

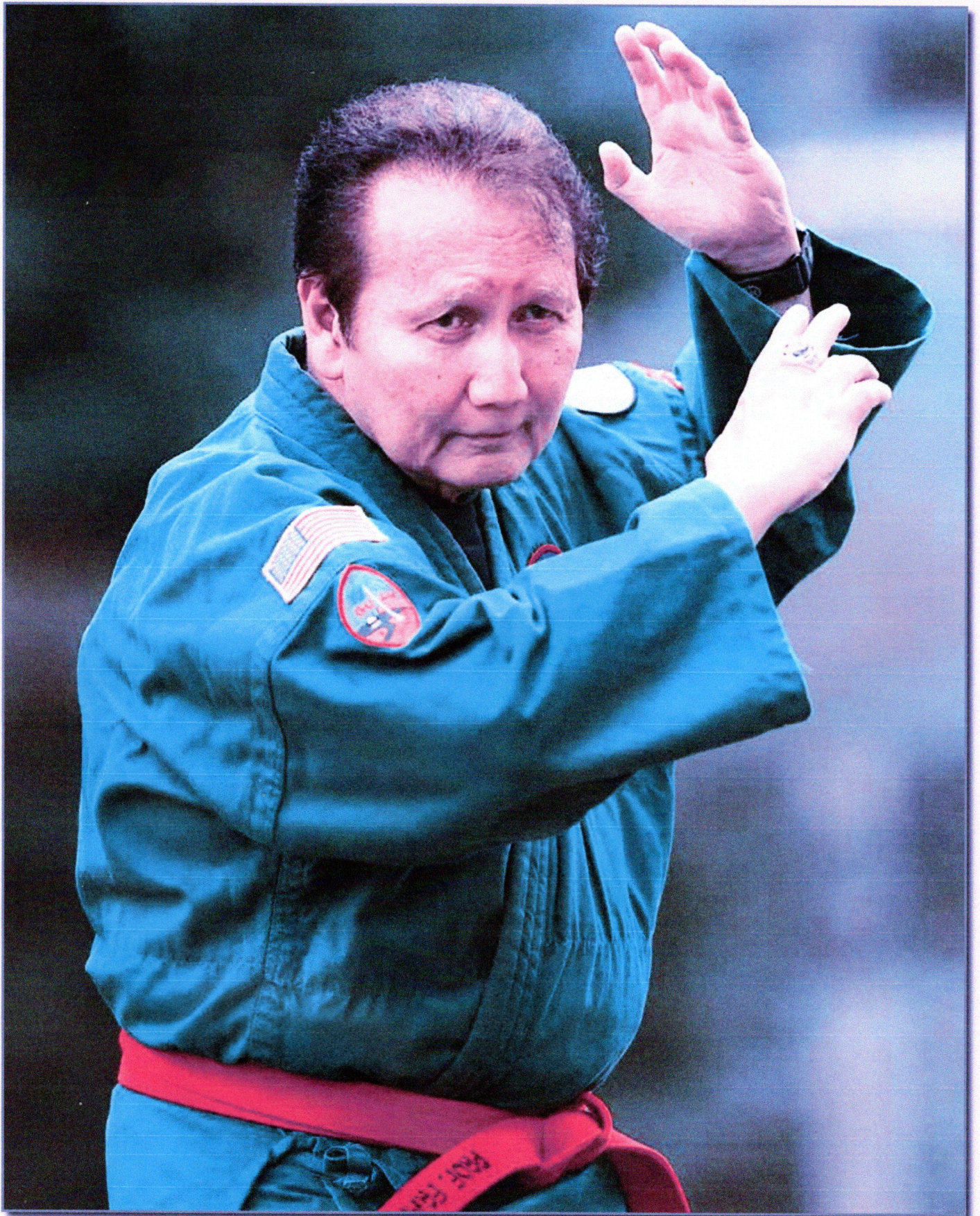
CAN A MARTIAL ARTS BLACK BELT SUCCESSFULLY DEFEND AGAINST A GANG ATTACK?

