



Sticks, Knives & Courage

**A tribute to
Grandmaster Roland
Dantes (1945–2009)**

“Through my masters, martial arts have taught me determination, strength of character, loyalty and to pass on the teachings with honesty and integrity.” These were the words of Grandmaster Roland Dantes, a world-renowned master of the Filipino martial arts who passed away after a long illness in March 2009. Despite being a former bodybuilding champion and a major Filipino film star, and having the respect and acquaintance of the Philippines’ top martial arts masters, Dantes lived a quiet life in Australia, teaching only a few dedicated students. Here, Dantes’ close friend and student David Foggie commemorates the passing of his master.

DANTES VS KNIFE

One of the world’s most senior Filipino martial arts masters, Grandmaster Roland Dantes, passed away in the Philippines on 16 March 2009 as a result of multiple organ failure arising from complications due to gout (metabolic arthritis). An internationally respected master of the Filipino martial arts (FMA) known variously as kali, eskrima and arnis, Dantes was known worldwide as an ambassador of goodwill for the arts. Although he travelled the world conducting seminars and liaising with many groups, in Australia he maintained a low profile and few were aware of this great man and his remarkable life.

Born Rolando Tangco Pintoy in Cotabato, on the south island of Mindanao, Roland’s interest in martial arts was sparked by his father, Brigadier General Climaco Pintoy. Firmly believing it was important for his eldest son to be able to defend himself, Brigadier General Pintoy taught Roland combat techniques that he had learned from his own father.

Since Roland’s father was a career military officer, he was assigned as Military Provincial Commander of different islands from the north to the south of the Philippines archipelago. After his promotion to Brigadier General, he became the Military Zone Commander of an area that comprised the main southern islands of Mindanao, Jolo, and Sulu, including Palawan. He also became Commander of several military bases, including Camp Murphy (now known as Camp Aguinaldo) in Metro Manila, which is the General HQ of the Philippines Armed Forces. Regarded as a man of impeccable integrity, Brigadier General Pintoy had a camp in Iligan, Lanao, Mindanao named after him, and in later years GM Roland Dantes returned regularly to Camp

General Pintoy to impart his skills in edged weapons to Special Forces based at the camp.

Due to his father’s career, Roland grew up on different islands and although the Philippines are predominantly a Christian (Catholic) nation, he had Muslim relatives in the south islands. The seven Pintoy children were born on a different islands, since the family had to relocate whenever their father was reassigned. This was an advantage to Roland, as he learned to speak numerous Filipino dialects, like his father, and was able to experience many different regional martial arts styles.

After his father passed away, Roland started training in Shotokan Karate and Moo Duk Kwan, attaining Black-belt in each. After joining the Philippine police force and undergoing basic baton training, Roland sought further instruction in arnis.

He also began bodybuilding at 18 years old and although he achieved considerable success, his passion was basketball. He was about to play for Mapua at the NCAA when he suffered a severe knee injury, which eventually forced him to give up basketball. Transferring to UE to major in Physical Education, his bodybuilding career took off when a friend took him to a nearby gym. The owner, Mr Elpidio Doroteo, noted Roland’s enthusiasm for sports and his good genetics, and guided him into serious training. After winning the Mr Novice title for bodybuilding newcomers in 1965, he went on to win the Mr Philippines title four times (1969, 1973, 1974, 1976 and 1980). On the international scene, Roland



1
David Foggie approaches GM Dantes, armed with a knife.



2
As he thrusts the knife, GM Dantes angles off and deflects the knife attack while attacking the eyes...



3
...then passes the knife-arm through to his left, moving his lead leg back to avoid being cut. His right hand is controlling the knife-hand.



4
Locking the thumb with both hands, Dantes also attacks the elbow of the attacker's straightened arm with his bodyweight behind his left arm...



5
...then stomps the side of the attacker's knee into the ground, as he forces the knife back towards the attacker.

came fourth runner up Mr Universe 1969 in New York, USA, where the title was taken by a young Arnold Schwarzenegger. Roland went on to place in the top five at several more Mr Universe events and other top international competitions up until the early 1980s.

Meanwhile, Roland continued his FMA training. As if destiny was setting him on the path he was meant to take, he met Professor Remy A. Presas, the famous founder of Modern Arnis (now deceased), in the late 1960s and became his student.

According to the Presas family, Roland became the closest student and confidante of Professor Presas. He was featured in two of Presas's books,

travelled to Japan for Modern Arnis demonstrations with his teacher and also assisted him introducing Modern Arnis in the USA. One of few who received instruction in Modern Arnis solely from its founder, Roland was honoured to receive the rank of 8th Degree Black-belt (*Lakan Walo*) and Senior Master of Modern Arnis personally from Professor Remy Presas.

