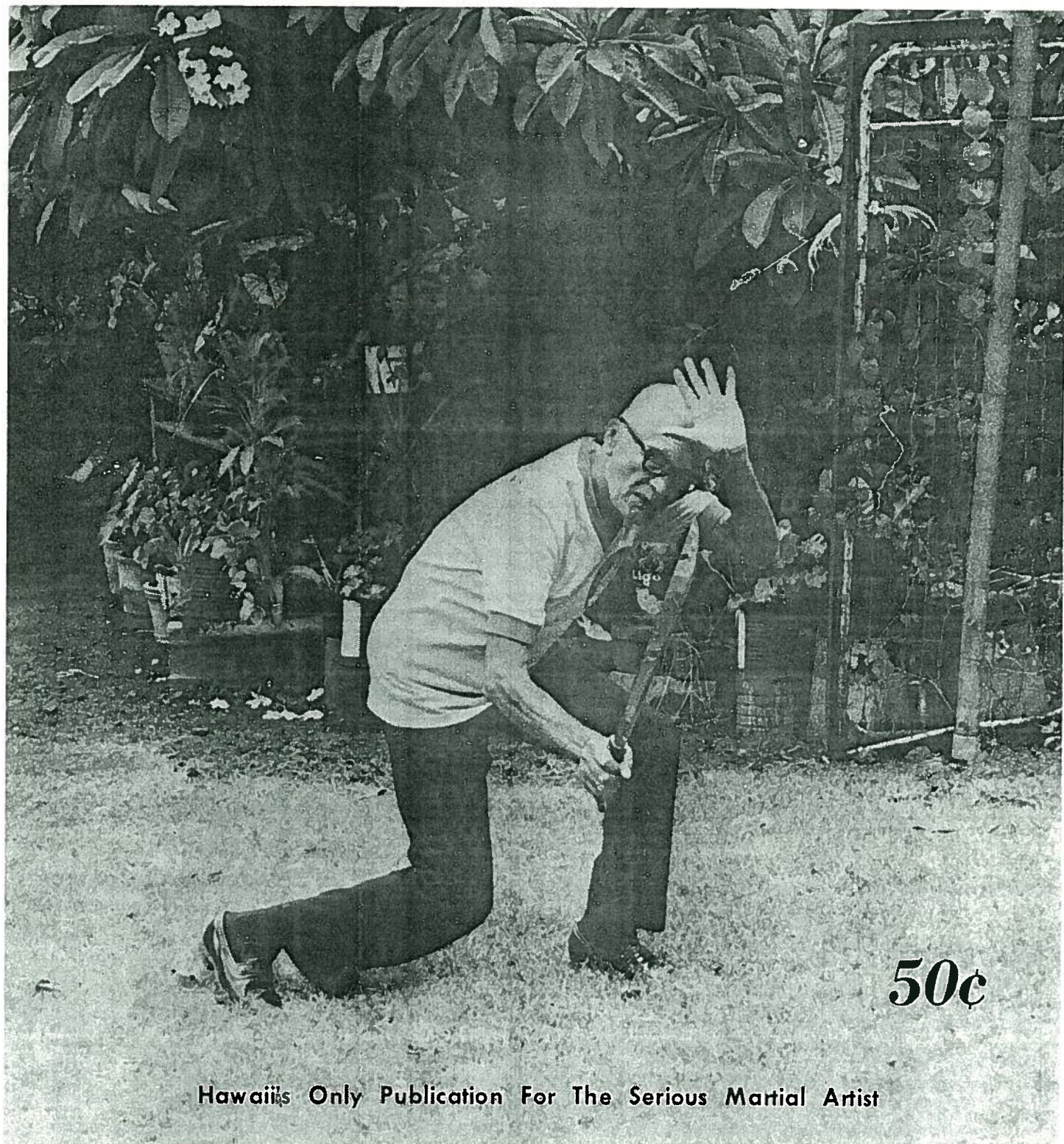


FIGHTING ARTS HAWAII

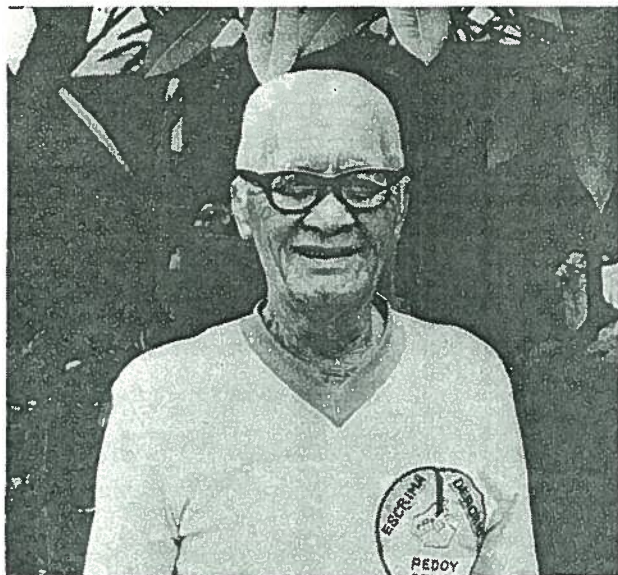
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AN INTERVIEW WITH



Master Braulio Pedoy

edited by Carlton Kramer
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(Editor's Note: This is an excerpt from an interview Kent Lighter conducted in December, 1976, and included in a paper titled, "The Master: A Biography." Lighter is an Instructor in Escrima and has been training for three years. The editor, Carlton Kramer, is an Instructor in Escrima and has been training for four years.)

FAH - Where in the Philippines did you come from?

PEDOY - I came from Omar, Leyte.

FAH - When did you come to Hawaii?

PEDOY - I arrived in 1924. My destination was Olaa Plantation on the Big Island.

FAH - Why did you come to Hawaii?

PEDOY - My friend told me, "We go Hawaii. Hawaii is good -- easy to make money." The temptation was in my mind, a conflict already with what my Master told me on how I should live my life.

FAH - So you worked the plantations all your life?

PEDOY - No, I spent many years as a fisherman, and during the second World War, I was a security guard for the Army. After that, I worked 11 years for Gaspro. From that time until now, I haven't worked. That is my history from the time I came to Hawaii. But if you go to my history in the Philippines, there is a whole different story to tell. I went from island to island, like my Master told me, to further my studies in Escrima. In every village, there are different movements and counters. Kali has very different movements than the Derobio.

FAH - How long did you go island to island?

PEDOY - Over three years.

FAH - How old were you when you did this?

PEDOY - I was 17 years old. I was 20 when I decided to go to Hawaii.

FAH - How long had you been training with your Master?

