

SHORTHAND EMPTY HAND

EXPEDIENT STYLIZED FIGHTING



***By
PHIL ELMORE***

Shorthand Empty Hand, Second Edition, PDF Version 1.1

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It must be remembered that these techniques are a study in an ancient art form and merit the interest and respect accorded to any art form. Their use was applied years ago as a peasant's only means of defense against armed soldiers. Under those circumstances there was no such a thing as "fair play" and anything went.

*– Worlds Deadliest Fighting Secrets,
Count Dante*

Preface to the Second Edition

As I write this new preface, it has been five years since the initial publication of *Shorthand Empty Hand*. It has also been twenty years since I began my study of the martial arts and self-defense. Trite as it sounds, the refrain that keeps echoing through my mind is from the Grateful Dead: *What a long, strange trip it's been...*

My pursuit of the study of self-defense has not come without cost. When I first became determined to publish my own material, to profess my own earnest, honest opinion about the martial arts and self-defense, I quickly found out just who were my real friends. I made a lot of enemies overnight. I made a great many people angry. Most of this came as a complete surprise to me... but it really shouldn't have.

Five years is a long time. Nobody was more surprised than me when, during that period, I was finally presented with a black belt in the martial art of Liu Seong Gung Fu. I'd never really cared about rank and until that moment, I'd never spent long enough at any one system or style to attain it. Suddenly, all those pages and pages of material I'd written and prefaced with, "Now, I don't have any impressive ranks or credentials..." were just ever so slightly inaccurate.

I still believe that the truth or falsehood of an idea is built on the merits of the idea itself, not on the resume of the person expressing it. I also stand behind everything I wrote in this book five years ago — which, according to some people, was five years before I was "qualified" to write a book. To me, that's ridiculous; the concepts, techniques, methods, and principles in this book aren't complicated and don't take a "black belt" or an officially certified instructor to understand or to impart. I believe that self-defense is for everyone, and that an "everyman" like me has a very real role in imparting clear, concise information about self-defense to other ordinary people.

Of course, there will always be people who hate me. There will always be people who dispute what I say, not because of what I've said, but because it was *me* who said it. There are simply people out there who look at a fat, balding white guy and think, "That guy can't possibly have a valid opinion." When I express that opinion and do it by supporting it

logically and reasonably, these same critics get angry because they want to disagree but don't know how to assail the *substance* of what I've written. All that's left is for them to attack me personally, thus joining the chorus of angry, rock-throwing spectators who would rather tear down everyone else than actually contribute productively to the shared goal of self-defense. They are, to the last person, cowards.

So, here we are, five years later. As I've done throughout my twenty year pursuit of the martial arts, I've continued to train and study actively throughout the intervening time. While critics continued to howl, I kept right at it... and I'm proud of the results. My life is considerably different now than it was five years ago, and I won't lie and say that I haven't suffered losses along the way, but my goal — success in self-defense, and imparting that to others — has always remained the same.

In preparing this PDF Second Edition of *Shorthand Empty Hand*, I replaced most of the pictures with color versions of the exact same shots. I made a few minor adjustments here and there, and a few corrections, but for the most part the text remains as it was five years ago. I did include, at the end of the book, some appendices that are adaptations from the *Shorthand Empty Hand* website (which I have since allowed to expire because it has accomplished its purpose). This PDF e-book, then, contains everything you need to know about SHEH and discussion concerning it, in one handy location. Hell, there's more material here *about* the book than there is *book*. That tells you something about critics of such basic material.

Remember that this book is only a starting point. I intended it as a first step for people who are relative (or complete) beginners in self-defense. It is something that I would comfortably give a friend or family member who wanted to know how to begin studying the martial arts or self-defense generally. In that, I believe it accomplishes its purpose well. Please don't try to make more of it than it is.

— Phil Elmore, 8 May 2010

Introduction

When I was training in a traditional martial art, someone told me that I was “relentless” in my desire to see traditional martial arts taken seriously as combative systems. This surprised me. I don't consider myself a traditionalist or a martial stylist in any sense of the word, nor am I particularly tied to or invested in a specific martial tradition. I do hold in high regard the things I do and the arts in which I train — but only because they *work*.



I have little patience and even less free time, so I try not to waste that time on efforts that don't further my goals. I have, in fact, adhered to something of a short-attention-span-theater approach to the martial arts in the last decade and a half. Most of my accomplishments in this field have been, for lack of a better word, “unofficial.” I have no impressive credentials and I can provide no compelling appeals to authority in trying to persuade you to listen to me. All I can do is tell you, earnestly, what I think and why, substantiating my opinions with logic and reason. If you find value in that and in the *Shorthand Empty Hand* program, that is all that matters to me.

It is always fascinating to look at yourself from the outside. I thought about the idea of martial arts traditionalism and my relationship to it for quite some time. I've been accused of many things over the course of my punditry and pedantry in the martial arts field. The profoundly stupid have called me a quasi- or pseudo-intellectual. The followers of alternative combat systems have accused me of sycophantic devotion to a single WWII combatives instructor. The unskilled have called me hateful and the self-absorbed have called me arrogant. The unyielding have called me a liar and the unfeeling have called me cold. The irrational have called me paranoid and the hoplophobic have called me afraid.

I had never before been called a *traditionalist*, however.

In the years I've written for public consumption and formal publication, I've said, read, and seen a lot. I've seen friendships born and

destroyed, virtual communities rise and fall, loyalties shift, lies told, truths revealed, hatred fed, hope born and dashed, wisdom imparted, foolishness propagated, and every permutation and combination of the preceding, across a spectrum running from mild to mind-numbing.

Over that time I've received a lot of mail and read a lot of things to me and about me. Good friends with whom I've disagreed have kicked me in the teeth. People I've despised have surprised me and shamed me. People I didn't know existed have praised me, damned, me and asked me for advice.

There is only one constant at the center of that dizzying storm of words and war, of weakness and wealth. That, regardless of what you may hear or think, is my *honesty* — my firm conviction to approach the martial arts with objectivity and an active mind.

I throw around the terms “combatives” and “martial arts” fairly casually because I see the two as synonymous. There are those who don't. To my mind, however, engaging in combat with another human being — using *physical force* — is a science that, through diligent study and training, can be elevated to the level of art.

Exponents of pure combatives — the “Thug Fu” adherents whose members dismiss all but the most elementary of violent mechanics (on the grounds that the rest is needless complication and delusion) — are right in their thinking. They are right because they measure what they do — and what they scorn — against the ultimate arbiter of right and wrong: *reality*.

To these men and women, the word “art” is somehow dirty. They associate it with the impractical and the unworkable. There is much ridiculousness in the martial arts community — and therefore I cannot fault combatives exponents for making such an association.

My *Webster's* desk dictionary defines *art* first as “the ability of man to arrange or adapt natural things or conditions to his own uses.” Alternatively, it calls art “skilled workmanship.” These are both, to me, the *art* of the martial arts: *skill in adapting*.

That is why I view the terms “combatives” and “martial arts” as synonymous. I dismiss the unworkable as not “martial” at all. Anything that works — anything that can be “adapted to my own uses” — is viable as a martial application. As a result I try not to dismiss anything out of hand without critical analysis, the hallmark of the active mind.

I find myself, then, standing within two spheres of thought, two martial philosophies, that sometimes intersect and sometimes do not. I measure everything I do and everything in which I train against the yardstick of reality. I find value in some traditional arts — the infighting system of Wing Chun Kung Fu, the stick- and knife-fighting of Silat, Kali, and the Filipino Martial Arts in general, some of the basic kicking techniques of Karate — and I find none in others. I modify components of my training to suit me and my pragmatic, nontraditional goals.

I am speaking of myself because I can speak for no other person. I would expect anyone reading this who seeks success in self-defense to do the same.

My publication, *The Martialist* (www.themartialist.com), is written “for those who fight unfairly.” So, too, is *Shorthand Empty Hand*. A fair fight is no fight in which I want to find myself. I'll take every advantage I can get and employ every piece of knowledge and training I can glean. I'm a pragmatist. I won't look down on any tool or piece of training if I think it can help me. I'm also a realist. I won't accept any tool or piece of training if I find it ridiculous.

I often do find benefit in traditional methods and systems. At all times, however, I integrate what I learn with practical combatives and with a baleful eye on reality's harshest limits. *Shorthand Empty Hand* is an expedient guide to stylized fighting — a simplified program of unarmed combat that integrates, interprets, and alters elements from everything I have ever studied and researched. It's not a traditional martial art. It's not the Shanliang Li martial system (a system I co-founded with my teacher David W. Pearson). It's not a purely modern gross-motor combatives program. It's one method of fighting and of doing so with style. It represents how I approach self-defense when not constrained by the demands of one style or another.

Shorthand Empty Hand makes the power of the martial arts and the expediency of combatives accessible to everyone, of any skill level. It is *not* representative of any individual style that I've studied. My experiences are part of me, but *Shorthand Empty Hand* is not a means of teaching what I was taught. There are no shortcuts to martial prowess — but this is the shortest path with which I can provide you. That is the meaning of the word *shorthand* in the title. This is a system anyone can learn and apply. This is a system for the everyman and the anywoman, the average citizen and the mere mortal. This is a template for those with no experience — and a simplified review for those with an abundance of it.

As you read this, please don't attempt to hold anyone but *me* responsible for what you see. My former teachers have no control over what I've written here. They had no input as to the content of this book. I am not attempting to teach you anything they can or would teach you. I am not demonstrating for you what they have tried to teach me. Anything with which you *disagree* in this manual is *my* responsibility, my error, my mistake — and mine alone.

There will be those who disagree with the curriculum outlined in this book. There will be those who ridicule it, who attack me, and who read all manner of evils into this simple pile of bound paper. It saddens me that there are people who take me more seriously than I take myself. I won't deny that it always causes me sorrow when my willingness to tell you what I believe, to share my experiences, to dare to have my own opinions and seek my own way, causes friction with those whom I respect. Some disagree but remain silent. Others tell me honestly and respectfully what they think. Still others resent the temerity with which I presume to offer my thoughts in the field of self-defense.

In the course of my work in *The Martialist*, I've gained and lost friends. I've listened and I've spoken. I've been surprised and unmoved, pleased and angered, happy and sad, prolific and preoccupied. I have not, however, been anyone but *me*.

Effective fighting is a function of content, not origin. *Shorthand Empty Hand* is not traditional and it is not opposed to tradition. It is not ideological save in opposition to ideologies that are self-destructive. It

has only one goal: success in self-defense. It has only one audience: the average citizen.

We all share this goal: pragmatic preservation of our loved ones, ourselves, and that which we've earned through our efforts. That is why you are reading this book. That is the purpose of *Shorthand Empty Hand*.

— Phil Elmore, 2005

My Martial Biography

One can spend a lifetime studying and mastering a single art or system. Some use this maxim as justification for looking down on those who study more than one. However, it is only by studying and observing several arts that one discovers the many characteristics and principles of movement that even seemingly dissimilar arts have in common.

– *Indonesian Fighting Fundamentals:
The Brutal Arts of the Archipelago,*
by Bob Orlando

In the course of my decade and a half studying the martial arts, there came a time that I now realize was the *beginning* of a real understanding of the concept of martialism. I would like to say my realization came about because of my diligent, if haphazard, study in the martial arts, coupled with my voracious appetite for martial arts texts and philosophical commentaries. I would *like* to say that, but I would be wrong. No, the first hints of understanding came to me through the efforts of gifted teachers.

At one point in my life I was training simultaneously in a pair of martial arts. The first is the system I co-founded with David W. Pearson, Shanliang Li — an eclectic and personal style whose name translates to “Virtuous Strength.” The other was a traditional martial art. To the teachers of those two arts I owe a debt I probably never will repay. Their lessons changed my life.

The first vital lesson I learned was that of *fear*. My Shanliang Li teacher David, also my friend, scolded me harshly when I was hesitant to close and engage him in sometimes brutal, near- to full-contact sparring. I outweighed him by an honest one hundred pounds and was still hesitant. I *knew* his strikes would shatter my defenses. I *knew* he would be everywhere at once.

“Stop,” he finally commanded, exasperated. “Stop being *afraid*. You’re not afraid of *me*. You’re afraid of *yourself*.” He pantomimed nailing one of my feet to the ground. “Now. You *will* stand your ground. You can rotate on that foot. You can kick with the other foot. But you are *not* to back up. *Do*

not give ground to me.” That was the beginning. That was when I learned to conquer, however briefly, the fear of myself — and with it, the fear of others.

My traditional martial art instructor, who emphasized in each class the vitally important principles of his system, taught me the second lesson — one I choose to term “space domination” and which others have called “forward drive” or “seizing the initiative.” We were taught that when an opponent closes to within kicking distance, he has crossed the boundary of safe personal space and must be *attacked*. “Do not wait,” my instructor told us many times. “If he’s too close, *get him.*”

I relate these two lessons because they are the core of successful self-defense. To cope with fear and to take the initiative are the heart of confidence and the soul of martialism. Applied properly, they make physical self-defense *possible*.

I had been training in a traditional art for perhaps half a year and in Shanliang Li for maybe three times that when a coworker — an unpleasant woman who had never really treated me with respect — began acting skittish around me. She finally commented, to the agreement of a couple of other office personnel, that I had become “much more aggressive.” I gathered that she did not find this development comforting. I was confused by her observation.

I spoke with another coworker whose cubicle was located next to mine, someone whose company I truly enjoyed. “Do I seem different at all to you?” I asked, mystified. “Is my personality different?”

“You’ve definitely become much more assertive in the year that I’ve known you,” she told me. “You don’t stand for things that you would have tolerated before. You make the people who used to treat you badly nervous. Haven’t you noticed they don’t treat you like they used to? It’s because they know they can’t get away with it.”

That is the power that competence in physical self-defense can give you. Being capable of fighting back when someone raises a hand to you — or places hands *on* you — is not about being a bad ass or a tough guy. It is about preserving your sovereignty as a human being. It is about being *inviolable* in a world whose countless predators seek to violate you. It is

about self-preservation, not self-absorption. It is about good and evil, not glory and ego.

I have been a student of the martial arts since 1990. I am passionate about self-defense and a firm believer in preemptive force. I believe all human beings should have the means to defend themselves against society's predators. I am also an avid student of all forms of weaponry, from knives, sticks, swords, and more exotic martial implements to modern firearms.