With a passion for FMA and appreciating the various styles, GM Roland Dantes also trained with and/or exchanged knowledge with many respected masters. Reading like a virtual who's who of FMA, among those who have shared knowledge with him are GM Ben Lema (Lightning Scientific Arnis), GM Antonio Ilustrisimo (Kali Ilustrisimo), GM Johnny F. Chiuten (Pronus Supinus), GM Guillermo Lengson (KAFEPHIL/Sagasa), GM Filemon Caburnay (Lapunti Arnis de Abaniko), GM Jose Mena (Doblete Rapillon/Mena System), Cacoy Canete (Doce Pares). He trained with many others too, some famous and others unknown outside of the provinces where they lived.

GM Roland felt privileged

to have been afforded such opportunities and having dedicated his life to the study, he combined their teachings, techniques, concepts and principles to create a comprehensive, well-structured syllabus of his own. While he had never intended to formulate another system, GM Roland spent many years painstakingly training, researching and analysing the techniques and concepts he learnt. This evolutionary process resulted in him naming the style he teaches *Pinagsamang Paraang Arnis* ('Combined Open Style Arnis') in Tagalog, the national language of the Philippines. It must be stressed, however, that GM Roland did not claim Pinagsamang Paraang Arnis to be a new style. Instead, he viewed it as a method synthesised from others, to honour the renowned masters of FMA who had offered their knowledge and experiences to him.

Although the material is understandably broad and comprehensive, GM Roland structured it to allow students to follow a clear and logical progression through the syllabus. In addition, sound fundamental

principles and theories are applied in teaching the system to allow students to assimilate the material both on a physical and mental level.

Stressing respect for the Philippines and the culture that gave birth to FMA, Pinagsamang Paraang Arnis continues to evolve so as to retain its practicality and adaptability in modern times. GM Roland believed it is vital for any system to continually adapt and evolve, as stagnation causes an art to deteriorate. As such, he stressed that his students train with other maestros in different systems in order to see the richness and diversity of FMA. This refreshing and non-political attitude saw students such as me benefit from training under respected masters like GM Christopher 'Topher' Ricketts, GM Johnny F. Chiuten, GM Vic Sanchez, GM Rodel Dagooc, Master Nilo Limpin and others during their training in the Philippines.

Recognised for his skill in edged and impact weapons, GM Roland was also involved in advising and teaching military and law-enforcement groups both in and outside the Philippines. He was an advisor on weaponry tactics to the Philippine Army Special Forces

stationed at Camp General Pintoy in Mindanao and has also served as an advisor to the Philippine National Police Academy. Additionally, he had been an invited guest instructor of the 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne), stationed at Fort Lewis, WA USA, who were taught by his close friend, Master Kelly Worden (founder and GM of Natural Spirit International, and proclaimed by Prof. Remy Presas as the first American Datu of Modern Arnis).

Preferring to maintain a relatively low profile, GM Roland taught quite a few students in Melbourne, Australia, where he resided for much of the time since the mid-1990s. I was his sole private student and he limited his teaching to his official class at Malvern Martial Arts. Wanting to see his art propagated and preserved, while avoiding the commercialisation and 'cash-for-certificates' scenarios that have tainted many FMA styles, GM Roland was cautious about who he graded.

In one of the last interviews conducted with GM Roland Dantes, he stated:

"The following people are the ONLY ones who have trained directly under myself and having been tested, fulfilled the

requirements laid down and thus attained Black-belt from me.

"My initial teaching was heavily based in Modern Arnis though there were differences and the following people were trained under the instruction of myself and achieved the following rank: Cheryl Pintoy-Carter, Tom Gange, Jess Rando, Dave Johnson, Rudy Bautista, Gary Smith, Paul Woods and Andrew Humphries – all were promoted to *Lakan Isa* (1st Degree Black-belt). Trevor Koochew was awarded Black-belt.

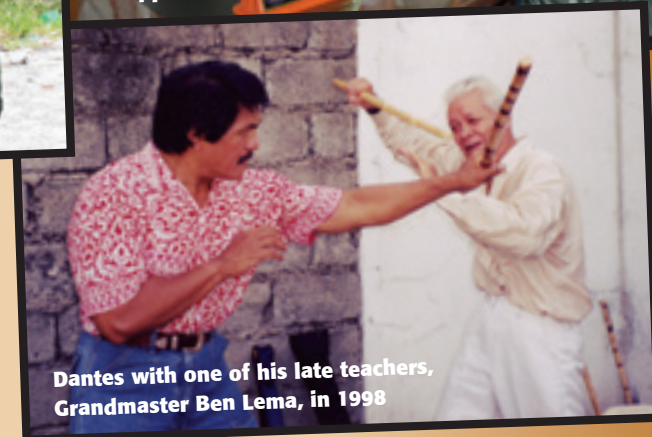
"From 1994/95 when I started teaching in Dingley [Victoria], the system I taught still retained the framework of Modern Arnis, but incorporated a lot of the influences of other masters who also taught me. This was when David Foggie and Chris Bidgood started training and eventually David became my most senior, longest continual student and in 2004 was tested and promoted to *Lakan Lima* (5th Degree Black-belt). As a matter of fact, the certificate awarded to David was the first of only two certificates I have awarded in the system I taught, Pinagsamang Paraang Arnis. The other was to Taga Turo Chris Caprio, who is ranked Lakan Delewa (2nd Degree Black-belt)." Due to his busy