The Myths and the Realities of Defending Against More Than One Opponent

By Frank E. Sanchez

Having taught Spetsnaz, the police and security in the past as well as having been involved myself in defending against a gang attack in my youth, I felt secure enough to write an article in May of 2001 for a major martial arts Magazine on my Art of "SAN-JITSU vs A GANG ATTACK". I wasn't expecting a reader to write to the magazine that my views on gang attacks were unrealistic, because his instructor told him that you realistically couldn't handle, but one person at a time... ..A student of mine in turn, wrote back with a letter addressed to him stating basically that if the student's instructor couldn't teach him how to handle more than one attacker at a time, then he should probably seek out another instructor who could! Before it got "uglier", I advised my people to refrain from writing any more letters to the Editor. Though I was proud of my student's defense of me, I surely didn't want to cause any one's loss of a student from a well-meaning instructor who meant well by what he said. In defense of this instructor's statement, if you are dealing with more than one well trained assailant attacking you at the same time, your odds of successfully defending yourself become lower than if you are dealing with regular "citizens" (a term I like to use for non-trained individuals). Your odds becoming even less if you are dealing with individuals who are better conditioned or knowledgeable in the same style or similar style that you practice; or have weapons.





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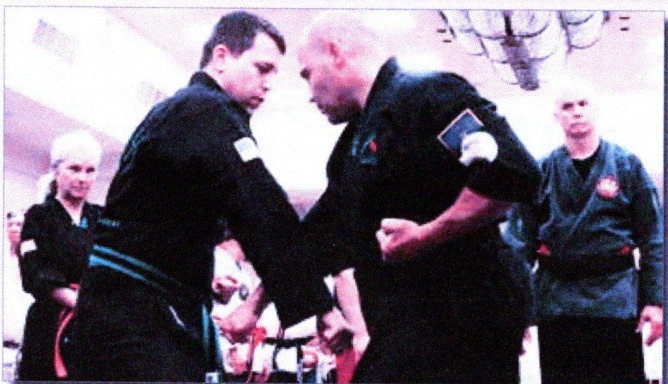
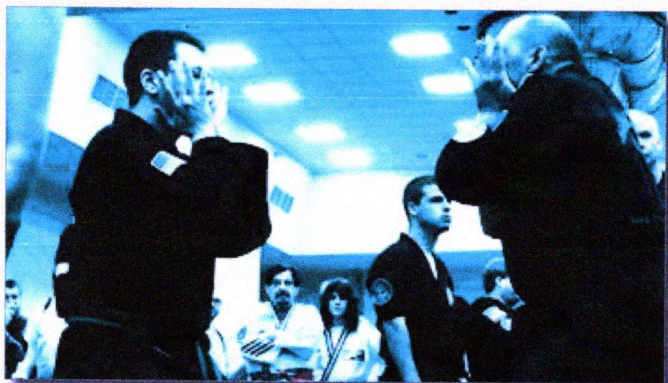
THE DISADVANTAGE THAT WE FACE TODAY AS MARTIAL ARTISTS

If I remember correctly, a magazine was quoted as saying that the most people that one martial artist was able to take out in a fight occurred in the early 1800's during the building of the railroads in America when a Chinese gentleman in a San Francisco bar single handedly took out more than ten people in a bar fight! How was this possible you might ask? First of all, if this report was "accurate", IGNORANCE would be my answer. "Ignorance" in the people who started this fight, probably because they thought the man was incapable of defending himself because he was from an inferior race.

Secondly, they were "ignorant" of this gentleman being well trained in some type of fighting art from Asia, because America was not introduced to the martial arts until some time in the 1890's and thirdly, "ignorant" on how to defend against it, because NO ONE was familiar with the martial arts at the time. No one knew what to look for to defend against it. So, it must have looked like "magic" with this Chinese Fella reeking havoc on his attackers!