My interest in self-defense and my pursuit of martial skill started when I was a freshman at Alfred University (though I do remember reading some karate books in the library of my high school when I was in the 9th grade — it's safe to say I was at least curious back then). I used to DJ a radio show with a friend of mine on W.A.L.F, 89.7 FM, in Alfred. During one show, my friend invited a guest who spent her time off-microphone playing with a butterfly knife. At the time I thought this was unusual, so I related the story to a classmate the next day as we waited for the professor to arrive. Another student a couple of chairs behind me, overhearing us, produced *his* butterfly knife.

I remember thinking that I was walking unarmed amidst a couple of thousand people who all seemed to be “strapped.” Not much longer after that, my neighbor (the fellow who occupied the room next door to mine in our dorm) showed up with a small Cold Steel tanto he'd purchased during a weekend in New York City (where he lived). I obtained from him a Cold Steel catalog and started planning.

My fascination concerning — and interaction with — knives developed thereafter, as I amassed a collection of self-defense blades of my own. During college I found myself confronted by a heavily armed occult group, from whose members I learned a thing or two (mostly what *not* to do with knives and machetes — it's a very long, very complicated story). It was meeting the leader of this group in 1992 that really spurred my interest in the martial arts, pushing me to enroll in the Alfred Martial Arts Association.

Thus it was that I started my “formal” studies in Chidokwan Karate in college. I was fortunate to get into the slot as a physical education requirement, for those not yet seniors seldom rated the coveted classes. This was the first truly physical activity I'd ever pursued in my life, having

been a dismal “athlete” in high school. I warmed to it quickly and soon became quite obsessed with Karate.

Shortly thereafter I discovered my short attention span when it comes to various systems. The more time I spent with Karate, the more disillusioned I became with its techniques. Dissatisfied, I left in my senior year. To this day, the only rank I earned in Chidokwan was a yellow belt.

After graduating college, I dabbled. I did a lot of research on the martial arts, amassing an impressive library of source books and instructional materials. I dabbled in and spent some time moderately fascinated by several different styles. I did a lot of work on my own. While I learned a lot during these explorations, I was still not satisfied.

In 2001 I began formal training in the Shanliang Li martial system, an eclectic style that is a mixture of contemporary combatives and more traditional martial arts. Its creator is David W. Pearson. We disagree on certain things, but while my personal philosophy is at times at odds with his own and with the philosophy of the art, we are committed to creating the best system possible.

Shanliang Li came about as a result of informal training sessions with David. We had been friends literally for years before the topic of the martial arts came up. When I realized that he, too, was interested in self-defense, I asked him if he’d want to get together to spar and practice. I hadn’t had a training partner in quite some time. I also thought I knew what I was doing. I remember thinking I’d have to go easy on poor Dave and wondered what his reaction would be when I showed him “a thing or two.”

Dave quite spectacularly handed my ass to me in our first sparring match. At one point (he described this to me after the fact) he had knocked me down and was waiting for me to counterattack — and kept waiting, stunned that I hadn’t yet done anything, as I rolled over on the muddy ground and looked up at him.

We got together a few times in rapid succession after that. Each time, I tried a different approach. Each time, Dave easily bested me. If nothing else, my short-attention-span-theater strategy was at least mildly confusing. He told me it was like fighting a different person each time.

Finally, there came a morning when he defeated me several times in a row, then went on to do the same as we sparred with rubber knives. At some point, something in me cracked. I threw my rubber knife into the dirt. “Okay, that’s enough,” I told David. “Enough fucking around. Let’s stop wasting time. Show me to do what *you* do.”

That was the beginning of our acknowledged teacher-student arrangement. It wasn’t long after that, as we picked up the equipment and dragged it back to his place (we used to practice on the lawn outside his apartment), that the idea hit me. “You know, Dave,” I told him, “you have a real gift. You should found your style. Formally, I mean. It would be a shame not to share what you know with others.”

David agreed, but would only found the style with my help. I was not qualified to found a fighting style on my own, but I did bring to the table my background as a sometime journalist and longtime martial student. As a result I found myself co-founder of the style, one on which Dave and I work to this day. As of this writing [in 2005] I hold a brown sash in Shanliang Li. I started at white, worked my way through yellow and green, and am working to earn my black sash (which represents competence in the system as a whole).

(Note for the 2010 Second Edition: While we had grand plans to bring Shanliang Li to the public, David changed careers and his new profession took him far from home a great deal of the time. To this day a Shanliang Li plaque adorns my wall, and perhaps someday, we will revisit it. Until that time, it remains a major step in my own martial arts journey, and David remains one of my most influential former teachers.)

In early 2002 I began studying Wing Chun Kung Fu. It was an excellent infighting system for which I have a great deal of respect to this day. In late 2004 I left that kwoon (at an arbitrary level three of ten rank levels) and began training full-time in a predominantly Indonesian system called Liu Seong Gung Fu (in which I had been cross-training while studying Wing Chun). I also studied Jeet Kune Do. I was surprised to find that my foundation in the martial arts was firm enough at that point that I could begin to absorb news systems relatively quickly. As I continued to train, my depth of understanding continued to grow, which pleased me a great deal.

In 2005 I codified the *Shorthand Empty Hand* curriculum. I wanted a simple program anyone could learn and apply — but I did not want to create simply another combatives guide. I wanted to impart the beauty and the style of what I've come to appreciate in the martial arts world. Thus, I chose to outline this program of *expedient stylized fighting*.

(Note for the 2010 Second Edition: Nobody was more surprised than me when, in 2009, I earned my black belt in Liu Seong Gung Fu. After 20 years studying the martial arts, I had finally earned a rank of some significance. It was a curious feeling to have rank, finally, after never caring about it before. This, too, was a learning experience.)

I have been extremely lucky to find gifted teachers over the years who were willing to share their knowledge with me. I have since charted my own course and pursued my own interests. This book is an attempt on my part to share an integrated, streamlined, altered, and redefined interpretation of my martial arts journey. It is biased heavily towards what I prefer and what I find most useful; it is thus an expression of my opinion on the concept of fighting for the average citizen.

It is my hope that you will find *Shorthand Empty Hand* useful for physical self-defense. Self-defense is your inalienable right as a human being. Mastery of the skills necessary for it is a treasure beyond price, second only to love in value. This book does *not* offer you mastery — no printed matter could — but it's a step forward. As the old saying goes, the journey of a thousand miles begins with that single step towards your goals.

I'll Make an Exception: Guidelines for Challenging Me to Fight

[Dear instructor of Phil Elmore], I have heard of your associate Phil Elmore through [an Internet discussion forum] and would like to challenge him to a sparring match under standard MMA rules (knockout or submission). I live near the Syracuse area and would like to see how confident in his fighting abilities he actually is. My background includes extensive TKD and Brazilian Jiu-jitsu, along with some Aikido. Although I realize he doesn't like to fight fair, I kindly ask he does not bring any weaponry to the match. Many thanks for your time.

– guillotine.choke@[withheld].com

[In 1860], after a bitter debate on slavery, [John Potter(R-Wis.)] accepted a challenge to duel the arrogant and hot-tempered Rep. Roger A. Pryor (D-S.C.). As the one accepting the challenge, Potter had his choice of weapons and conditions. He shunned the Southern gentry's favored pistols at 10 paces for large-bladed Bowie knives at four paces in an enclosed room.

Pryor called such terms “vulgar, barbarous and inhumane,” but Potter didn't budge. The duel, reported widely in the Washington press, was delayed and eventually called off. Potter and his knife became symbols of stern resistance to Southern intimidation.

– John Kornacki

Years ago, an infamous author of various ninja manuals set the bar for challenge matches at \$10,000 USD. As I understand it, if you really wish to fight the ninja master, you must first pony up the cash and then provide various other assurances and considerations. Only after meeting these conditions will the master grant you the privilege of attempting to kick his ass for him.

I'm not famous as is that fellow, so I'll back off that amount just a bit. Anyone wishing to challenge me to a fight — in order to prove to themselves or to someone else whatever it is such people hope to prove by

issuing such challenges — must first send me cash or an equivalent money order or bank draft in the amount of \$9,999.⁰⁰ USD. This fee is *nonrefundable* and must be made *prior* to any and all negotiations for the match.

Once the fee has been accepted, I (as the challenged party) set any and all conditions. I may bring whatever weapons I wish. I may drive my car and use it as a weapon, if it suits me to do so. I may place on the opponent any restrictions I choose. *The Martialist* is devoted to *fighting unfairly* and, as such, I will not grant a *fair* fight.

My usual policy on challenge matches is that I don't fight challenge matches. I don't share the view that when two people disagree, the way to settle that argument is for them to fight. That's the reasoning of bullies and children. It is not how *adults* — how *men and women*, rather than boys and girls — settle their differences.

I also consider it beneath me to brawl or duel someone who wants to hurt me simply because we did not agree on something. I have nothing to prove to you. If you don't like my opinion, either argue your case persuasively or shut up. If you must challenge me to fight, send your money now. All funds for challenge matches may be sent to the address for *The Martialist* found at the end of this book. Don't be surprised if my conditions include requiring you to fight under six feet of water while I circle you in a boat taking shots at you with a 12-gauge.

Unlike a lot of people, I live in the real world. If I have to fight someone, it's because they mean me serious harm. I'm not going to treat it lightly and I'm going to do my best to make sure I walk away unhurt — or as unhurt as I can manage.

There's a school of thought — the old-school Kung Fu philosophy — that if someone challenges you, you have to put up or shut up. It was following this philosophy that martial arts schools used to police themselves, for challengers from an opposing school would show up and shut the place down if the instructor(s) they were challenging couldn't field effective fighters in their kwoons.

Then there's contemporary society, in which people can be sued or arrested if they act on machismo like this. If I ran a school and some joker

showed up at my door challenging me to a fight, I'd draw down on him and tell him to get lost. I don't train for self-defense in order to indulge the fantasies, the insecurities, or the hostilities of people who simply resent that I express my opinions. I train to protect my family and myself from those societal predators who seek to do us harm. *They* are my enemies — not those within the self-defense community who should know better.

Challenge matches among martial artists are a stupid waste of time. They prove nothing except who's got the bigger testicles and, frankly, my testicles are none of your business. In the real world, if you go looking for trouble, you're likely to get shot by a tattooed crank addict whose rap sheet is longer than your arm. That's the world in which I operate — a world that has no time for Kung Fu fantasies and athletes' posturing.

So, yes, if you must challenge me to fight, send your cash now and quietly await my conditions. I promise you they will be so grossly unfair that there is no way I can lose. I guarantee that you will have spent \$9,999.⁰⁰ USD for the privilege of engaging in a terribly unfair exercise tailor-made to leave you humiliated. I warrant that in the future you'll think twice before wasting anyone else's time with that nonsense. Michael Buffer won't return my calls, but maybe you'll have better luck.

You see, life is not a Kung Fu movie. It is not a game. It is not a reality show. It is not a Pay-Per-View airing of the Ultimate Fighting Championship™. The average citizen has responsibilities and a life to live. He doesn't spend six hours a day, every day, training. He can't afford to slug it out with some disgruntled mixed martial arts athlete because he can't risk getting punched so hard he goes *blind*. He can't take the chance he'll contract a blood-borne illness while he and his challenger bash their fists into each other, leaking from cuts to their faces and knuckles. He's not interested in indulging someone else's ego. He's a grownup living and operating in a grown-up world and he can't show up to work at the office on Monday with two black eyes and a nose wrapped in bandages.

Shorthand Empty Hand is a system for you, for your neighbor, and for the countless other *average citizens* who lead normal, balanced lives. Chances are you don't consider yourself, first and foremost, a *fighter* — for that is not how you define your life. All of us, however, may find ourselves in situations *where we must fight*. That is the difference — and that is the purpose of *Shorthand Empty Hand*.

This was the question: “Is there anything more irritating than person who has dabbled for a year or so in this art, a year or two in another and who then thinks himself an all-around competent martial artist?” It was posed conversationally by one of my seniors at the dojo, to another budoka, also far my senior.

“Yes,” the second replied, “there is. It is the fellow who has trained several years in one art, who then thinks of himself as an all-around competent martial artist.”

*– Traditions: Essays on the Japanese
Martial Arts and Ways,
by Dave Lowry*

The Principles of Shorthand Empty Hand

My way of martial arts is to have beginners learn and practice those of the techniques that are easily mastered, first teaching them the principles that they will readily understand.

– Miyamoto Musashi

“Most systems taught today could not meet even basic combat training needs,” wrote Richard Loewenhagen in *Mastering Kung Fu*, “because they are more artistic expressions than scientific achievements of maximum efficiencies in a life-and-death reality. The real danger in this type of training is that it leads to the illusion of competence.”

The *illusion of competence* is what we seek to *avoid* in the pragmatic, expedient forms of *Shorthand Empty Hand*. Every functional martial art is based on *principles* rather than on the memorization of rote techniques. What this means is that the practitioner — rather than memorizing a complicated decision tree of fixed responses to predicted attacks — *applies* the principles of his or her martial art to a given situation. He responds as appropriate using the tools learned (the actual fighting techniques) in a dynamic, not rote, fashion.

A good example would be the principle of *forward drive* or *space domination*. This principle of *Shorthand Empty Hand* is shared by many arts and systems. The principle states that when attacked, you should not move backwards or retreat. Instead, you should move *forward*, seizing the initiative and overwhelming your opponent. Any steps back should be followed by *more* steps forward (such as when moving off the attacking line in order to attack from and move in on the opponent’s blind side).

The eight principles of *Shorthand Empty Hand* are not original. I did not invent them. They are an amalgam of the best principles from the various styles and systems I have studied and researched. Applying these principles will help you succeed in unarmed self-defense *only* if you have the will to survive and to act decisively. If you have no *will*, no *drive*, you will lose no matter how accomplished is your technique.

The Eight Principles of Shorthand Empty Hand

- Stay aware.
 - Focus on nothing and everything.
 - Keep your hands up.
 - Maintain space.
 - Move forward.
 - Lead with the hands and the feet will follow.
 - Palm Heel, Edge of Hand, Fist
 - Face, Neck, Groin, Knees, Ankles
-

Stay aware. *Awareness* is the most important component of self-defense. Only when you know what is going on around you can you possibly hope to deal with it. Only when you are capable of perceiving subtle (and sometimes obvious) cues in your environment will you have any hope of avoiding potential trouble before it becomes physical force directed against you. When you are out and about, you must make an effort to maintain a reasonable level of alertness.

This does not mean you must spend your days in a flop-sweating, trembling state of jittery paranoia. Rather, it means that when you are not someplace you can deem *relatively* secure — your home with your doors locked, for example — you must be prepared to meet physical force should you have reason to believe it is being offered.