Foggie & Dantes in the Philippines



Dantes joins other FMA legends in convening the Philippine Council of Kali Eskrima Arnis Masters



Dantes with one of his late teachers, Grandmaster Ben Lema, in 1998

schedule travelling to the Philippines and other countries, from the mid-90s until his passing GM Roland limited his instruction mainly to his class at Malvern Martial Arts, where I assisted him. Taga Turo Tom Gange, a long-time loyal student of GM Roland and the first to be promoted to Black-belt in Australia, was the only other early Black-belt continuing his training. Though his schedule kept him very busy, GM Roland felt it was another way to contribute to the martial art that gave him so much fulfilment. He felt he was a product of the time and effort his masters gave him and that he was honouring them by giving the same to others.

The respect GM Roland showed to his teachers and all martial artists, and his avoidance

of the politics that have often been so detrimental to FMA, is one of the reasons why those who were acquainted with him held him in such high regard.

GM Roland also saw FMA as a cultural treasure of the Philippines and, concerned for its preservation and promotion, he long dreamed of creating a 'council of elders' comprised of impartial senior masters. This culminated in the founding of the Philippine Council of Kali Eskrima Arnis Masters in

2005, of which GM Roland was the Chairman and President. A large number of respected grandmasters, masters and guros from the Philippines joined the council, to assist in the preservation and propagation of the arts they cherish. Since the Philippine Council of Kali Eskrima Arnis Masters is truly apolitical, aficionados of FMA worldwide have applied to join.

The Council remains as evidence of the high regard GM Roland held for the combat

DANTES VS KNIFE #2



Dantes has his palms facing in towards himself to protect vital arteries inside the arms, and as his attacker thrusts...



...he steps obliquely to his left, checking the knife-hand while simultaneously striking the attacker's elbow joint.



Continuing the momentum of his strike, GM Dantes brings the weapon-arm high as his right hand moves to secure control of the attacker's wrist...



...then moves his left arm from the attacker's elbow and locks the attacker's thumb to gain control of the knife.



GM Dantes consolidates his grip and swings the attacker's arm clockwise and up, as he prepares to apply a wrist-lock.



Applying the wrist-lock, Dantes controls his attacker and drives him down to his knees...



...then steps in with his left leg, rolling the knife-hand to his right and applying leverage down on the arm.



With his leg positioned under the elbow, Dantes applies pressure to the elbow/tricep and removes the knife.

arts of his beloved Philippines, kali, eskrima and arnis. He said, "The art is greater than me. It was in existence before me and will be in existence after me. I have been simply an instrument to help promote it and I am honoured to have done so."

This was somewhat of an understatement, as he was one of the first Filipino actors to perform FMA in the movies and promote it to audiences. For the record, with the Filipino martial arts being close to his heart, Roland featured arnis in *Pacific Connection* and *Sticks of Death*, thus holding the distinction of starring in the first full-length movie about arnis, as well as being one of the hosts for the Philippines Channel 7 television show *Karate-Arnis Full Contact Live Weekly* for two years.

Well known in the Philippines as an actor and entertainer, where he used the stage name Roland Dantes, Roland was the lead actor in *The Pacific Connection*, in which he co-starred with Hollywood veterans Nancy Kwan (of *Suzie Wong* fame), Gilbert Roland, Guy Madison (star of the original *Wild Bill Hickock* TV series), Dean Stockwell, Alejandro Rey (who co-starred in the TV series *The Flying Nun* with Sally Field) and the Japanese actor Hiroshi Tanaka (who had co-starred with Charles Bronson in the film *The Red Sun*).

GM Roland had many credits to his name in film, stage and television, including the lead in *The Golden Triangle* and *The Heavy Hand*, both international releases, and *The Children of An Lac*, a Hollywood production in which he starred with Shirley Jones. In one film, *Banta ng Kahapon* (*Threat of Yesteryear*) he received favorable reviews for his portrayal of a deaf-mute gun-for-hire employed by politicians. In later years,

he even had a role in the low-budget Aussie action film *Trojan Warrior* alongside former world kickboxing champion, Stan 'The Man' Longinidis.