In my days growing up in the 60's, it was relatively easy to take out someone fighting you, because no one was really carrying around a gun as they do now and everyone either was

trying to wrestle you to the ground in a head lock or trying to box with you! Kicking was also considered "girly stuff", at the time. No one knew how to kick in the martial arts way with speed and power...Not to belittle boxing in anyway, because it was my first martial art that I learned from my Father who was a boxer in the U.S. Navy Pacific fleet and it helped me win many a street fight with individuals who were unfamiliar with the skills of the "gentleman's art". Also, knowing the conditioning that professional boxers go through, I have great respect for them, but when you are taught to use both your arms and legs in fighting as the martial arts teaches you, facing off with a "citizen" who uses only his two hands became easy for me. To the point where taking on the bullies was becoming fun. The problem we have now-a-days, is that "everyone and their mother" is familiar with what martial arts looks like now, thanks to the movies and the schools that have popped up on every other block that market martial arts of every type. In fact, I venture to say that most people have at least one person in their family circle who practices or has practiced the martial arts! So, defending against it has become a little easier, because people have learned what to look for. That's why some instructors tell you not to drop into a martial arts stance on the street.





What is the answer to this dilemma now that the “cat is out of the bag”, so to speak regarding the martial arts? You can boil it down to 3 principles: 1. “SKILL” – you must develop your mindset and skills to the point where you can do your techniques without thinking and in combination with power, conviction and blinding speed.....”REAL SPEED” where your punches and kicks are delivered with lightning accuracy and brought back even faster, so that they can’t be grabbed. Trying to take out each attacker with ONE strike; and 2: being in continuous motion where you try to place one person in front of you at a time to disable and act as a shield against the others ; and 3, most important of all. Keep your martial arts training to yourself. Your greatest defense against an attacker, aside from your skill is the “ELEMENT OF SURPRISE”. Don’t do what I saw one student of martial arts do in the neighborhood I live in. She stood on a corner of the street in her uniform with her yellow belt tied tightly around her waist, waiting for the individual she was fighting to show up! I’m sorry, but if you do this, you are certainly not going to invite any respect on the part of the person fighting you (in fact, you are disrespecting your teacher and your school). You are more likely to draw fits of laughter. On the other hand, I witnessed a friend of mine who was an experienced street fighter on Guam, feign fear to invite an attacker to become more aggressive, thinking that he was dealing with someone who couldn’t fight and then when the guy moved in. My friend proceeded to beat the “living tar out of him”. He stripped him of his clothes, except for his boxer shorts and dragged him to the street to further humiliate him (the back streets of Guam were quiet and not as busy as those in the States at the time). He accomplished two things by doing this: 1. He humiliated and broke the “spirit” of the

person who fought him, and 2; Instilled a healthy fear in him, that my friend was “crazy”. He would not want to face him ever again. He beat the guy both “physically” and “psychologically”. Two things you SHOULD DO, to win any fight..... This also brings to mind another story of a young gifted student of mine who was accosted by a group of young thugs at his apartment complex. He successfully defended himself, but they came back with even more people and overwhelmed him.

His family of course reported the incident to police. Then moved out of the complex to protect their son.....Although, he beat them the first time.....He beat them “physically”, but not “psychologically”. The “psychological” part is just as important, if not more so, then the “physical” . You haven’t really won a fight unless you’ve done both. Defeat them physically and broken their spirit!

MEASURING THE ODDS AHEAD OF TIME OR NOT LETTING YOUR EGO GET THE BEST OF YOU

Of course, it’s always best to avoid a confrontation involving more than one or two people by either talking your way out of it, if you can (called “verbal Judo”) or just vacating the premises as quickly as possible. Because there are too many variables and too many things that can go wrong when you are fighting more than one person. There are times though when defending yourself against a group cannot be avoided. In which case it helps to know the “personality” of the group you are dealing with. A spontaneous attack is usually much easier to defend against (for lack of a better way to put it), than an organized or “planned” attack where minds are “set”. Simply because there is almost always an “Alpha” male involved in

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the first. Dissuade him verbally or Defeat him physically and the rest will “usually” dissipate or make a half-hearted attempt to continue before dissipating . While a planned group attack means that they have thought out ahead of time what each will do to nullify any type of defense you might make and will usually “swarm” you all at one time. A mob with weapons should also definitely be avoided at all costs.