When I am in public — at a movie, in an amusement park, walking from my car into a store and back again, walking from my office or my home into the parking lot and back, traveling on the highway, whatever — I do so in a relaxed but alert state, monitoring what is around me and assessing the behavior of those within range of me. If anything strikes me as unusual or potentially threatening, I pay closer attention to it, my awareness ratcheting up from baseline “aware” to “interested.” If my interest reveals the potential for danger, I move to “on guard” — at which point I would start using body mechanics to establish and maintain my personal space in preparation for self-defense. We’ll discuss this at greater length in the *Postures and Methods* chapter.

When I am home relaxing, I lock my doors. I take off the considerable load of equipment I carry daily, from knives and flashlights to keyrings, firearms,

and other implements. I allow myself to feel *safe*. This does not mean, however, that I become *complacent*. I've made that mistake before and always regretted it. Just because you are home does not mean you can simply suspend your judgment, refuse to check out odd noises or other strange occurrences, or otherwise act like the world outside cannot affect you. I keep weapons and tools close to hand at home even if they are not on me. When I answer the door, I do so on guard. When I leave, I secure the place as best I can to prevent a break-in.

Once, not long after my wife and I were married, we lived in an apartment complex in one of those neighborhoods that is largely decent but slowly decaying around the edges. Late one weekend night, while I was asleep in the bedroom and my wife was still awake in the living room, an angry black man started pounding on the door. It wasn't someone we knew; I think it likely that he was drunk or high (or simply enraged) and didn't realize he had the wrong apartment.

My lovely wife went to the door, looked through the peephole, and then went back to what she was doing. She didn't try to answer the door, didn't engage the intruder, and didn't deem it necessary to disturb me as long as he was only knocking. He went away as abruptly as he'd arrived and we never saw him again. My wife told me what happened the next morning and we agreed that she'd handled the situation exactly as she should have handled it.

The would-be tough guy in me was a little disappointed that she hadn't come to get me, but that's just my manly pride talking. She was aware, she behaved prudently, and we both remained safe at home. Quite possibly, had I been awake, I might not have had the presence of mind to behave as practically as did my wife; I might have tried to confront this character. Her way was the *correct* way to handle the situation. My wife is a lot smarter than I'll ever be and has taught me much about living life with dignity, poise, and grace.

Practice being aware. When you're in a restaurant waiting for your food, or waiting in line at the bank, ask yourself if you could describe the scene to a police officer. How aware are you of the people around you — what they look like, what they're wearing, and how they're behaving? When you're driving, ask yourself if you know the color of the car immediately behind you. Do you have any idea if there's even someone back there, possibly

tailgating you? Is it a cop car? Awareness on the road will help you avoid accidents *and* tickets. When you're home, maybe lying in bed just before you go to sleep, ask yourself what you hear. Are there any sounds and, if so, what do they signify? Does anything sound unusual? Can you hear people or other activity outside your window or in adjoining rooms or structures? Once you strive to *be aware of being aware*, it will become second nature. You will be better off knowing what's going on around you.

Focus on nothing and everything. Much debate has taken place in the martial arts world regarding what or where to watch in a physical altercation. When you face someone whom you must fight, for whatever reason, do you watch their eyes? Do you watch their hands? Do you focus on the *dan tien*, the body's center? Do you watch the leading elbow, the shoulder, the hips? On what should you focus?

The answer, much as it might sound like a convenient dodge, is all of these and none of them. When you face off with someone, blur or unfocus your vision slightly. Do not stare at any given part of the opponent's body. Instead, take in the whole body as a single entity, seeing everything and nothing at once. This slightly blurred holistic vision not only helps you perceive movement in the other person, but makes it easier for you to dehumanize him — to see him as an opponent rather than a person, which in turn makes it easier for you to deliver physical force if you must.

Believe it or not, many people have a hard time hitting and otherwise hurting another human being — even if that human being has no such qualms. Decent, rational people simply don't go around injuring others. This is why dehumanizing your opponent will help you to defend yourself.

For that matter, many people are easily “psyched out” when staring a hostile person in the face (and especially in the eyes). By refusing to focus on the opponent but remaining visually aware of his entire body (so you can pick up movement cues within the range of your vision), you will see him without really *seeing* him. Your countenance will, in turn, have a better chance of unsettling *him*. Don't count on that, of course; if he attacked you in the first place he's probably less afraid of you than you are of him.

Readers of *The Martialist* have often teased me about the expression on my face in many of my pictures. I frequently have one eyebrow arched and am staring past the camera when my picture is taken. Many pictures of me show me looking over the top of my glasses, too. While my “eyebrow thing”

is attributable in part to my childhood hero-worship of *Star Trek's* Mr. Spock, it is also the result of my myopia. My eyes are nearsighted and unevenly so, which means one eye always works harder than the other when I stare intently. Staring over the top of my glasses helps me to blur my vision in taking in an opponent's entire form; it also brings my chin down, protecting my throat. In the process, one of my eyebrows invariably goes up as my eyes struggle to see the same unfocused picture.

Keep your hands up. I was taught that a potential threat must not be allowed to close within striking distance of you. You must attack the opponent *preemptively* when he enters this range. When approached by someone whom you do not trust, we were taught, you must put up your hands and maintain a safe distance.

I once described in *The Martialist* an incident in which a panhandler accosted me and I reacted to his intrusion. As the stinking, disheveled man approached, my first thought was that I must, at any cost, keep him *outside* that critical striking distance — or else I would *have* to strike him, as I did not want him approaching me. The only alternative was to let him get as close as he wanted to get, which is an unacceptable security risk when dealing with unpredictable, frequently diseased street people.

Some of the armchair experts across the Internet accused me of overreacting, of “dropping into a Kung Fu stance” to deal with a relatively benign situation. In so doing, these critics betrayed their ignorance — because *the basic hand positioning to maintain personal space is universal.*

I've seen the stance referred to as an “I don't want any trouble” position, a “fence,” and a “de-escalation stance.” Whatever the terminology, the basic concept is the same. When you are approached by someone who represents a potential threat to your person — be he a panhandler, a drunken barfly, or an incongruously aggressive stranger demanding the time — you must keep that person outside striking distance to avoid making yourself a potential victim.

The basic *Shorthand Empty Hand* position is a bladed (angled) posture in which the hands are up, staggered, palms open. This will look similar to many kinds of conventional guards and stances. If you wish, you can adopt the *Shorthand Empty Hand* supplementary guard, bringing one arm closer to your face. This is more like a fighting stance and less like a “fence”

position; it also looks more aggressive. The advantage it provides is closer, tighter protection for the face. The arms create distance and provide a protective barrier for your body (and, more specifically, your centerline). The body language is clear: *Do not come any closer*. The open palms are less aggressive than would be closed fists. Open-hand blows can be delivered easily from this stance, too.



***Basic Shorthand Empty Hand Position (Left)
and Supplementary Guard (Right)***

From the basic hands-up, palms-open, bladed posture, you have the option to deliver physical strikes if you must defend yourself. You also may choose to transition to a weapon (thus escalating the force used in the scenario). The most common justification for making this transition would probably be facing multiple opponents, in which case a “force multiplier” could be seen as a rational necessity on your part as the defender. (I’m not a lawyer, so don’t take this as legal advice. It’s safe to say that if you use a weapon in a violent altercation, you’re going to have to answer for your actions in court.)

It doesn’t matter with which side you lead, at least to me. This is a matter of personal preference and will depend largely on the types of strikes you like to do from the hands-up position.

There's one more basic guard position in *Shorthand Empty Hand* — the Timepiece. A Timepiece is single-hand guard for use when your other hand is occupied. It's a modified wing-like posture that looks like you're checking your watch. It's perfect for doing so safely.

You see, if you're obviously wearing a watch, you have two choices when asked for the time. You can be rude and refuse to give it, or you can comply with the request. The problem is that when approached on the street by a stranger, there is a chance — not a great one, but a real one nonetheless — that someone who asks you for the time is trying to distract you in order to assault you. Think about it: when you look at your watch, you typically look down at your arm, making you an easy target.



Shorthand Empty Hand “Timepiece” Guard

If someone you don't know comes up to you and asks you for the time, you can easily minimize your risk. Step back casually, away from the stranger, preferably blading your body as you do so. Raise your arm rather than lowering your head, keeping that arm well away from your body and between you and the other person. In this way you can read the time while keeping your guard up.

The point of the *Shorthand Empty Hand* stances — and of any hands-up stance — is to place your arms between you and a potential threat. This creates a physical barrier while asserting personal space boundaries.

Maintain space. Your personal space is the range at which someone can touch you or reach you with a physical attack (a punch, a kick, etc.). Maintaining that personal space — guarding it against intrusion — helps prevent such attacks from succeeding. It establishes a barrier, a physical boundary, between you and the opponent. Whenever possible, do not allow people whom you do not know or do not trust to intrude on your personal space.

As we've discussed, keeping your hands up helps you maintain your personal space. Since I started advocating this method for dealing with being accosted, I've seen three major criticisms of hands-up ready stances and their use in space maintenance. These criticisms raise issues worth addressing. I will list each of the three criticisms and then refute them in turn.

"Hands-up stances are too hostile." Many critics see placing your hands up in front of your body to be very aggressive — body language that can escalate an altercation because it appears threatening. While it's true that assuming a double Wu Sao or flaring your fingers in tiger claws might look like the prelude to a duel, the appropriate posture for maintaining space in *Shorthand Empty Hand* is much less hostile. With the hands up, palms out, combined with appropriate verbalization ("Whoa, there, friend, nobody wants any trouble, let's not crowd each other...") the combative nature of the stance is mitigated.

Of course, any time you put your hands up, you are *being* combative to a point. You're asserting your personal space and you're demanding that this be respected. Getting your hands up will always be more aggressive than passively allowing someone to encroach on your space. Yes, when you do this you run the risk of escalating an encounter, but that is the risk you run whenever you resist the will, the demands, or the approach of another person. That is what we train to do — to *resist* the use of force or the threat of force *against us*.

There will be those critics who say you should be ready to defend yourself from any position and with appropriate maneuvering of your body. Well, *of*

course you should do this. Given the luxury of preparing for a potential threat you have identified, however, why would you not get your hands up? If action beats reaction, the man in a hands-up ready stance will always have a slight edge over the man whose arms hang by his sides. Given the option, getting your hands up provides a better shield than does waiting to put those hands up after an attack is initiated. Hands-up stances also provide an important visual cue for maintaining personal space — a cue that just isn't as forceful when trying to maintain space with your hands down or through body movement alone.

“Hands-up stances constrict your focus.” Some critics complain that a hands-up stance inappropriately focuses you on one person, prompting you to ignore or neglect potential threats from elsewhere in your environment. While this is always a possibility if one is not mentally aware, it need not be a byproduct of such a stance. You don't need to turn off your brain or stop scanning the area with your peripheral vision simply because your arms are raised.

Even when dealing with a multiple attacker scenario, the greatest threat is presented by the person *closest* to you. *Of course* you should focus on that person, at least initially. Just how many ninja are hiding in the neighboring shrubbery is not your *foremost* concern. You *must* deal with the more immediate threat.

Let's be clear about this, however. We're not talking about focusing on the immediate threat *to exclusion*. You must remain aware at all times, even when dealing with someone physically. (That's one of the reasons you must deal with a physical attack quickly and ruthlessly — because the person attacking you might not be alone.)

“Hands-up stances are vulnerable to grabs and breaks.” This is the complaint that always kind of irritates me because it speaks to mild ignorance on the part of the critics. I don't mean, though, that they must be “ignorant” if they worry about having a finger broken or a hand grabbed, because these are valid concerns. Rather, they're ignorant of the way such hands-up stances are used.

Hands-up stances are *dynamic*, not static. If you're standing there like a potted plant with your arms extended and unmoving, you deserve to have your fingers broken. The whole point of placing your arms in front of your

body is to facilitate action and reaction. The second your would-be attacker gets close enough to grab you, you should be *doing* something. If he reaches for your hand or arm, that hand or arm should be moving, countering, hitting, or whatever you're inclined to do. It shouldn't be just hanging there.



Transitioning from Hands-Up to Action

Move forward. One of the first things my teacher Dave taught me was, “Stop being afraid of yourself.” His intent was to train out of me the hesitance that characterized much of my early training. I still remember the first time we engaged in the exercise, working outside one sunny spring day. Dave told me to imagine that one of my feet was nailed to the ground. He was going to attack me. I was to defend myself, to counter-attack, without giving ground. I could move around the pivot point of my foot if necessary, but I was not to let him force me back.

It was a daunting prospect at first. Dave is much smaller than me but possessed so much more skill that sparring him was very intimidating. Over time, though, it became much easier. I reached the point where I actually preferred sparring Dave, because I knew that I would learn something each time.

Interestingly enough, roughly one year after Dave became my instructor, different coworkers of mine told me, at different times, that I was “more

assertive” and even “more aggressive.” They said at the time that the change was apparent “in the last year or so.”

Coincidentally, both of my teachers at the time commented on the physical expression of this change. While working one-on-one with each of them, I repeatedly, subconsciously, and slowly backed each one of them across the room. The process was quite gradual. We would be training and suddenly discover that we were once again too close to the wall. Both teachers had to prompt me to back up more than once to give them more room.

Dave found this almost amusing and told me that it made him proud. To back up your opponent, to dominate the room in a way that gives you more space in which to operate while denying this to others, is an extremely useful tendency to cultivate. I would like to think this habit is a natural outgrowth of becoming more confident in one's skills as a martialist, but it is entirely possible that it requires conscious thought to develop.

When you spar and when you train (where applicable and prudent), push yourself. Resist the temptation to give ground. You may have to back up at times to take advantage of your footwork, but when you do, follow up by driving forward to keep the initiative.

Gaining and keeping the initiative is necessary to overwhelm the opponent. You never want to play his game; you never want to be on the defensive. “Attack the attacker,” as the saying goes. When you must defend yourself, *drive forward*.

Lead with the hands and the feet will follow. *Shorthand Empty Hand*, as a system, focuses primarily on the hands. The feet are used for mobility and for low-level kicking, but footwork is kept intuitive and kicks are deemphasized in favor of hand techniques. This is because in the stress of a real-life encounter, I would rather you had your feet solidly planted than moving all over the landscape or firing off kicks. Use your hands and your feet will naturally follow, taking you where you need to go as you press your attack forward. It's as simple as this and we'll complicate it no further.