PEDOY - Since I was 6 years old until I was 17. And from there I went island to island. First, however, my Master told me to study about the ocean, and of the philosophy of the sea. If you were to climb to the top of a tree and look into the ocean, you would see different shades of blue. The darker the blue, the deeper the water. In the lighter areas it is shallow, rough, and noisy. Many are at this level, close-minded people with conflicting goals in life who tend to use their mouths loosely. We must look towards the deeper water where it's calm and peaceful, where your morals run deep and only pure thoughts come out of your mouth. Thus, you can observe for yourself what is shallow and what is deep. In every one of us the Lord provided seven gateways for us to observe our environment. Each of us has two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, and a mouth. Only the mouth can get us into serious trouble with our fellow man --- thus one should be very careful in what one says. Give good advice, don't lie, and never gossip, for it might not be true. Then you can get your humbleness from that.



A Derobio pose using two bolos

FAH - When you came to Hawaii, were you a Master already?

PEDOY - Yes, I had developed already. I had been all over the Philippine Islands.

FAH - How did you meet your Master?

PEDOY - My father was a very mean person. Every day he gave me lickings. So, at 6 years of age, I ran away. I went along the main trail until I came to a fork in it: one way to the big city, the other to the mountains. If I was to go to town, my father might still yet catch me, so I went the other way. I just walked with no destination. I just walked -- walked and walked. For four days, I roamed the forest. Then I saw a small shack where someone had, at one time or another, built a fire. So I sat down and waited, for I thought to myself, someone lives in this place, thank God. Later in the evening, that man came back, and he was very surprised to see me. He asked how I had come to this place, and I pointed to the pass in the mountains I had come through. He said, "I know other people come from the opposite way to this place, but no one can pass through your way -- it's too dangerous."

