECRETARY

Mark Olsen has resigned his position as Secretary of the Society, and Paul Dennhardt has been appointed by President Drew Fracher to fill out the rest of his term. Membership, rules, or other secretarial issues can be directed to Paul at:

Paul Dennhardt
2014 E. Taylor St.
Bloomington, IL 61701
(309) 662-8352
or (309) 826-9689

NEW CHAIR

David Leong has accepted the Chairmanship of the Department of Theatre Arts.

David Leong
Department of Theatre Arts
Virginia Commonwealth Univ.
922 Park Avenue
Richmond, VA 23284
(804) 828-1514 (w)
(804)-254-2071 (h)

WEAPONS 4 SALE

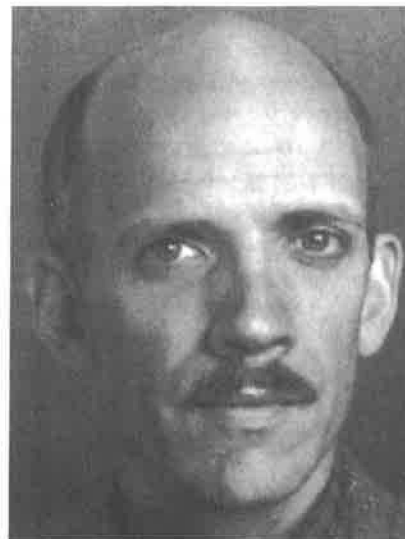
The SAFD is recycling some of its inventory. Contact Mark "Rat" Guinn if interested (318)257-2930. First come, First Served. Used Epee blades \$15. Used Daggers \$25.

Fight Master J. Allen Suddeth publishes new book on Fight Choreography

Fight Master, J. Allen Suddeth has concluded a six year endeavor, and has published his new book, **Fight Directing for the Theatre**. He is careful to point out that it is not a book on how to learn how to do a forward roll, or throw a punch. This richly illustrated book deals with all of the issues surrounding the directing of the fight, i.e. safety issues, conceptual issues, actually staging the fight, research, etc.

Some of the highlights of this book include a chapter on using the text for clues as to how the fight should be staged, a fight directors' timeline outlining when things should happen during the ideal rehearsal process, and chapters dedicated to contemporary violence, group fights and mass battles. And a great deal more than there is room to outline in this publication. Suffice it to say, however, that if you want to know how to do any of the afore-mentioned things or learn to work with fight directors or stage food fights, comedy fights, or need to discuss the ever-important issue of acting the fight then this book will prove tremendously useful to you.

I asked Allen when has he had time to write such a book with his busy schedule, he drily replied, "Oh it's not so much. Just six years of work, while having kids, a job, y'know."



J. Allen Suddeth

Nothing much."

With the other chapters discussing issues like blood effects, gun safety, and more, this book will likely fill a useful niche in all of our bookshelves. This 350 page book is now available from:

Heinemann Press
361 Hanover Street
Portsmouth, NH 03824
(800) 541-2086

and can be found at most Barnes and Noble or Borders bookstores.

Paddy Crean Workshop to be held at the Shaw Festival!

The Annual Paddy Crean workshop is being held this year in beautiful Niagara-on-the-lake at the site of the George Bernard Shaw Festival. The dates are September 20-22, and the cost is \$200 or \$75 per day. Be sure not to miss this wonderful and one-of-a-kind event!

Featuring instructors from the United States, Europe, England and, of course, Canada the Paddy Crean workshop has proven to be one of the most enjoyable and widely anticipated events each year for the fight world.

While this year's schedule is still being worked

on, based on years past, participants can expect to see classes such as period movement, classic era rapier ala Hollywood, fencing on balance beams, group melee, martial arts and much more! Registration questions should be directed to:

Brad Waller
5616 Kirkham Court
Springfield, VA 22151
(703) 323-7233



Profile

CERTIFIED TEACHER

k. Jenny Jones

by Dale Girard

It has often been pointed out that the SAFD, as an organization based in theatrical violence, has a membership of generally passive individuals. This is definitely true of Certified Teacher, k. Jenny Jones. To say that she is passive, however, is not to imply that she is not passionate about her work or not a go-getter; nothing could be further from the truth. Anyone who has had the fortune to meet or work with Jenny will describe her as a soft spoken, fun-loving individual who is more interested in theatre and the immediacy of the dramatic moment than in tooting her own horn or the pompous machismo of a real rough and tumble.