Palm Heel, Edge of Hand, Fist. These are the primary weapons of *Shorthand Empty Hand* and the natural weapons of the hands. The palm heel and edge of hand are open-hand structures, the use of which lessens

the danger of damaging the hands. The fist is the most commonly used of all natural offensive weapons and, properly conditioned, allows the user to hit with great penetrating power.

Face, Neck, Groin, Knees, Ankles. These are the primary targets of *Shorthand Empty Hand*. The face, the neck, the groin, the knees, and the ankles of every human being are equally vulnerable. No amount of conditioning, no amount of muscular development, and no amount of sheer size will lessen the effect of a strike to the eyes, the throat, the genitals, or the vulnerable knee and ankle joints. *Shorthand Empty Hand* practitioners seek to strike these as *targets of opportunity* — meaning that when they are presented (and not before), they are struck.

Postures and Methods for Maintaining Space

A lesson frequently learned early in a martial artist's training is that those who are destined to win do so first by studying and then fighting. Those who are destined to lose tend to fight first and then study why they lost. Although no one can accurately predict the outcome of every battle and prepare specifically for it, you can certainly stack the deck in your favor.

– Gabe Suarez

In life, especially if your social interactions are healthy, you will find yourself in venues you cannot control. There will be times when you have no choice but to permit others to violate your personal space because the quarters are too close. If you've ever stood with others in a crowded restaurant or bar, waited in line at an amusement park, walked the congested streets of a major city, used public transportation, or even attended church, you have permitted others to get within striking distance of you. These situations are unavoidable. It is neither practical nor possible to lead a normal life while keeping every other human being beyond arms' reach.

When you must allow people into your personal space, your only choice is to remain aware of them and what they are doing. Stay alert but calm, absorbing what is going on in your proximity. If you detect something inappropriate, act on it. Until then, be content simply to watch or even feel those crowding you. There will be times when you are so crowded that you won't be able to look around easily; at those times your sense of touch (as others press against your arms and shoulders, for example) is your only indication of what is happening around you.

In self-defense scenarios, there will be those times when you cannot preserve your personal space. A sudden attack in which your opponent is abruptly on top of you is one such case. A seemingly innocent social interaction in which an individual surprises you through deception is another. You must be capable of fighting and of seizing the initiative even when taken by surprise. You will never be able to predict every conceivable situation in which something surprising could occur.

In those cases in which you do perceive a potential threat approaching and have both time and space in which to deal with that threat, you can employ the hands-up methodology. Keeping your hands up in the course of a physical altercation helps protect your vulnerable head and neck. Getting those hands up ahead of time provides that protection preemptively while helping to establish your personal space (and sending a strong nonverbal message to that effect).

When approached by someone whom you do not trust, raise your hands with your body slightly angled, your hands open, and your palms out. Combine this with assertive, non-threatening verbalization — something to the effect of, “Hey, that’s far enough, don’t approach me, don’t crowd me.”



Basic Hands-Up Stance

Combine your verbalization with movement. Step back if you must and if you have the room in which to do so; don’t stay rooted to one spot. If the person by whom you feel threatened continues to advance, become more

forceful. Warn them verbally: “Do NOT approach me. I do NOT want you coming any closer to me. That is FAR ENOUGH.” If the individual continues to advance on you despite these commands, he is aggressing; it is okay for you to adopt a more aggressive demeanor in response.



Forcefully Warning Attacker While Preparing for Attack

You may or may not have time for all of these verbalizations, of course, because you may not have enough room to maintain distance between you and the attacker and he may be advancing quickly. When the individual approaches to within striking distance — the distance at which they can kick or punch you — you are out of time and you must preempt the attack. Be warned that **YOU MAY ONLY DO THIS IF YOU ARE IN GENUINE AND CREDIBLE FEAR FOR YOUR LIFE**. You cannot simply start hitting people preemptively in the absence of the credible threat of serious harm.

The courts will use a “reasonable man” standard in evaluating your actions. A judge or jury will ask the question, “Would a reasonable observer share your opinion that an attack is imminent and you should be in fear for your

life?” If those around you would not similarly judge the attacker’s actions to be threatening (and sufficiently threatening to endanger you — you cannot go around hitting people who aren’t big enough or strong enough or armed well enough actually to hurt you) then preempting the attack is not justified. You will be arrested and convicted of assault if you make such a mistake. Always judge your actions by the standards of a reasonable, impartial observer. Make your choices carefully, for *you will pay for them if you are in error.*

Generally, you are only legally justified in using *parity of force*. This means you can only use that amount of force necessary to stop the attack. You are not justified even to do *this* if the courts judge you could have avoided the attack altogether — meaning that if you can simply leave and avoid a fight, you are obligated to do so. You cannot grind your attacker into paste after he’s already neutralized; you cannot stomp him while he’s down; you cannot take revenge on him for daring to attack you. You may only *stop him from hurting you and then escape.*

From the hands-up stance, as your attacker (who has made his intentions clear through words and body language) moves into range, you strike him and overwhelm him using several of the offensive techniques included in this manual. Remember — “attack, attack, attack,” as long as he is still aggressing. Once he has faltered or even fallen, *get out of there.* Find a phone and call the police to report what has happened.

You might choose simply to go your own way on the theory that if the cops don’t know what you’ve done, you can’t be sued by anyone



after the fact. It's true that in our crazy legal system, people are often sued wrongly by those who've tried to hurt them and were injured in the process of failing to do so. However, if you are content simply to let a societal predator go his own way after vanquishing him, you reduce the chances that he'll end up in the system and then in prison. Reporting the crime gives the police a chance to link the suspect to previous crimes and put him away for them. (It's a fact that most societal predators are recidivists — repeat offenders for whom violence and crime are a lifestyle.) Weigh your decisions carefully and do the right thing.

Remember that your hands-up stance is not a frozen posture. It's a dynamic means of maintaining your boundaries. When someone reaches for your limbs, move them — and react accordingly.



Reacting to a Grab

For example, when someone grabs and pulls you, roll with it — literally. Roll your arm over and feed an elbow into the bastard. He wanted your arm; now he's got it.

When anyone goes for your hands or fingers, use evasive handwork. Turn your hands in tight circles around the intruding limbs. As a grab comes in, you rotate your hand around that grab and slip in to slap the attacker. It sounds easy and it's harder in practice, so get practicing.



Evasive Handwork

Now that we've covered the principles of *Shorthand Empty Hand*, we're ready to discuss the techniques with which we may apply those principles. Remember to consult your physician before engaging in any new physical activity or program. Never use *Shorthand Empty Hand* on an unwilling training partner.

Offensive and Defensive Techniques

Attack, attack, attack — come at your target from every possible direction and press until his defenses overload. Never give him time to recover his balance: never give him time to counter.

– *Heroes Die*, Matthew Woodring Stover

The offensive techniques of *Shorthand Empty Hand* are easy to learn and easy to employ. The basic methods are listed here in no particular order of preference. Any could be used, as appropriate, to strike another human being. The key is to learn to flow from technique to technique, following what is natural and striking the targets offered. Never use a single technique unless your opponent immediately drops flat and goes comatose. Overwhelm the opponent with a combination of techniques until he is neutralized and you can escape.

Remember that as you deliver a hand technique, your hands must remain up to protect your head and neck and to dominate space. When you use one of your hands to strike, keep the other hand up in front of the body. You may keep it at the level of your striking hand elbow or you might keep it closer to the face. Even if your own “off” hand gets driven into you face, it’s better that it be between you and the attacker’s limb.

Learn always to keep your off hand up and protecting your body no matter what you’re doing. Once you’ve learned this properly it will become instinctive.



TECHNIQUES

The **palm heel** is not a slap; it is driving the heel of the hand into the target as if the palm is the head of a piston. The practitioner of *Shorthand Empty Hand* could also choose to deliver slaps, of course — these are intuitive. The heel of your palm is the meatiest, strongest portion of the hand and forms a natural weapon that is also resistant to damage when striking hard targets. Tucking the thumb helps prevent it from being jammed, but in practice many of us allow our thumbs to drift.



The **edge of hand blow** can be delivered vertically, horizontally, or at an angle. You may choose to flag the thumb or you may tuck it in; there are two schools of thought on the topic and I don't believe it makes much of a difference. The important thing to remember is that you're striking with the bottom edge of the hand, which is fairly tough. This is, essentially, the infamous "Austin Powers Judo Chop," delivered from the elbow. The preferred target is the neck; a chop to the side of the neck and this can leave an adversary unconscious. (I know, because I was almost knocked unconscious by a light chop to the side of my neck.) You can deliver the edge of hand blow vertically, horizontally, and at any angle, depending on the target.



The **forearm smash** is like an edge-of-hand blow in which the hand misses and the forearm becomes the striking surface. Forearm smashes make good offensive blocking techniques.



The punch is the closed-fist blow you know only too well. A proper fist is rolled tightly, the fingers tucked inside, the thumb rolled over the fingers (not on top of the hand and not flailing about alongside the fist). Everyone thinks they know how to punch. Most people can make a punch work regardless of the technique used, though there are ways to maximize your power. I advocate the vertical punch delivered from the rear or rooted leg.



To punch properly, keep your arm loose. Relaxed muscles are faster muscles. As you get ready to punch, sink slightly on the rooted leg and torque your hip into the punch, aligning your shoulder, elbow, and hip. Clench your fist just prior to impact. With practice, the timing will become instinctual and you'll be able to snap powerful punches into your target. Keep the rear hand up to protect yourself when you punch.

The **hammer fist** is a powerful tool that carries less potential for damage to the hand than does the vertical punch. Instead of striking with the knuckles, you hammer the meaty lower portion of your clenched fist into the target. Picture pounding on a table angrily. Hammer fists can be delivered vertically and horizontally. A horizontal hammer fist to the side of the opponent's head is a good substitute for a backfist.



The **gooseneck** is a whipping strike using the back of the hand (and, rarely, the bone below the wrist). It is suitable for striking soft targets only (the groin, the fleshy part of the limbs, etc.) and gets its power from the snap generated by whipping your arm at the target. If you can snap a towel, you can deliver a whipping strike with the back of your hand.



The **mantis hook**, when used offensively, can be a gooseneck strike. When used defensively or for grappling, checking, and passing, it is a means of redirecting and trapping an opponent's limbs.



The Mantis Hook (Front — Left and Side — Right)

The **tiger claw** is a splayed and curled configuration of the fingers that is useful for grabbing, tearing, and ripping soft targets like the face and eyes. It is not a strike so much as it is a means of grappling and grabbing at someone while doing damage in the process. A typical tiger claw is whipped into the target with a clench of the fingers at the end of the “blow,” followed by an immediate retraction.



LEG TECHNIQUES

While leg techniques are deemphasized in *Shorthand Empty Hand*, they do exist. The basic techniques used are all intuitive and easily performed. They are the knee, the stomp, and the front kick.

The **knee** is as simple as driving your knee up into the opponent. While it's slightly more telegraphic, you could choose to bend the knee and drop it slightly before driving it upward in order to generate more power.

The **stomp** is done by lifting the leg and bending the knee, then driving the flat of the foot down into the target, from the front or from the side.



The Knee (Left) and the Stomp (Right)

The **front kick** is a standard push-kick in which the knee is bent and the leg chambered before the foot is driven forward like a piston, striking with the bottom surface of the foot (not the toe or the heel).



DEFENSIVE TECHNIQUES

Defensive techniques in *Shorthand Empty Hand* are always followed by offensive movements. For example, if you must block an attack rather than preempting it (we all make mistakes, after all), you must immediately follow it with offensive techniques. If you remain on the defensive, allowing the attacker to keep the initiative, you *will* lose.

The most basic block using the hands is the **slap block**. This is simply using the hand(s) to slap the attacking limb. The goal is *not* to catch the attack or neutralize its force completely. Rather, you seek only to drive the attack off line. This causes the attack to glance off or miss you.



The **hook intercept** meets incoming force and neutralizes or jams it. You must be fast to make it work. When a hook punch comes in, you strike the inside of the arm with the edge of your hand while driving a palm heel into the attacker's face or checking his shoulder. Hitting the arm and shoulder simultaneously is particularly effective in stopping the attacker's forward momentum.



The **block and check** is a slapping block immediately followed by a secondary block or strike that “checks” the attacking limb. The purpose is to free the arm that did the initial block, allowing you to use it for a follow-up strike, while maintaining control (guard) over the attacking limb.



Block and Check

I've seen the **vertical deflection** advocated by different instructors under different proprietary names. It guards the head and neck with the upraised arm, preferably while you are moving forward and to the side of the blow. You can brace the vertical deflection with your off hand if you like.



The **prow** is like the forward edge of a large ship. It is an angled wedge that absorbs and deflects incoming force. A block with the prow can be converted into a mantis hook for follow-up grappling; all you do is turn your hand over and hook as the force comes in and crashes on the prow.



The **low slap double block** is a slapping block thrown below the beltline to protect from a low blow (most often a punch, but it could be a kick) while using the off hand to protect the upper body.



Whenever possible, deal with kicks using a **kick block**. Simply raise your leg to absorb and deflect the incoming kick, preferably jamming it (before it can complete its arc) by making a low-level shin kick. Your goal is to protect your groin and lower torso while preventing ankle-breaks and knee shots. I was taught to practice this block during early stages of my training by standing in front of a stationary object (like a telephone pole) and throwing low, angled kicks to either side of the pole.



Intercepting a higher kick can be done by raising the knee and lowering the elbow, preferably striking the kicking leg between the two. Done correctly, this is very damaging to the kicker. It takes good timing and balance to perform this technique correctly.

Fighting with Shorthand Empty Hand

In essence, the majority of [people within] society are becoming victims in waiting. It is extremely important to take charge of your own destiny.

– Kelly Worden

Lists of techniques can give you the tools with which to fight, but they are no more a guide to fighting than a list of ingredients is a recipe. The question this begs then becomes: how does one fight with *Shorthand Empty Hand*? Only you can develop the flow necessary to move with the mechanics and integrate them as a coherent whole. This requires time and practice.

I recommend working with others to practice developing your flow. Find willing training partners, wear protective gear as appropriate, and work through various force scenarios. Guidelines for dynamic training and sparring are outside the scope of this manual, which covers the curriculum of *Shorthand Empty Hand* only. You're a grown-up and perfectly capable of designing a training schedule that will help you. Just remember to be honest with yourself in evaluating your progress.