MASTER BRAULIO PEDOY

FAH - What was so dangerous about the pass?

PEDOY - There were plenty of poisonous snakes, the kind of snakes that get bigger than men. But at the time, I didn't see any snakes during the day and at night I climbed high into the branches of trees. My Master told me, "God guided you to me. He wanted you to learn how to defend yourself -- so he brought you to me, for that is the talent I have to give to you."

FAH - What was your Master doing in this out-of-the-way place?

PEDOY - My Master was a wanted man with a large reward offered for him. That's why he hid deep in the forest. He was a general during the revolution against the Spanish, and again later during the Filipino - American War. When the United States won and all Filipinos were required by law to salute the American flag, he would not. To the Filipino flag, he would salute, but to no other country's flag would he pay respect. Too many of his men had died fighting for independence in the battlefields. That's why the authorities put him in jail. That man had great powers -- no jail could hold him. The guards were there, yet no one saw him escape.



A movement from the Master's 'Caranza'

FAH - And he went to the mountains?

PEDOY - Yes, he ran away to the forest. He was a man of great powers, powers he received from heaven through his prayers. Snakes wouldn't go near him, animals wouldn't eat the rice he planted. There was plenty of wild pigs, deer and birds. But nothing touched his rice. We wouldn't chase them away either, just leave them alone. And when it was time to harvest, we would thank the Lord for our food. See what powers he had?

FAH - So when you were 17, you left your Master?

PEDOY - Yes, but before I was to return to civilization, I was told to study the movements of the trees and of the ocean, to observe carefully the motions of the branches in the wind. You must be able to get away from the force of the blow and return to an equal, balanced position. Thus, to be an Escrimador you have to carefully study the land and sea while also searching for those unusual things in nature God has created. After 11 years, I went back to my father's place.



A movement from the Master's 'Caranza'

FAH - Did your father recognize you after 11 years?

PEDOY - Yes, he tried to hit me with a stick. I just took it away. I didn't hit him back. He asked me how I survived all these years. I told him I found a man and we lived together in the forest. I stayed two or three weeks with my father, then I went away. I didn't tell him that I was going island to island to practice, I just left. He never knew anything about what I had learned.

FAH - Didn't you regret leaving your Master after 11 years?

PEDOY - My Master told me that this was no place for me to live all of my life. He said I would have to leave after my examination.

FAH - What examination?

PEDOY - My final test to become a Master of the Derobio System of Escrima. Each of us had two sharp bolo knives. We were to fight in actual combat. My Master told me, "If you can kill me, kill me. I, in turn, will try my best to kill you. If either of us gets wounded badly, the other has to kill him, because there is no doctor, we would only suffer. So better defend yourself well, or else."

Before the examination, I prayed for days, asking my Lord, Jesus Christ, to protect me. The battle was long and tiring; each of us used our best fakes and counters. When it was over, he was unhurt, whereas I suffered cuts on my hands and face. But only the tip of his bolos cut me, not deep enough that I let down my defense.



A movement from the Master's 'Caranza'

FAH - When was the first time anybody knew you were a Master in Escrima?

PEDROY - Oh, I never showed anyone I knew Escrima. But when there was trouble, my neighbors found out I knew how to defend myself. Especially with newly-arrived Filipinos, when there was trouble, out came the knife. When they would use it, I would take it away. That's how they know I know Escrima. But I never taught anybody before, only Eddie (his son).

FAH - And that was the first time you taught?

PEDROY - Yes, the first person I taught was my son, and only after he had taken Karate. One time, however, some officers of the Honolulu Police Department asked to learn. I showed them how easy it was for me to hit them with my sticks. Soon they stopped coming over.

Do you know why I started training Eddie? Because I thought to myself about the Chinese martial art of Kung Fu, about the Japanese with their Judo and Karate, and about the Americans with their boxing. I know the Filipino community in Hawaii has some good Escrimadors, but they never show or share their talent. That's why I began teaching Eddie -- so that we could preserve a valuable part of the Filipino culture and heritage, and to give an opportunity to the younger Filipinos who don't have Escrimadors in their families a chance to learn Escrima, thereby increasing their pride in themselves and our heritage.