CONDITIONING...CONDITIONING... CONDITIONING

Aside from light or medium contact, in the case of advanced students sparring. You must also practice sparring against multiple opponents all at one time (with and without facsimile weapons) which will also build up your endurance. Along with doing conditioning exercises to build up your hand and foot

weapons as well as your ability to take a good “hit”. “There is no such thing as fighting without fighting” and being hit is going to happen in a real fight, no matter how good you are. It’s what happens after you’re hit that determines how things are going to turn out. Are you going to quit or are you going to hit him harder and “take him out? Also, forget about using pre- programmed defenses. Learn to respond spontaneously to what is “actually happening before you”....and keep on your feet. “Sure”, if you’re skilled at ground fighting, you will no doubt dominate the guy by taking him to the ground, BUT how about his buddies? All it takes is for the guy you are fighting to hold on to you while his buddies play football with your head! So, stay on your feet. Here are some exercises that will help condition you for multiple opponent attacks taken from my Art of San-Jitsu.....

“CATCHING THE FLY” AND “SNAPPING LEG” WARM-UPS

With hands relaxed at sides, snap your hand out QUICKLY to the front as if to grab an imaginary fly and then return the hand to your side. Alternating each hand. As you do the exercise, keep in mind that the hand and arm are completely relaxed and only tensed at the moment you grab. Your punching and striking should “mimic” this exercise with the extension of the arm being relaxed and very fast. Then tensed upon the moment of impact. Trying to attain “blurring” speed with your movements. The same with your legs, work to develop blinding speed with them and kick to shin level followed immediately with a kick to mid-level. Never kicking above mid-level in this exercise because kicking head high while taking on a group can put you in a precarious position.

IMITATING THE ADRENALIN RUSH IN PRACTICE

So that you obtain some sense of realism in sparring multiple individuals at once or even in regular sparring with one

individual (with or without facsimile weapons). You can imitate the adrenalin rush that will hit you when fighting by having your partner spin you quickly in place 3 times one way and then the other immediately before Kumite. We do this in our advanced sparring and you should do it in yours’

TWO MAN SAN-JITSU CONDITIONING FORM

Face your partner with both of you in a horse stance at a little less than arms distance. Both arms cocked at your sides. Deciding in advance how many repetitions you are going to do with each moment. Part one – conditioning the face

Circle the arms outward, upward and down in a circle while breathing in and end by striking the sides of your jaw simultaneously with palm heel strikes as you breathe sharply out through your nose. Controlling the amount of power in your strikes with each repetition. Again, circling the arms outward, upward and down in a circle, end by striking your chin with a double palm heel strike. Making sure that the teeth are properly clenched together with your tongue tucked behind them.



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PART TWO – CONDITIONING THE ARMS AND STOMACH

With both of you remaining in your horse stances. Perform a downward facing inside forearm strike with your right arm against your partner's arm using the inner edge of the forearm against your partner's forearm who is doing the same thing. Followed quickly by an inward block against your partner's inward block & end with a simultaneous lower block by both you and your partner, making contact with the outer edges of your forearms.

PART THREE – CONDITIONING THE STOMACH

While remaining in your horse stances (which works to strengthen the legs). From your lower block, punch with your opposite hand to your partner's stomach followed by a punch with your other hand to the same area (your partner does the same thing simultaneously with you). Then repeat Part Two above, starting the exercise with the opposite arm and ending with this exercise, until you have completed the agreed upon number of reps combining parts two and three.

PART FOUR – CONDITIONING THE LEGS

Drop back into your fighting stances and round house kick with your rear leg to his outer thigh using your shin while he

does the same to you simultaneously. Repeatedly kicking in this way to the desired number of repetitions. Jump change to the opposite side and repeat the exercise. Then jump change again and change the target area so that it is shin against shin. Be sure to control the strike as the shin area can be extremely sensitive when hit until you become used to it and after the pre-determined number of reps is reached, just change to the other side and repeat. This will complete the San-Jitsu Two Man Conditioning Form.

Remember that winning against a group of enemies can be done. I've done it in the past and advanced students of mine have done it as well. It is "no walk in the park" and "yes", it is scary and you will most likely get hurt in the process. I'd be surprised if you weren't. Again, it all depends on the fighting skills of the persons who attack you (are they well trained or "citizens?") and on your skill level and endurance to respond correctly. Remember too, that getting into a fight with a group is not the wisest thing to do because someone is most likely going to get hurt badly or go to jail afterwards and it could be you. All it takes is one mistake....Talk your way out of it; or Walk away, but if you can't, use the skills taught to you by your instructor and the tips I have given you above to survive.