That said, there are a few things you should know about bringing everything together as a system. First, let's talk about *delivering* techniques. There are a few kicks in *Shorthand Empty Hand*, but you need no special instruction to push a front kick or a low kick block into someone. Just stand on one leg, preferably bending the root leg slightly, and deliver the kick or block.

Hand techniques are generally delivered off the rear or "rooted" leg (or from the lead leg if you're performing a falling step, in which you strike just before you complete a stomp forward in order to drop your weight into the blow). The thing to remember is that you need something behind your strike. Most of the time, this will be the leg on the same side as the arm you're using. As your leg presses against the ground it gives you "root" from which to deliver your strike.



Striking with Root



Striking from Falling Step

A typical application of *Shorthand Empty Hand* in fighting would follow a hypothetical progression from initial contact and escalation to defensive

posturing and then preemptive or reactive striking. Here's just one interpretation of how that might go:

You are minding your own business out in public somewhere when you are approached by someone. Let's say it's a stranger asking you if you have spare change. You brush him off and say you do not. He continues to approach but is still outside of your personal space — the distance at which he could kick or punch you.

You raise your hands in the basic *Shorthand Empty Hand* stance. You verbalize appropriately — “Hey, man, don't crowd me, I like my space.” He does not heed your warning and you are forced to become more aggressive, saying, “That's far enough! Do not approach me!” (You could even get clever, depending on the situation. “Don't get any closer, dude, I've got the flu and you don't want to catch it” is one way to deter people.) He continues to approach.

He steps into range and raises a fist, shouting something incoherent and profane. You rightly judge, in that fraction of a second, that any reasonable person would perceive the credible threat of violence in your attacker's actions and words. At this point...

A. You step in and deliver a trio of palm heel blows to the attacker's face, alternating right and left strikes, rocking him backwards. He staggers and falls down. You leave and report the incident to the police.

B. You whip a gooseneck strike into his face. He puts his hands up and grabs for you. You raise a vertical guard, step to the side as his flailing limbs glance off your arm, use a mantis hook to pull him past you by grabbing the back of his neck, and throw him to the ground behind you. You keep running in the direction you face in order to find a phone and call police.

C. Your attacker is faster than you. He throws a hook punch. You intercept the hook punch with a block that strikes inside his arm. You launch a simultaneous palm heel to his face. You then mantis hook the back of his neck and pull him past you. He does not go down, so you face him and drive forward, throwing a knee into his groin and then a series of palm heels to his face. He finally goes down and you flee to find a phone and call police.

D. Your attacker throws a punch at your head. You slap block and check the arm, flowing into a palm heel to the face as you check, mantis-hooking the attacking limb and pulling it toward you as you palm the attacker in the face. He resists and you stomp his ankle, then twist and dump him to the side before you flee to find a phone and call police.

Not terribly complicated, is it? Here's a basic framework for fighting. It uses the techniques and methodology you've just learned. *Shorthand Empty Hand* is a simple, relatively intuitive system. Remember that and don't complicate things more than you must.

- When you have time, get your hands up and take your stance. Fight from there. Keep it simple — you must protect your head and neck.
- If you don't have time, roll with the sudden strike or your failed block as best you can. As you recover, get your hands up.
- When attacked, drive forward. Bring the attack to the enemy. Take the initiative.
- When taking the attack to the assailant, overwhelm him. Don't throw a technique or two and then stop. Don't leave a "space" between your techniques. Strike and keep striking until the opponent goes down. Remember: "Attack, attack, attack."
- Use the techniques that seem most natural to the target and the situation. Strike targets of opportunity only and let those targets dictate what you do. As the different parts of the assailant's body move within range of your strikes, choose a technique appropriate for the target and throw it without thinking about it. Use the tiger claw on the face and eyes, for example, while using the edge of hand on the throat and using the knee on the groin.
- "Pose" as appropriate. Remember that this is expedient *stylized* fighting. There's benefit to be had in keeping your hands up and ready. Give your assailant a chance to back down if you judge he might be thinking of giving up.
- If you end up on the ground, refer to the next chapter on *Groundfighting*.

Groundfighting

So it is that good warriors take their stand on ground where they cannot lose, and do not overlook conditions that make an opponent prone to defeat.

– *The Art of War*, by Sun Tzu

If you can, stay off the ground.

Let me say that again. *If you can, stay the hell off the ground!* Remember that game children play, in which they jump from one to the next piece of playground equipment or living room furniture because the floor or the sand beneath them is “lava?” I remember playing that game as a kid. I want you to play that game as an adult. STAY OFF THE GROUND.

As I type this, grappling arts like Brazilian Jiu Jitsu (BJJ) and many forms of mixed martial arts have popularized the “ground and pound” approach to sportfighting. The United States Army even adopted a new hand-to-hand combat manual that is biased heavily in favor of BJJ. There are many people out there who will quote statistics (figures repeated so often that they are now believed to be true regardless of provenance) telling you that such-and-such a percentage of fights go to the ground, which in some way is believed to justify going to the ground intentionally.

Shorthand Empty Hand is a striking system, not a grappling system. This is because, for one, striking systems are simpler to learn and to practice. There is another reason, though. *Shorthand Empty Hand* focuses on striking because remaining on your feet and striking your opponent makes it easier for you to inflict trauma and then escape.

Grappling or groundfighting with anyone is inherently dangerous in the real world. Metal, concrete, and asphalt terrain, sometimes covered with broken glass or other debris, is a painful fact of contemporary urban and suburban life. When you are on the ground entangled with another person, that person fully occupies your attention. This leaves you vulnerable to being stomped by multiple attackers (your assailants choose the time and place of the attack, after all, and will choose odds that favor them). Grappling with another individual also puts you in great danger from weapons like knives,

as you are much closer to the opponent's weapons when engaged in groundfighting. These facts are true even if you go to the ground with a fellow striker or a completely untrained individual.

These intrinsic dangers aside, it is a remarkably bad idea to go to the ground with someone who is *trained* in grappling. The earliest mixed martial arts competitions showed us why this is so. Strikers, usually much weaker in grappling than trained groundfighters, are at a distinct disadvantage on the ground. While I would encourage you to seek cross-training in grappling and groundfighting (these will enhance your use of mantis hooks and other grabs and passes), I strongly discourage using this as a *primary* self-defense strategy unless you're forced into it. What I mean is, avoid fighting on the ground unless you end up there *by accident or mistake*. Some people advocate deliberately going to the ground, particularly to defeat a more powerful opponent (or one very skilled in striking), but the benefits of this strategy are outweighed by the dangers inherent to groundfighting.

If you've applied *Shorthand Empty Hand* correctly, you'll overwhelm your opponent with multiple strikes and forward drive before it comes to grappling. If you have reason to believe your opponent is a grappler, however, don't let him get his hands on you. Pound him silly before he gets the chance. Keep him just within the range of your strikes and chop away at him.

If you fail in doing this, or if you're surprised, or if you simply slip and fall down (or get taken down), I want you to go absolutely *berserk*. The second your body touches the ground or the floor, go absolutely animal *nuts*, striking and kicking and biting and gouging and tearing. Once on the ground you are fighting for your *life*. Savage your attacker and get back to your feet at all costs. Do not, under any circumstances, let him mount you. Once he's on top of you he's just going to pound away at your face until you're a bloody paste. We've seen this happen in countless MMA bouts. You must avoid this and escape the grapple *before* you reach that point, or it's all over and you've lost.

Early in my training in Shanliang Li, my teacher David and I were sparring. He started to take me down and I, seeing the ground headed my way, did the only thing I could think to do — I bear-hugged him with all my might and landed with my knee on his groin.

“You win,” he said.

If a grappler gets his hands on you and starts to take you down, your only chance is to hang on for dear life. Clench your muscles and grip that bastard for all you’re worth. Try and land on him, if you can. As I said before, go berserk once you get there.

We all make mistakes, but do everything in your power not to get down there in the first place.

Always run to the short way; and the short way is natural: accordingly say and do everything in conformity with the soundest reason. For such a purpose frees you from trouble, and warfare, and all artifice and ostentatious display.

– *The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius*

If people find fault with you and try to put you in a bad light, wrongly slandering and vilifying you, just step back and observe yourself. ...Just cut right through it and be as if you never heard or saw it. Eventually malevolent pests will disappear of themselves. If you contend with them, then a bad name will bounce back and forth with never and end in sight.

– *Zen Essence*, translated by Thomas Cleary

Dealing with Multiple Opponents

“If you don't have footwork, you're fucking dead.”

– Sammy Franco

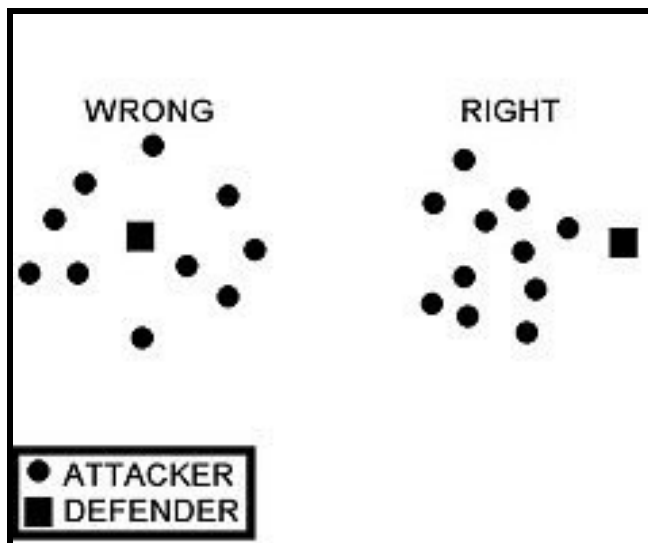
The problem of multiple opponents is one that separates the world of sports and sportfighting from the world of reality-based self-defense. Sports practitioners will respond that they, too, have friends, and that it is every bit as likely that your attacker may find himself fighting multiple defenders. This is ridiculous.

Unless you regularly travel surrounded by an entourage that would do proud the average rap star, you won't face an attacker or a group of them while backed by friends. Criminals are opportunists who seek the easiest route possible. They select their victims based on their perceptions of the chances of an easy victory. They will always choose odds favorable to them. Because self-defense is not the *initiation* of force — average, law-abiding citizens do not *start* fights — the attacker (by definition) sets the terms, chooses the conditions, and selects the venue in which you will be defending yourself. If you and your gang of would-be muggers are willing away a pleasant summer evening on the streets, whom will you choose to mug? Will it be the man traveling alone or perhaps with a wife and child? Or will it be a group of half a dozen body builders on their way home from the gym?

If you, as lone defender, find yourself facing multiple opponents, you are in grave trouble. Even if you stay aware and choose your lifestyle and actions prudently, you may not be able to avoid such a scenario. When fighting for your life against two or more people, you are not merely meeting force with equal force. You are, by definition, outnumbered and in *mortal danger*. Whenever more than one person is trying to hurt you, there's a very good chance you'll end up on the ground being stomped into a pulp. That's how mob assaults work — the defender is brought down and then the mob moves in, kicking and stomping and hitting the defender from all sides.

The basic mechanics of *Shorthand Empty Hand* don't change when facing multiple opponents. The fact that the system emphasizes stand-up fighting is to your advantage, for in this way you retain your mobility and maximize

your chances for escape. When fighting multiple opponents, keep these principles in mind.



The Right and Wrong Ways to Face a Mob

- You are fighting for your life. Just as you must when brought to the ground, you have no choice but to fight as viciously and fiercely as you can. You may *die* if you do not.
- If the group attacking you has an obvious leader (a person from whom the others take their cues), attack him first and as ruthlessly as possible. Defeating the lead aggressor *may* give the others pause.
- Attack the closest enemy first. Fight explosively and ferociously, like a mad animal. This is your only hope.
- Use your feet! You've got to maneuver yourself in such a way that you're not surrounded, or you'll get overwhelmed, taken down, and stomped. Move to put one attacker between you and the others. As you fight him, make sure his buddies have to go *through* him to get to you. This means working your way to the outside of the mob in order to, as Sun Tzu described in *The Art of War*, "attack the corners." Always make the enemy fight through his own ranks to get to you.
- STAY OFF THE GROUND! Once you're on the ground and surrounded by a mob, it's all over for you.
- Make a hole and *run for your life* if you have that option.

Parting Thoughts

When you can, always break something.

– David W. Pearson

One of the topics this book does not cover is that of weapons. Weapons are very much a part of the contemporary martialist's training because weapons are very necessary (and very effective) for self-defense in our violent world. For countless reasons, however, many people cannot or will not own firearms, carry knives, or tote any of the myriad other force multipliers available to them. In some nations or municipalities, weapons are strictly controlled. In some households, parents fear so greatly the potential for misuse of weapons by children that they will not allow weapons in the home. There are many other justifications; it is simply a fact that many people must be able to defend themselves with their bare hands. *Shorthand Empty Hand* describes a means for doing just that.

Shorthand Empty Hand isn't the latest super-devastating, end-all, be-all combat system that will have you fearing no man and kicking all asses within half an hour after you read it. Self-defense doesn't work that way — and I, for one, don't care how tough you think I am or how tough you think *you* are. The reality of self-defense makes no allowances for our egos, our wishes, or our pretenses.

Shorthand Empty Hand is a relatively simple framework for the delivery of physical force that anyone can use. The more you train and practice with it, the greater your personal drive and aggression, and the better your physical conditioning, the more success you will have with this program — and that's true for just about any program you might adopt for self-defense. I make no claims to super-ninja-Kung-Fu-killer status and you shouldn't, either.

Self-defense is your *right* as a human being. No one has the right to hurt you. Your life and the lives of your family are worth preserving.

When I was ten years old, an older, much bigger boy started harassing me. This was my first acquaintance with the concept of the "bully." I will always remember his name; it was "Danny." Danny didn't like me and I'll never

know why. He spent a lot of time picking on me and made a lot of threats. When none of his threats materialized as actions, however, I started to get arrogant. He was all talk, or so I thought — and so I told anyone who would listen.

One snowy winter morning, Danny and a friend confronted me on a hill leading to our school. “I hear you’ve been talking big about me,” Danny said. I don’t remember if any other words were exchanged. We fought, and I lost. I fought back to the best of my ability, but it wasn’t enough to stop him from knocking me down. Danny, however, never bothered me again.

Five years later, I found myself in a similar situation — facing constant harassment from a boy a year older. One day, in a quiet area where I used to sit and eat my lunch, he found me there and made some derogatory comment. Something in me snapped; I came up behind him as he walked away, wrapped an arm around his neck, and choked the living daylights out of him. Once I had him on the ground I realized I couldn’t keep him — he didn’t belong to me, after all — so I let him up. Shaken, he took a swing at my arm as he retreated — and never bothered me again. When he graduated, he even asked me to sign his yearbook. “Come on,” he wheedled. “I haven’t done anything mean to you since you tried to kill me that time.”