Yet, despite achieving success and recognition in the fields of acting, bodybuilding and martial arts, GM Roland Dantes remained relatively low-profile throughout his years and remained a very humble and approachable man.

Holding a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Science, GM Roland was also a graduate of the Philippine National Police Academy and a graduate of a physical fitness instructor's course in the Philippines and the USA. In 1975 and 1976 he was awarded the Siglakas Award as a 'Sports Hero' in arnis by the Philippine government. *Blitz* magazine also awarded GM Roland Dantes the *Blitz* Hall of Fame 'Open Category' Award in 2003, in recognition of his skills and contributions to martial arts. In recognition of his bodybuilding accomplishments, Roland was awarded the Certificate of Merit for Bodybuilding by Ben Weider, president of the IFBB (International Federation of Bodybuilding).

When it came to dedication to his chosen fields of

endeavour, GM Roland was certainly one who practised what he preached to his students. Though he was over 60 years of age and in recent years had overcome a serious aneurism in his heart, he remained totally committed to daily training in arnis, as well as his physical training, including weight training and daily walking. To his students, he remains a living testimony to what disciplined daily training can achieve.

Tragically, however, he was to eventually succumb to illness after 64 years. A wake and mass were held at the Marian Memorial Chapel on Marcos Highway in Antipolo City, Philippines, and many respected maestros attended to pay their last respects. Among them were the 'Mother of Modern Arnis', Mrs Rosemary Presas, Ate Patty Caballero (daughter of the late GM Ben Lema), GM Vicente R. Sanchez, GM Jerry dela Cruz, GM Rodel Dagooc, Master Nilo Limpin, Master Godofredo Fajardo, Punong Guro Rey Dominguez and Master Felipe 'Bot' Jocano, as well as many other grandmasters, masters and practitioners of FMA.

Grandmaster Roland Dantes

was laid to rest at Heaven's Gate Memorial Park in Anipolo City with many of his family members, fellow arnisadors and friends attending. Myself, Chris Caprio and Trevor Koochew travelled to the Philippines to pay our respects — but it was by no means our final act of homage to our much-loved guro. Chris and I have vowed to continue paying our respects to GM Roland Dantes as he did to his masters: by continuing to promote all Filipino martial arts, but also by preserving and teaching the system that he imparted to us.

About the author: David Foggie was a long-time private student of GM Roland Dantes and was his assistant from the early 1990s until his passing. Holding the rank of Lakan Lima (5th Degree black-belt) and the title Ikalawang Guro, Foggie is the highest ranked student of GM Dantes and was named as his successor (as recognised by Dante's family in Australia, USA and the Philippines). Foggie can be contacted on 0421 045 018 or xsagasa@yahoo.com



Dantes (L) and GM Rodel Dagooc with Prof. Remy Presas (in suit) when he left for the US

Dantes playing a traditional warrior in one of his many films

IDOKAN AUSTRALIA



IS PRESENTING A JIJITSU SEMINAR ON BEHALF OF THE AUSTRALIAN JIJITSU FEDERATION



The seminar is open to martial artists of all styles from beginner to black belt.



Instructors are keen to share their years of experience with participants of the seminar.

PRESENTERS:

Kyoshi Roger Quick 8th Dan (Koshinryu Jujutsu- AJF President)
Hanshi Dave Franklin 9th Dan (Dave Franklin Martial Arts)
Renshi Kevin Walsh 6th Dan (Idokan Australia)
Shihan Trevor Smith 6th Dan (Bendigo Jujitsu)
Shidojin Bernie Quinn 3rd Dan (Jishukan Ryu Australia)
Sensei Peter Graham 3rd Dan (Dragon City Martial Arts)
Sensei Cameron Rowe Black Belt (Will /Machado Brazilian Jiu Jitsu)

TOPICS OF THE SEMINAR INCLUDE:

- Defences and control against Weapons
- The use of pressure points to unbalance an opponent
- Small circles and how to use them
- Practical and Advanced Joint Locks
- Ground fighting through the use of weight and leverage
- Practical applications of select traditional controlling techniques

Date:

Sunday 19th July 2009

Time:

Registration » 8:00am
 Start » 8:45am
 Finish » 5:00pm

Venue:

Aqualink
 Surrey Drive
 Box Hill

Registration on the web:

www.idokan.com

More info:

Kevin Walsh
 Mobile » 0403 800 089
 Email » kevin@idokan.com

Cost:

\$55 members/non-members

Early bird prices are \$35 for members*and \$45 for non-members before 6th July.

*Members of the AJF and past attendees of Idokan Australia/Bushido Instructor Association seminars

Limited to the first 75 places.
 Participants will be divided into smaller groups for small class sizes.

The Australian Jujitsu Federation is recognised by the Australian Government under the Australian Sports Commission as the peak body for Jujitsu and related martial arts.