I then told Eddie to find instructors and to teach them well. Teach them to pray, because that is also an important part of being an Escrimador. And when you get your instructors ready, open a public Filipino Martial Arts School. That is how our school began over five years ago, when we first opened in Waipahu. Today I have nine full instructors under my son, who of course is my chief instructor.



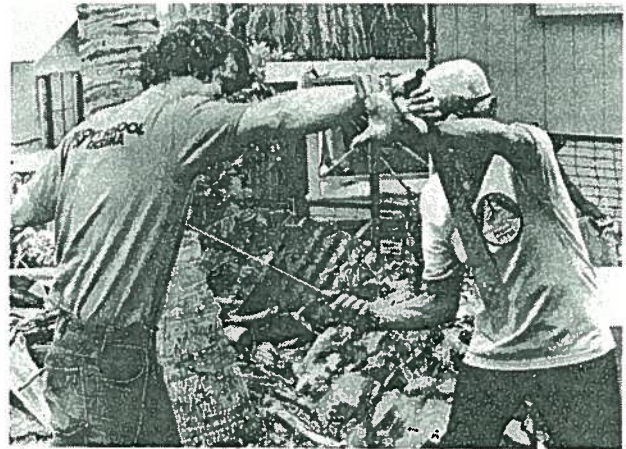
An example of Derobio's use of the left hand as a 'safety' and the right hand disarming



Defending to the inside against simultaneous double pokes

FAH - In class, how does your ranking system work?

PEDROY - In our martial art system, there are no color belt rankings. Instead, there are three classifications a student can fall in; either you are an instructor, an assistant instructor, or a student. Promotions are awarded by Eddie and me for overall performance and are not dependent on specific tests. Students are always taught rapidly and must learn quickly or feel the pain of the stick. Usually after a few mistakes he learns to move away quickly. The philosophies, history and ancient traditions of Escrima are always upheld. There are no shortcuts in learning this art safely. One must have patience and be willing to sacrifice time and come to every class. And thus, the talent that I have can be yours.



A classic example of a locking technique combined with a strike to the vulnerable area

FAH - What are some of the philosophies of life you teach your instructors and students?

PEDROY - It is up to the individual to decide which path in life he chooses to follow. Everyone should strive to improve themselves in the eyes of God. There are four levels of consciousness a man must go through to become closer to Him. Most are on the physical level.

In this stage of Escrima, the student develops his equal balance, studies the 12 main body joints of man and learns to train his eyes in watching the tip of a stick or

knife. He learns to relax and to flow fluidly from one movement to another. Like a tree in the wind, the Escrimador must be able to move, to bend out of the line of the force of the blow, to reach out with his branches and counter the attacker.

In the next step, one must work on his mental capabilities: learning to cope with life's daily troubles and improving one's learning and concentration abilities.

The third level deals with one's morals. Here you learn to analyze yourself, looking deep and not to the shallow levels of your mind. It also deals with determining and appreciating your place in relationship to your family, others and to nature. This is probably the most difficult phase to move through. Devotion to the Lord through the use of prayer, sacrificing all of oneself and one's time to serving Him. One must also be willing to cleanse the physical body of impurities before moving into the final stage.

The final level you will reach is spiritual fulfillment. One can never be equal to the Lord, one can only get closer to Him.

Just because you reach one level doesn't mean you will reach higher levels. Higher goals are attained only through humbleness and respect.

FAH - If one wishes to learn to practice the art of Escrima, how should one prepare one's self?

PEDDY - It is important that people who may be interested do not consider physical disabilities and weaknesses as reasons to avoid the art. Size and power can be overcome if one knows how to move and use their physical characteristics to their best advantage. Anyone is welcome who is serious about learning.

In class, we stress these qualities, which make up our creed: An Escrimador must have the wisdom and discretion to know when to use his art, and the humbleness not to boast about the power he holds. When forced to use it, he must show humanity against aggressors who can not defend against it. In doing these things, he will gain harmony with his art and in his life.



**Carlton Kramer (left), Master Braulio Pedoy (center),
Kenton Kramer (right)**