These childhood experiences taught me a valuable lesson that has been with me ever since: you must stand up for yourself and you must be willing to use force in so doing. I only wish that every self-defense scenario you experience could be as relatively benign as facing a schoolyard bully. Self-defense in the adult world carries with it much more danger than did those childhood encounters, but the basic premise is the same. You must stand up for yourself in the face of societal predators who believe they can abuse you in whatever ways they wish.

I hope you will never need to apply what you’ve read here. I hope all your training and all your precautions are unnecessary. I hope, for you, that self-defense remains only speculation and precaution for the remainder of your days.

Good luck.

Appendix A: Seven Lessons from Miyamoto Musashi

Gabe Suarez, whose work in the field of self-defense I quite admire, wrote an article for the May 2004 issue of *Black Belt* magazine in which he analyzed the five scrolls of Musashi's *Book of Five Spheres*. Gabe discussed, quite eloquently, the relevance of the famed swordsman's words in modern times. My martial arts instructor at the time thought so highly of Gabe's article that he discussed the text in class. This prompted me to go back to my well-worn copy of the text to reread it. In the course of that I thought I might try to distill some of the lessons I've taken from it. These aren't necessarily the most important thoughts Musashi relates in the text, but they're the ones I've taken most to heart in the context of my martial development and the ongoing task of self-defense. They are eminently relevant to *Shorthand Empty Hand*.

1. Be a Pragmatist.

According to translator Thomas Cleary, Musashi wrote deliberately in a clear, almost crude style lacking the flowery subtext of his contemporaries. His prose carries the tone, at least when rendered in English, of someone tremendously confident in the remarkably simple principles he is relating — principles that can be applied to different spheres of human activity. He saw only four walks of life and he saw martial skill as essential to life. He did not believe in overcomplicating things. “When you attain a certain discernment of the principles of mastering swordsmanship,” he wrote, “then, when you can defeat one opponent at will, this is tantamount to being able to defeat everyone in the world.”

2. Be a Skeptic.

Musashi, writing hundreds of years ago, decried empty commercialization and poor teaching in words just as relevant then as to today's martial arts community. “The field of martial arts,” he said, “is particularly rife with flamboyant showmanship, with commercial popularization and profiteering on the part of both those who teach the science and those who study it.” The self-defense industry today is rife with McDojos, strip mall money pits, fly-by-night “fear no man” schemes, would-be critics and fraud-busters, and desperate but ridiculous attempts to be different in a market flooded with just-invented combat systems claiming fictional historical roots. It seems

the 17th century was not terribly different than the 21st — for good reason. Human nature has not changed in the intervening years. We'd all do well to remember Musashi's warnings as we seek qualified and effective instruction.

3. Nothing Worth Doing is Easy.

“The long sword seems heavy and unwieldy to everyone at first,” Musashi wrote, “but everything is like that when you first take it up.” That's the lesson I remember most often in my daily life. Musashi understood, hundreds of years ago, something that too few of us remember today. When you start something new, it's difficult at first. You have to stay with it or you will never accomplish anything worthwhile. I spent the first three months of training in one traditional martial art wondering if I should quit, but I remembered Musashi — and I resolved to stick with it. When I finally started to “get it,” I was glad I had not given up.

4. Use All Your Tools.

Musashi's “School of Two Skies” was devoted to the simultaneous use of the katana and wakizashi — something that I gather was not done by all schools of swordsmanship at the time. “When your life is on the line,” he wrote, “you want to make use of all your tools. No warrior should be willing to die with his swords at his side, without having made use of his tools.” *Lin sil die dar* — using both hands at the same time to attack and defend simultaneously — is a fundamental principle in more than one martial art. It is also a good lesson for life. Learning to do multiple things rather than fixating on a single task is the only way to maximize your effort (and therefore your results). You have two arms and two legs — learn to use all of them. You have multiple tools at your disposal in all venues of life — and thus you should learn to employ them. If you fail “with your tools at your side,” with your resources untapped, you have squandered the opportunities afforded you.

5. Don't Get Attached to Material Things.

“You should not have any fondness for a particular weapon, or anything else, for that matter,” Musashi said flatly. “Pragmatic thinking is essential.” A tool is a tool — and only that. No material object should be more important to you than the people in your life and the accomplishment of your goals. I thought so highly of this advice when I first read it that I

incorporated it in my sword-and-sorcery novel, *Demon Lord*. Becoming despondent over the loss of a given object, or getting so sentimental about any material commodity that you go to pieces if you don't have it, has always struck me as pointless anguish. I view material objects as disposable. Just as no employee should be considered indispensable in running a business, no tool or object in your possession should be so valued that its loss leaves you unable to cope.

6. Move Like You Walk.

Musashi speaks of moving on the heels in executing footwork — not on the balls of the feet and certainly not on the toes. This is very natural, for it is the same way we walk: heel to toe. Movement can be precise or it can be sloppy, but if it is not natural, it will never be as useful to you as are the mechanics of your body's instinctive motion. More abstractly, you should move through your life at a natural, unaffected gait. If you don't feel natural fundamentally, even when working hard at something, you're doing it wrong.

7. If You Have to Stop and Think About it, You Don't Know it Well Enough.

The “mind of no mind” is a well-known concept in Japanese swordsmanship and in the martial arts in general, but I'd be remiss if I did not include it in this list. More broadly, the only time you can ever be said to truly know how to do something is if you can do it naturally, without thinking about it. If you're startled by an incoming blow to the head and you instinctively perform a block that you've trained for hours on end — if you stop the blow without having to *think* about doing so — you've *learned* that block. It's part of you. Any activity that you can do without conscious thought is something you truly *know*. Conversely, if you believe you've mastered a skill but you “choke” when trying to perform it, you don't know it well enough yet.

Musashi was, by all accounts, not a complicated man. It's possible he wasn't an altogether pleasant man, either. He was scarred from congenital syphilis, led an ascetic life largely unconnected to other human beings, and is known primarily for killing of scores of other men in consensual (but largely unnecessary) duels. Despite this, he took the time to write words that still speak to us today, leaving us with timeless lessons for the martial

arts and for life. Of all the books in your library, you cannot call yourself a martial artist and never read Miyamoto Musashi.

His words are relevant both to fighting and to *not fighting* — the goal towards which we all strive. Remembering his lessons will enhance your success in *Shorthand Empty Hand*.

Appendix B: Dealing with the Homeless

“Sir! Sir! Sir! Sir! Sir! Change? Change? Sir?”

The barking continued unabated for half an hour. The disheveled black man, shambling about in front of a shopping facility downtown, accosted each person who passed him on the street entering or leaving the building. He was wearing one sneaker and carrying the other. Literally barking at the top of his lungs, he sent a barrage of begging at every individual he saw.

He was quite obviously mentally deranged, chemically altered, or both. He was dirty and probably carried any number of diseases. Several people cringed or otherwise backed away when he approached them.

It made me furious.

What right did this scumbag have to bother people in this way, to demand what they have earned simply because he had the gall or the guts or the lack of shame to stick out his grimy paw and shout for it?

I got out of my car. The creature fixed on me, his staccato demands for change alternating with his rapid-fire attempts to get my attention. “Sir! Sir! Sir! Sir! Sir!” I simply stood there and stared at him. He did not approach, so I did nothing. At that moment I felt more hatred, more loathing, than I think I have ever felt in my life. He did not know how to react to my complete lack of response, so he stopped shouting at me. Eventually he wandered into downtown traffic, still carrying one sneaker.

The very next day I was again downtown, checking the tire of my car after bumping the curb while parking, when I heard a voice behind me.

“Excuse me, sir? Excuse me, sir?”

I ignored it. There is no one downtown to whom I need to speak on the street. When the query was repeated, this time more loudly and closer, I stood and whirled on the speaker.

He was, predictably, a panhandler, though he looked less obviously insane and was a little less dirty than many. Muttering something about wanting two dollars to buy a bagel at a nearby coffee shop — the surest sign that

you are being panhandled dishonestly is when the beggar offers too many specifics about what he is going to do with the money — this twenty-something white male was approaching me with his metaphorical hand out.

When I studied a traditional Chinese martial art, we were taught that a potential threat must not be allowed to close within striking distance of you. You must attack the opponent preemptively when he enters this range. When approached by someone whom you do not trust, we were told, you must put up your hands and maintain a safe distance. As the panhandler approached, my first thought was that I must, at any cost, keep him outside that distance — or else I would have to strike him, as I did not want him approaching me.

You see, every panhandler you meet is a potential threat to your health and your well-being. Those who dwell in urban areas will face no other self-defense scenario more often than that of being approached by street people. Under no circumstances whatsoever should you allow a street person to get close to you. More importantly, nobody has the right to violate your personal space without your consent. Let me say that again:

Street people do not have the right to approach you.

Something clicked in my head as that miserable beggar made his way toward me. I was so angry. I thought about the way street people decrease the quality of the lives of every honest man and woman who walks down the sidewalks of my city, harassed and intimidated by beggars who believe the world owes them something for nothing. I thought about these societal parasites who see nothing wrong with simply asking for what others have earned because they think they have some claim to the labor of others.

I pointed at the beggar, bringing my rear hand up into a guard much like the primary stance of *Shorthand Empty Hand*.

“Step away,” I hissed.

Now, I'm not describing this because I think I'm cool or because I think I have the ability to put the Fear of Phil into random strangers. I was simply enraged and I spat at this beggar with a hostility I did not realize I possessed. I reacted instinctively — but my instincts were, in this case, developed by training that simply took over under stress. I was pleased that when I needed it, I did not have to think about it. That is the goal of training

to defend yourself for real-life problems. That is the goal of *Shorthand Empty Hand*.

As I pointed and glared at him, that street creature froze in his tracks. He actually apologized, turned, and scampered off in the other direction as if I'd threatened to kill him. I looked down at my hands, exhaled, and was immediately hit with an attack of the shakes as the adrenaline dump had its way with my nervous system.

I was a little shocked at the vehemence of my reaction — but I was not *sorry*.

The reality of the homeless, of panhandlers, is that the overwhelming majority of them have mental problems, drug dependencies, or both. Crazy people and people “on something” are the most dangerous of all potential assailants because they are completely unpredictable and not deterred by actions or words that give rational people pause. These are also the people most likely to carry diseases like HIV and AIDS — and the people most likely to be carrying used hypodermic needles. I remember reading of an incident in a major city in which a homeless man jabbed a woman's daughter with a dirty needle.

How many women must be harassed and made to feel physically threatened simply trying to get from home to work and back again? How many honest citizens must be made to feel somehow guilty for daring to work hard and lead productive lives simply because some grasping, filthy beggar demands a hand-out? How many people must wonder if they will contract lice, tuberculosis, hepatitis, or other communicable diseases when forced to work and walk in close proximity to the vile refuse of humanity? How many commuters must be stabbed with fucking used hypodermic needles before we recognize the danger?

Panhandlers should not be objects of our pity. They are potential threats who must be recognized and avoided.

Their *need* does not constitute a right to victimize you.

Express these sentiments and you'll be told that you lack compassion, that you are overreacting, and that you are being “hateful.” Before you let others

make you feel guilty about recognizing this very real threat, let me tell you another story.

On a pleasant autumn evening I was standing by my car, which was parked in front of a heavily trafficked coffeehouse in an area near a local university. I was standing *outside* the car rather than sitting *in* it because there was an attempted carjacking at that very spot only a week previously.

With the strap of my pocket-stick keychain threaded over my fingers, I watched the college students and basketball game spectators bustling past. Crowds were heavy in the wake of a recently completed exhibition featuring the Harlem Globetrotters. Parking spaces were sparse and I was grateful to have snagged a prime section of curb. There was plenty of people-watching to do; the location hosts a cross-section of urban society, including all races, income levels, and occupations.

One trend developing at that particular location is most unwelcome and quite sobering: an increasing street person presence. The beggars I noticed most recently were sexually harassing female pedestrians. “Hey, gorgeous, you got any spare change?” was the mantra. “Hey, baby. Hey! Baby!”

As you can imagine, this spectacle made me sick. Whenever I say that, I’m greeted with the usual chorus of bleeding-heart nonsense about how awful I must be to see the homeless as my enemies. With rare exceptions, none of the people blathering on in this manner have *any* experience with the homeless. A few of them wrongly extrapolate, from their own fortunately peaceful encounters, a distorted and utopian view of reality in which street beggars are merely kind-hearted, down-on-their-luck characters with hearts of gold. Worse than these are the people who’ve actually had encounters with violent street people who blame “the system” and see socialist transfers of wealth as the solution to these societal problems.

Anyone capable of holding these views has not walked the gauntlet endured by countless urban pedestrians every day. Men and women who actually contribute to society, who in many cases are walking to jobs they’d rather not work for less pay than they deserve, must suffer further by dodging the grasping claws and barked demands of harassing, unstable, persistent panhandlers.

Why does this topic make me so angry? I am, after all, a lone, armed white man more than capable of fending off a single panhandler. I am not angry for *myself*, though. I am angry for every woman who has ever felt disgusted and fearful listening to the catcalls and feeling the gaze of a stinking, too-close beggar looming in her path. I am angry for every peaceful man who has had to wonder if he must use his fists simply to walk through a parking lot or down the street. I am angry for every person who is walking with his or her children, who has a physical disability, or who just doesn't wish to be yelled at by strangers who want what they have not earned.

No one has the right to accost you.

That's a fact. No "right to beg" exists. No one has license to invade the personal space of others or to make unwanted demands of them.

As I said, the majority of street people have mental problems or chemical abuse issues — problems that make them unpredictable and prone to violence. Yes, *all* people you encounter, no matter what their stations in life, could be threats — but you'd be a fool not to recognize the heightened risks offered by those who are obviously ill-kempt and erratic.

All these thoughts went through my mind as I watched outside that coffeehouse. While I waited, a disheveled, gaunt, African-American man in his twenties or thirties came shuffling up, rattling the loose change in a paper cup. "Change?" he barked. "Any change?" He accosted several people, all of whom ignored him. He asked me for change too. I stared him down and he wandered a little farther away.

Had I left then, those who think street people are just misunderstood would be free to chastise me as callous and paranoid. There's more to this particular story, though.