Jenny was born and raised in Cincinnati Ohio, where she graduated High School and moved on to higher education with the intent to become a veterinarian. At Thomas More College, Jenny pursued a degree in Biology (Pre-Med.), but it didn't take her long to realize that this was not her calling. "I dropped my Biology major for two reasons," she says, "First, I had more interest in animal behavior than in tearing them apart, and second, I couldn't carry my organic chemistry book." Attending a liberal arts college ("where everyone should go"), however, she found herself exposed to the School of Drama. There she acted, learned stage tech skills and found herself graduating with a BA and continuing into

Cymbeline, where she played Cius Lucius, Jenny met Fight Master Drew Fracher who staged the fights. This meeting spawned a friendship that has grown throughout her career. It was not this experience alone, however, that turned Jenny down the road of the theatrical combatant. It was a less positive experience that made her consider proper training. In a production of *Getting Out*, staged without a fight director, she had a string of accidents. Among her war wounds she received a concussion, lacerations on both hands, and her left eardrum perforated by a bad slap. To this day she has a 15-20% hearing loss in that ear. She laughs and says, "It's a good teaching tool. Now when I'm asked if there is a safe contact slap I say 'What? I'm sorry, could you repeat that - I've lost some hearing in my left ear.'" This, and other negative experiences, made her decide to drop out of grad school.

Drawing upon the lessons learned in *Getting Out*, and her experiences with Maestro Fracher, Jenny was inspired to seek further training in stage combat. In April of '88, she completed her first skills

test, adjudicated by none other than Maestro Fracher. That summer she attended the NSCW where she tested and passed all 5 weapon skills, receiving recommendations in 4, and won the award for "Best Female Combatant." Realizing that she had found not only a craft that she

enjoyed, but one at which she had strong potential, Jenny sought further training.

She took private classes with Drew at his farm, and got a job working with



Maestros Leong and Villa at the Pennsylvania Renaissance Faire. Her interest in animal behavior paid off, at the Faire she helped

train horses for the joust. The combination of working with the fights and the animals was hard to beat. When Leong and Villa left the Faire, however, Jenny was soon to follow.

Having worked in the professional arena, Jenny reevaluated her position and decided that it would be beneficial to complete her MFA. In 1992 she went back to school, returning to the University of Cincinnati to complete her MFA. There she studied techniques such as mime, mask, and comedia. At the same time, however, her skills as a combatant were being taken in new directions. While completing her degree, Jenny began teaching stage combat and choreographing local productions. Her philosophy was simple, to stage dramatically effective encounters, and to ensure that what had happened to her in the past would never happen to any of her actors. Two years

"Sometimes gender sounds too much like agenda...you don't have to be a man to be aggressive or a woman to be

theatre studies in grad school.

From Thomas More Jenny went directly to the University of Cincinnati's College Conservatory of Music where she pursued her MFA. It was there that she had her first introduction to stage combat. In a reversed role production of

Let's list your workshop!

As the new editor, one of the changes that I want to make in the Cutting Edge, is to begin putting a focus on what is coming up, rather than what has just happened. There will still be the "Late Breaking News" segment as always, but I would like to begin to list classes and workshops that are going to be offered around the country in the upcoming 60-90 days. So, Certified Teachers and Fight Masters, let me know what you're up to, and I'll put it in!



The Swash-buckling Workshop is a continuation of the Swash-buckling series of workshops that Certified Teacher, David "Pops" Doersch and partner Jim Ridge have been offering in Miami,

Florida over the past 3 years.

During the course of the four day workshop, over Thanksgiving, participants will focus on all things to do with being true pirates, including: saying "Yarrggh" with an appropriately bad accent, walking on a peg leg, fighting with rapier, cloak, dagger, black powder guns, swinging on ropes, drinking rum, rye and whiskey, and falling into the ocean after losing your ship. Certified Teacher, **Brad Waller** will be a guest instructor this time round and has agreed to wear a parrot and striped pants, and teach Paddy Crean's patented "Poop Deck" Fighting Style, known only to a handful of shiver-me-timberers. Come be part of the fun! All inquiries should be directed to: Alex Daye at (954)438-3423.



Jack Young, Certified Teacher, has just finished teaching Acting and Stage Combat at the Performers' and Choreographers' Workshop in South Paris Maine. Last season he directed Julius Caesar, Hamlet, All in the Timing, and The Miser. He also choreographed Hamlet. He is looking forward to this coming season in which he'll be directing a whole bunch of shows. Jack's Theatre, the warehouse theatre, in Greenville, SC, is also starting a \$600,000 capital campaign to build a new space for the company, so if anybody sees any money lying around don't hesitate to send it on up!