When no one among the plentiful crowd would give the beggar any money, he became *hostile and belligerent*. "What the fuck..." he muttered, his voice growing louder as he worked up a head of steam. "I ain't so fuckin' bad... fuckin' assholes... sons of bitches..."

Now, is he a harmless hobo whom society has left behind? Is it just possible that when approached by a shaking, angry, reeking man — who is

yelling obscenities and cursing you out for refusing him money — you'll recognize him for the threat he represents?

Compassion is a wonderful thing. *Misplaced* compassion will get you maimed or killed. No amount of compassion will change the harsh realities of street predation. Remember that the next time you're out.

Now, let's talk about some of the common confrontations you'll likely face on the street. The people accosting you might or might not be obviously homeless. Many street people look perfectly "normal" and aren't smeared with their own offal.

OFFRAMPS

Anyone who drives in urban and suburban areas will, sooner or later, be confronted by one of the more obnoxious manifestations of panhandling — offramp beggars. I say "obnoxious" because I find it particularly galling that someone would both ask for money *and* ask in such a way that those inclined to give must put themselves at great physical risk to do so.

You are never in more danger than when seated and belted in your automobile, stopped, with your window down and another human being standing nearby. You have very little mobility and even less leverage sitting in your car.

In Texas, an uproar occurred when a holder of one of the state's then-new CCW (Carry Concealed Weapon) permits shot and killed another person in a "traffic dispute." What didn't always make the left-leaning news reports of this example of "gun violence" was the fact that the shooter fired in self-defense. He was sitting in his car when a road-raging fellow traveler reached into his open window and started striking him repeatedly.

Being struck in the head again and again can result in serious injury, permanent blindness, and even death. The armed citizen knew this and reacted accordingly. Given his relatively helpless nature sitting in the car, his gun was really the only option available to him. This emphasizes just how big a disadvantage you face when sitting while attacked by a standing assailant, especially if you're strapped in and going nowhere.

Consider an offramp. If you're trapped at the light at the bottom of the ramp, the beggar has a captive audience. He can approach your vehicle and there's little you can do about it except refuse to roll down your window. Most of the time, this is sufficient to protect you — but remember, few car windows are brick-proof.

If you think you're going to drive away when a threat appears, forget it — unless you're keen on trading a mugging for a car accident. You're stopped at that light for a reason. If there aren't cars both in front of and behind you, chances are you'll have to pull into oncoming traffic to drive against the light.

To give that offramp beggar money, you must essentially offer him your throat in complete trust. Reaching through your own car window to hand him a dollar, you are totally vulnerable.

Never give money to panhandlers, especially if you're in your car. It is not worth the risk. You may successfully give money to scores of street people before encountering one who's inclined to do more than quietly take what you volunteer — but why subject yourself to unnecessary danger? You have family and friends who count on you. Your continued health and well-being are more important than those of someone rude enough to corner people in their cars.

GENERAL PANHANDLING AND PLOYS

The same is true when you are approached outside of your car. Again, *never give money to panhandlers*. For one thing, at least one of your hands is occupied when you hand something over to someone else. For another, you are telling the panhandler that you *have money* when you give him some of it. Oh, and please, for the love of all that is holy, do not take out your wallet and start selecting a suitable donation from your available funds. You might as well wear a sign around your neck that says, “Rob me.”

When someone asks you for money, the appropriate response is to *keep moving*. I stare down panhandlers out of my overdeveloped sense of outrage, but this could provoke a confrontation and I don't recommend it to others. Either ignore the request or state flatly that you have no money (even if this isn't true). Keep walking away as you do so.

Many of the hard-luck stories beggars tell you are con games and nothing more. How can you tell? Most of them commit the classic error of offering too much information. The more elaborate the song and dance, the more complicated the backstory justifying the begging, the greater the probability that the whole thing is bogus.

Beggar ploys have one thing in common: they are all, pardon my language, bullshit. The following indicators are by no means an all-inclusive list, but they serve as a great thumbnail guide to some of the more common street lies. All are ploys with which I've been confronted personally. Granted, there are people out there whose hard luck stories are actually true, but they're much fewer and farther between than many people think.

Too Much Information

This is the big one, the ploy indicator most frequently encountered. Liars and beggars almost always fail to keep things simple. They launch into incredibly involved stories on the theory that the more detail they include, the more plausible the ruse will seem. This is not the case. A *good* liar keeps things simple because this leaves fewer traps to remember and avoid. A *good* con artist lets *you* fill in the details.

A young white man wearing gold chains over a muscle shirt once gave me an elaborate song and dance about needing money to make a phone call because he needed a ride to some outpatient cancer treatment center, an appointment he'd missed previously due to a number of factors (which he supplied). The whole pile of nonsense was obviously an excuse to separate me from my money.

Gas Money

Apparently we are in the grip of a nationwide epidemic of stranded motorists, all of whom just need two or maybe five dollars worth of gas to get them on their ways again. The only cure for this epidemic is the kindness of strangers, it would seem, for this army of stranded motorists is even now wandering the streets, asking passers-by for help. Almost every time you encounter this request, it's bogus.

Lunch Money

I recall a study some time back — it might have been in USA Today or some other major media outlet — that speared a popular myth. Most of the “homeless” carrying signs saying “will work for food” actually *wouldn't* when offered the chance.

Take a good look at the next beggar who asks for money because, he tells you, he's *hungry*. He doesn't *look* like he's starving, does he? He looks dirty and unkempt, sure, but is he *emaciated*? People who are *really* starving look the part.

A beggar once accosted me citing a specific sum of money and muttering about the specific breakfast he hoped to purchase at the exact establishment he sought to patronize. Ploys are like that — they sometimes come wrapped in each other. This was “Too Much Information” within “Lunch Money.”

Speak Up

I was waiting outside an urban coffee shop plagued by aggressive panhandlers (who, when they aren't begging, sexually harass and intimidate the female college students who frequent the shop) when I last encountered this ploy. A disheveled white male of perhaps middle age wandered up, muttering something I could not hear. I glared at him and he gave me a wide berth as he continued to work the area, accosting everyone entering the shop. Those who did not ignore him stopped and said something like, “What?” or “Pardon?” because he muttered so quietly. This is a deliberate, calculated decision on such a beggar's part. Mumbling panhandlers hope to catch you off guard, counting on the cultural reflex that prompts you to ask for clarification when you do not hear what someone says. I've fallen for this myself without thinking.

The appropriate response to anyone who accosts you and mumbles is no response at all, though you may choose to observe silently to see if the speaker repeats his or her plea.

Help a Vet

Most of the homeless “veterans” one encounters are veterans of long begging careers and nothing more. Those holding signs proclaiming their veteran status are hoping to cash in on your gratitude to those who fight and die for our country. Some will go so far as to dress themselves in soldier costumes, wearing fatigues or boonie hats as if they've just gotten off the first boat from Over There to find themselves destitute among spitting hippie ingrates.

The majority of “veteran” beggars are liars who have never served in the U.S. military. Your heart is in the right place, but don't fall for this one.

The Grace of God

Ours is basically a religious society. Many people will try to invoke religion as a means of gaining trust or allaying fear. Some subtle con artists will wear crosses (which are large enough to be obvious to those whom they accost). Others will work references to God or church into their ploys.

One early morning, while walking from my car to my office, a couple in a battered and fanbelt-squealing Cadillac stopped and gave me an elaborate song and dance about losing or running out of money. They were supposedly desperate to get gas money to get home but, shrewdly, did not directly ask me for funds. Instead they wanted to know where the nearest church could be found (which was their ostensible purpose for stopping me).

The implication was, of course, that they were good Christians who only sought the support of their network of fellow believers. One supposes that, lulled by their evident religious credentials, I as the mark would be inclined simply to give them money to help them on their way.

I didn't fall for it and neither should you. God doesn't care if you've got gas in your car. That's your responsibility. Anyone invoking God while implying a need for cash is simply using religion to mask a ploy.

GOT THE TIME?

If you're obviously wearing a watch, you have two choices when asked for the time. You can be rude and refuse to give it, or you can comply with the request. The problem is that when approached on the street by a stranger or a street person, there is a chance — not a great one, but a real one nonetheless — that someone who asks you for the time is trying to distract you in order to assault you. Think about it: when you look at your watch, you typically look down at your arm, making you an easy target.

If someone you don't know comes up to you and asks you for the time, you can easily minimize your risk. Step back casually, away from the stranger, preferably blading your body as you do so. Raise your arm rather than lowering your head, keeping that arm well away from your body and between you and the other person. In this way you can read the time while keeping your guard up. Look at that — you've just used the *Shorthand Empty Hand* Timepiece guard.

Practice doing this so it looks casual rather than confrontational. There's no need to drop into your Daniel-san crane stance and fire off a flurry of snap kicks just to tell someone they're late for an appointment.

GOT A LIGHT?

The answer to this question is, *no*, you don't have a light. You do not, in fact, smoke, even if you *do*, if someone you don't know wanders up to you on the street and asks you this question. (Now, if you've got a cigarette dangling from your mouth it's going to be harder to deny that you smoke. This scenario assumes that a stranger has approached you and you have given no public indication that you have a source of flame on your person.)

There's simply no way to light another person's cigarette for them on the street without incurring an unacceptable level of risk, unless you're willing to toss someone a lighter or a book of matches. (For you smokers, that's one option. Pick up a handful of those free books of matches people still give away here and there, or buy a box at the store. Carry a couple in your pocket in addition to your lighter. When someone asks you for a light, you can toss them a book of matches (from a safe, casual distance) and even look generous by adding, "Keep it."

Picture standing in front of someone, holding your lighter to that person's cigarette. At least one of your hands — possibly two, if you're cupping one palm against the wind — is occupied. You're also giving that stranger a burning cylinder of tobacco with which he can put out your eye, if he's so inclined. (That's why cops will often tell you to put out your cigarette when they speak with you.)

PARANOIA AND PRUDENCE

These are just a few examples of scenarios in which you must be extremely careful in today's world. Being mindful of these risks isn't paranoid. It's *prudent*. It's sad that we must be concerned about such things, but the reality of our world is that you simply can't trust people you do not know. Every one of these scenarios has been used before to victimize someone by playing to the individual's basic decency, his or her desire to help others.

I am not teaching you to envision marauding ninja crouching behind every parking meter or encouraging you to draw down on every Girl Scout who wants to know how long it will be before her bus arrives. You've got to keep things in perspective. That perspective, however, must include a recognition of the real dangers that exist in contemporary society. Every street person encounter is a potential "street interview," a precursor to assault.

WHAT TO DO WHEN ACCOSTED

If you are accosted by a street person, particularly one whose pitch involves an obvious ploy, do not engage that person. No dialogue will improve the situation. A null response gives the street person nothing with which to work in attempting to involve himself in your life.

If someone begins to encroach on your personal safety zone, warn him or her off. A firm, neutral "Step away from the car" or "Do not approach me" should suffice. If the assailant does not listen and tries to engage you, maintain space as needed. If the encounter becomes an assault, do what you must.

Remember that most people who approach you in public *asking for money* are liars. You should not trust them and you do not owe them a blessed

thing. Remember, also, that most people who approach you probably *aren't* trying to attack you — but any of them *could*.

Never contend with someone who has nothing to lose. By doing so you enter into an unequal conflict.

– *The Art of Worldly Wisdom*, by Balthasar Gracián

Appendix C: Reflections on Shorthand Empty Hand

A ronin — (literally, wave man — one who is tossed about, like a wave in the sea) was a name given to masterless samurai during the feudal period of Japan that lasted from 1185 to 1868. A samurai became masterless from the ruin or fall of his master, or after the loss of his master's favor or privilege...

...The term ronin is also used in modern Japan for those who failed the college entrance exam. This use probably derives from the analogy that they have no school to attend, as a ronin samurai has no leader to serve; there is also a parallel to the shame of the original ronin, in failing to pass the exam.

It's a busy time in my life — busier than ever before, in fact. I have multiple writing projects ongoing and I'm accomplishing a great deal with regard to my "day job" as a technical writer. I manage to travel and take in culture with my lovely wife, too. The more I do, the more it seems I am *capable* of doing — though I would be lying to you if I said I slept much these days.

The urge to *create* and to *accomplish* hit me relatively recently in life, only a few years ago, galvanizing years of half-thought-out ambitions in a brief period of furious activity. In only a few years I've managed to realize dreams that have been with me since childhood; in only a few years from now, I anticipate increasing my levels of activity exponentially.

One of the things I've experienced *repeatedly* since choosing to stand up and walk my own way — a decision marked by the founding of PhilElmore.com — is what a participant at online discussion forum called 'friends who are willing to be your friends *only on their terms*.' More precisely, I've learned a lot about who my friends really are — and who they *aren't*. I tend to be fairly open and honest with everyone and as a result I make "friends" pretty quickly. Over time, however, I learn just who among those I consider friends and allies are *false*.

I have never made the choice in my life to discard someone I considered a friend. I tend to overlook my friends' flaws — to see whatever I might otherwise dislike in them as merely part of them, something to accept as part of the sum total of that human being. While I may offer my opinion —

sometimes in an extremely sober fashion — I don't judge my friends *as such*. If I have a problem, I'll tell them about it. I've had people ask me, "You're not angry with me, are you?" I'll respond with simply, "I can't stand it when someone is angry with me for no good reason. If I'm mad at you, I'll tell you; you'll never have to guess."

When I started my website and started using my real name as a freelance writer, I immediately started making a few people nervous because I was willing to profess controversial opinions and then defend them with my skill as both a writer and a debater. I don't think it's arrogant to say I'm good at both; I've logged countless hours online arguing with people and I write for a *living*. It stands to reason I'd be good at both just from practice alone. I type insanely quickly for the same reason; I've had people tell me it sounds like I'm just swiping my palm back and forth across the keyboard. That's just *practice*.

When I started *The Martialist* I received a very abrupt, very shocking education in who my friends were and were not. Let me be clear on something: you don't have to agree with me to be my friend. You don't have to think I'm right. You can openly criticize my ideas, my conclusions, and my efforts as long as you're honest and you support what you assert. One of my best online friends disagrees with me all the time and isn't afraid to tell me so on the phone, either. At the end of the day, however, he still treats me with *respect and courtesy* — and I do the same in return.

My associate editors at *The Martialist* are among the best friends I have, too. They tell me what they think and they tell me when they think I'm wrong. I do the same. We all understand, however, that no human being can be completely ideologically and emotionally in agreement with any other. *Friendship and respect* supersede disagreements of that type. Honor, morality, and reason demand that we speak out about those things with which we disagree — but there's a big difference between doing this and declaring the person with whom you are disagreeing to be some sort of heretic.