Certified Teacher, **John Cashman** and Actor/Combatant, **Willis Middleton** are, as they put it, HITCHED BUT GOOOOOD!!! They got married on June 22nd at the home of Willis' parents in New Jersey. The ceremony consisted of readings from the Beatles, Cyrano de Bergerace and Dr. Suess. They wish to apologize to all of the wonderful friends that they were unable to invite due to a set number of attendees. Sorry! After a whirlwind vacation in Antigua, they are now back at work. Willis at Disney and John works for a theatrical lighting company in North Hollywood. Best wishes to Willis and John!

Michael Anderson, Certified Teacher, was severely injured in a motorcycle accident on June 12, 1996 in Gary, Indiana. He is mending, but it will be a long and painful process. His students at En Garde, Unlimited! have put together a fund to try to help Michael with his medical expenses. Please send all donations to:

Michael Anderson Hospital Fund
c/o Tasha Hardy
3935 Lyndale Avenue North
Minneapolis, MN 55412.

Any questions should be directed to Tasha Hardy at (612) 588-9483. Cards and well-wishes should be sent to Michael at:

Michael Anderson
3011 Dakota Avenue South
St. Louis Park, MN 55416
(612) 920-8165

He wants phone calls, since he is going stir-crazy. He was particularly grateful to all who participated in the "Search for Michael Anderson" video at the NSCW. Here's a fond wish for Michael's speedy recovery and all our good thoughts & prayers.

Erica Bilder has been quite busy lately. In September of 1995, she travelled to Turkey to direct the Assos Festival. In December of 95, she was in Rome, Italy directing two plays by Beckett Cascando and Eh Joe. In February, 96, she was back in Turkey and Italy teaching Stage Combat. In Turkey, she had to teach in French, and in Italy, she worked the violence in the Italian version of Passing. She is now back in New York working at a variety of venues.

Brian Byrnes, Certified Teacher, has received and accepted the position of Assistant Professor of Stage Movement. His new address is:

Brian Byrnes
University of Houston
School of Theatre
Houston, TX 77204-5071
(713) 743-2915 (office)

This is to notify all SAFD members who applied for either inspection or desk copies of **Dale A. Girard's** upcoming publication Actors On Guard that the manuscript is due for publication this Fall. Routledge apologizes for the delay in the release of this manuscript, there have been complications in acquiring rights to several period illustrations used within the text. If you would like to confirm that your name and address is on our list for inspection/desk copies, please contact Marne Benson at the New York office (212) 244-3336. You may also apply for an inspection/desk copy by contacting Routledge customer service at 800-634-7064.

k. Jenny Jones, continued

after her graduation, Jenny got her alma mater to hire her to teach a skills class, and she's been on faculty there ever since.

The choice to work in the "Fight-Biz" proved slow going at first. Jenny had to supplement her income working as a scenic painter, grip and drywall finisher. She was determined, however, and as she pursued work in her area she quit acting so that she could concentrate on further fight training and teaching/choreographing at local universities and theatres. (She has recently come out of acting "retirement" to favorable reviews).

In 1994 Jenny attended the Advanced Workshop in Las Vegas where she repeated her showing of '88, testing in all weapons and walking away with the award for "Best Female Combatant." The following summer she attended the Teacher Training Workshop. There she displayed her years of training and hard

work, joining the ranks of the SAFD's Certified Teachers; and becoming one of four female CTs presently in the organization. She laughs at this later distinction pointing out that the criteria is the same for everyone and that she is simply a CT. "Sometimes gender sounds too much like agenda...you don't have to be a man to be aggressive or a woman to be afraid. You only need to be human." This philosophy has helped her step inside a variety of characters, and to interpret their circumstances into the moment to moment reality of the production.

Currently, she is in her fourth year on faculty at the University of Cincinnati, CCM and will be taking over a sabbatical position there as well as teaching 2 classes next year at Northern Kentucky University. Those who know Jenny will note that she may not be violent, but she is definitely aggressive in the pursuit of her dreams.

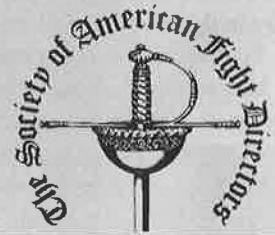
The Cutting Edge

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David Doersch.

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Oxford, MS 38655



T H E C U T T I N G E D G E



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