Worse, when you disagree with someone and you can't even give them credit for what they've managed to accomplish to that point — when you deliberately diminish *things for which you would have given them credit prior to the disagreement* — you're worse than a false friend; you're a hypocrite and a petty, venal human being.

When I started publishing *The Martialist*, I lost a couple of friends — one in particular who sent me amazingly vicious e-mail in which he attempted to *destroy me* through emotional and intellectual intimidation. As far as he was concerned, my "friend" could not give me credit for even the least of any accomplishments I had managed. He'd contributed to *The Martialist* in the past, but suddenly I was the lowest human being on the face of the Earth, the least talented, the least experienced, and the most unworthy — all because *I disagreed with him regarding certain points of his philosophy and approach to self-defense*. It didn't matter that we agreed on other points; it didn't matter that I certainly bore him no ill will; it didn't matter that we'd been friends to that point. No, what mattered was that *I presumed to have my own opinion and pursue my own course*, and this he could not abide.

As someone put it so eloquently, my "friend" *could only be my friend on his terms*. I was determined to be and act as my own person, and this he could not accept. I, by contrast, wished only *to do what mattered to me*. My disagreement with my "friend" had nothing to do with him and *everything to do with what I thought*. This, too, he could not accept. He could not accept a "friend" who was his own person and who had his own goals and accomplishments to pursue. I could not relate to this. I do not begrudge any other person his or her accomplishments. I do not see someone else's success as diminishing me in any way. I do not presume to say who is or is not "worthy" in a free market of ideas — provided the work examined stands on its own merits.

The egotist in the absolute sense is not the man who sacrifices others. He is the man who stands above the need of using others in any manner. He does not function through them. He is not concerned with them in any primary manner. Not in his aim, not in his motive, not in his thinking, not in his desires, not in the source of his energy. He does not exist for any other man — and he asks no other man to exist for him. This is the only form of brotherhood and mutual respect possible between men..."

— Ayn Rand, *The Fountainhead*

What I've seen happen repeatedly — and sadly — is the death of my heroes. Over time I've watched again and again as those I venerated and for whom I had great respect showed themselves to be... well, no less and

no more than *human*, with human flaws. That's all any of us can ever be. To an idealist like me, however, it's upsetting to watch my heroes die; it's saddening to see those I idolize fall and crumble at the bases of the pillars on which I placed them.

When I chose to publish *Shorthand Empty Hand*, some of the criticisms were expected. There exists online no shortage of petty, childish criticism — those so wrapped up in ego, in envy, in insecurity, that they see my productivity as some sort of threat (or worse, as some sort of assertion that I am equal to or better than are they — a fictional but nevertheless perceived claim that drives so many of my critics to howls of irrational outrage). Some of the criticism, however, sounded an idol or two with the hammer of perspective. Because of my devotion to truth, to objective reality, and to making my own way, I lost the tenuous "friendship" of more than one person.

Ultimately, all any of us can *ever* do is choose to make our own decisions — to choose *wisely*, as I say over and over again at *The Martialist*. One of things I like to think sets my publication and my work apart from others is my respect for others as sovereign human beings — people from whom I ask nothing except the mutual respect and recognition of *me* as another sovereign human being. I don't ask that anyone take me seriously because I say so; I make no pleas to impressive credentials; I never refuse to substantiate my assertions. I ask only that my work stand on its own merits and be evaluated as such.

Men have been taught that it is a virtue to agree with others. But the creator is the man who disagrees. Men have been taught that it is a virtue to swim with the current. But the creator is the man who goes against the current. Men have been taught that it is a virtue to stand together. But the creator is the man who stands alone.

— Ayn Rand

As I watch my heroes fall for no other reason than that I have dedicated myself to productive, useful work and the accomplishment of my own goals, I am tempted to be sad. I remind myself, however, that I do what I do *for me* — and that others will find value in what I do accordingly. It is my

sincere hope that many do, but ultimately I must admit that I would keep working even if I thought no one would ever see what I wrote.

I would expect the same of *anyone* — out of respect for their potential and their sovereignty as human beings.

When our heroes die, they do not die because we kill them. They choose to commit suicide. In their place, other statues are erected.

In their stone they wear our own faces.

When acting with spontaneity or wu-wei, the martial artist takes up no perspective of his own, but lets his mind mirror the particular perspective of what is in front of and all around him. This means responding in accordance with not only his own abilities but also the abilities of his opponent.

– *The Demon's Sermon on the Martial Arts,*
by Issai Chozanshi

Appendix D: Questions and Answers

I've read a great deal about you at the "Bullshido" forum online, where they say you're not qualified to teach (and a lot of other pretty nasty things.) What's their problem with you?

That site is the most famous troll pit on the Web and, no, they really don't like me there. This is due in part to the fact that the membership there hates most everyone; when you have little skill and low self-esteem, the fastest route to salving your insecurities is to ridicule everyone and anyone who's managed to be productive in the field of self-defense. I've written an entire FAQ file at my 'zine, *The Martialist*, covering the more common reasons the "bullshidoka" spend so much time obsessing over me.

Their ire is also caused by the fact that I'm just an average guy and therefore not very impressive. Because the members at that site don't find me impressive, they resent the fact that I write cogently on the topic of self-defense. It strikes to the very heart of their insecurities and their envy — because if someone like me can become known in the self-defense field, I must be asserting that I am somehow better than are they. There is a tremendous amount of ego involved in the martial arts for some people, and these people project onto others their ego-related problems. They assume that I must be trying to convince the world how tough or cool I believe myself to be; the idea that I'm earnestly sharing what I've learned is alien to them.

Most of the people whose work I respect have done their "turn in the barrel" at Bullshido (though I seem to be one of the most obsessively discussed topics at the site — it's enough to make a guy think he's important), as well as the usual list of frauds and other nutjobs whom any objective observer can identify as illegitimate. I see it as a badge of honor that I am so hated at that forum, for if they liked me I would be a little worried about what that said about the company I keep.

I heard one of your former instructors called you "a dead rank beginner with little skill." Is this true?

A former Wing Chun instructor of mine, after I left his school and published *Shorthand Empty Hand*, did say exactly that. Specifically, he said this:

You on the other hand barely train and are viewed by your former and present instructor AND former and present classmates as a dead rank beginner with VERY LITTLE skill or real life experience... despite your "15 years" in martial arts.

As you can imagine, a quote of this nature was immediately exalted by my critics as evidence of my [place derogatory descriptor here]. "Why, even Phil Elmore's former instructor says he's a beginner with no skill! There you have it, folks, the gospel truth on the matter!"

The problem, however, is that when one's critics are incapable of rational thought — when those critics' thinking is clouded by hatred, resentment, and even envy — those critics are only too eager to seize on any and all negative commentary from any source that supports their assumptions, biases, and misconceptions, regardless of context and regardless of why the source said them.

The fact is that my instructor and I got into a pretty heated argument over the release of the *Shorthand Empty Hand* book. He was concerned about what it might contain and I understood his concerns — but we started going back and forth over it anyway. Things boiled over and we both said things we regret in the course of several months of bickering over the Internet. Almost immediately after he said those words I've quoted, my instructor apologized and deleted them — but it was too late; they'd already been pasted by others and took on an exaggerated life of their own.

Remember, too, that my instructor promoted me not once, but twice. If I was the poor student we are expected to believe I was in his revision of history where I am concerned, why would he have promoted me both times? I was one of his senior students. I had been with the school since it opened. We were friends. Compare and contrast this to the various negative things he had to say about me after we had our falling out.

Consider, also, an instructor who would publicly insult a former student in that way. Would you really take the word of a “teacher” who would do such a thing? Doesn't the fact that he speaks like that about a former student say a lot of very negative things about his own character?

Now, given the Internet war that broke out, I'm not completely blameless. I fanned the flames myself in stumping for my cause on the Web. Finally, thanks to the intervention of one of my current instructors, I met with my former teacher over dinner. We worked things out, expressed mutual sorrow over the incident, and agreed to put it behind us. At least, I thought we did. It turned out that he still had a lot of negative things to say about me after that point... but at least I tried.

My friend and teacher David Pearson has said I have "average to above average ability" and that I "[pick] up concepts quickly and [am] good at applying them." If you'd like a more objective and more official opinion of my abilities, only six months after I started training in Liu Seong Gung Fu (the system in which I would eventually earn my black belt), my teacher (the well-respected Sifu Guro Dan Donzella) had this to say:

Since Phil Elmore has been my student he has made steady progress in understanding and using the chuan-fa/tjimande systems. His power and technique [have] improved steadily over the last six months.

Didn't former classmates of yours agree with your former teacher's negative assessment?

I'll tell you something right now: nobody wins a political dispute in the martial community. If I was once your classmate, I imagine you'd have your own opinion about me. I don't imagine I'd improve that opinion if I then engaged in a political dispute with your teacher and insulted him in the course of it. As I wrote previously about a famous fight between two practitioners of a traditional art,

When the "fight" was over, neither party was injured. So what does this tell us? It tells us almost nothing. From it we learn nothing about [the style] as a system (other than the need for cross-training in grappling to cover what is arguably a blind spot...). We learn relatively little about the two participants, other than that they didn't hurt each other. We learn, simply, that politics can leave a black eye on a style that no amount of punching can inflict.

I used to think politics were something that happened out there, something that didn't and wouldn't touch me. I learned I was wrong — because I learned I have just as much capacity for politicking (and for ruthless

politicking) as anyone else. Fortunately, I also learned that it is possible to get over whatever issues prompt such politicking. I am pleased to report that any previous disputes I've had in this regard have been resolved positively.

Do you feel good about giving people advice on self defense that you yourself have not proven effective in real life altercations?

I feel good about sharing the conclusions I have drawn on self-defense based on my own study, research, and training to this point, yes. I don't think you have to have shot someone to teach other people how to shoot (though of course you must practice with firearms in a realistic manner), nor do I think you have to have engaged in a street brawl to relate logical, reasonable advice about physical self-defense. Nothing in the *Shorthand Empty Hand* curriculum is terribly complicated and none of it is particularly earth-shattering; it's all grounded, basic stuff.

I'm a writer, not a fighter. I'm a citizen, not a soldier. I'm an average guy, not a superhero. I'm an everyman, not an athlete. In the time I've studied the martial arts and self-defense I've managed to learn concepts and make conclusions about techniques that I think are worth passing on to other average citizens — in the context of sharing them as such. I don't try to pretend to be anything I'm not and I don't expect anyone to be impressed by the curriculum simply because I say they should be or because of whatever credentials I'd like to have and don't. Rather, I think the material in the SHEH program (just like my articles at *The Martialist*) stands on its own merits.

It's simple, straightforward self-defense advice based on what I've gleaned in my own training and study, presented in the way I thought best. That is really the only unique thing I bring to the project, as I make no claims of being Bruce Lee, Jet Li, or even Tommy Lee with a bad hangover — my ability to write clearly, effectively, and in an engaging and entertaining style.

What if someone who doesn't know what he's doing reads your book and then gets himself hurt? Don't you care? The book should have a big disclaimer across its front saying you don't know what you're doing.

I've spent enough time studying the martial arts and self-defense to be able to write, cogently and reasonably, a book about the basics of self-defense. For anyone terribly concerned about from whom they are learning, the book contains an extensive discussion of my own background. I am never anything but honest with my readers. I tell them what I think, and why; I also tell them who I am. They are then free to make their own choices — a theme I emphasize often. That is the respect I have for my readers as sovereign individuals.

As for the technical information the book contains, it is very basic. With a couple of rare exceptions I think most people would have a hard time disagreeing with it. Of course, to disagree with its content would require a critic actually to read it. Since releasing the book a lot of people have howled in outrage over its existence, but these people all have in common the fact that they've not read it.

Shorthand Empty Hand is a book I would proudly and confidently give to a loved one, a family member, a friend, a coworker. It is my statement of opinion on the topic of self-defense — and my opinions would not be my opinions if I did not believe in them wholeheartedly. When I am out and about myself, this is the material I use (in part — I did not put everything I think, believe, know, and do in a single 112 page book) to defend myself and my family.

Anyone who simply reads a single book and thinks, "Now I am prepared to defend myself" is obviously a danger to himself and others, if not only through simple ignorance. As I say in my own marketing copy for the book, "No system is the ultimate system and no book can truly teach you what you must do to fight another human being..."

The book gives the reader the conceptual framework necessary to preserve his or her life by imparting, as concisely as I could, the ideas necessary to approach the pursuit of success in self-defense. That was my purpose in writing the book. I pictured the reader as, say, a relative with no experience for whom I was afraid — and put together what I thought that hypothetical family member would need.

If no book can teach what you need to know to fight someone, how does this give the reader the "conceptual framework" to preserve his life?

Success in self-defense starts with mindset. You will never manage to defend yourself if you continue living in a fantasy world where what is has been ignored in favor of what you wish was true. The book explains the frank reality of the violent world in which we live and gives extensive advice about how to view that world. From within that context it goes on to impart basic principles that are vital to self-defense. The book also includes some simple techniques, but these have no value without that mindset, without that context. Someone with no knowledge of self-defense will be able to acquire the mental foundation from which to pursue the study of self-defense within the pages of *Shorthand Empty Hand*.

How often have you tested against a resisting opponent the techniques and principles you are teaching? My concern is that someone picks this stuff up and thinks it is coming from an experienced fighter, assumes it will work... and gets his ass handed to him.

Anyone who picks up a book and thinks he's now qualified to fight another person deserves to "get his ass handed to him." As I've said, the *Shorthand Empty Hand* core curriculum text is a guide to study and a conceptual framework for self-defense, but it means nothing as a book by itself. The techniques themselves are all techniques that can and have been used by others for self-defense; whether I've tested a palm heel or a punch or a knee or an elbow is fairly irrelevant to the fact that all of these techniques have been used and do work (and have also failed to work, depending on the practitioner).

You said that you took from other systems to create this style. What systems and techniques did you use?

I drew from everything I've studied or researched that I liked. I drew from Karate, from Wing Chun, from Silat, from Shanliang Li, from WWII combatives, from others' interpretations of WWII combatives, and from anything else with which I had any familiarity (if I liked a given technique, I took it). Most of these systems have the techniques in common, really, such as palm strikes and punches.

I went to great pains, however, to point out in the book and on my sites that what I am demonstrating is NOT what is taught by any teacher with whom

I've trained. I don't presume to represent any of them. If anything I do looks like something I learned previously, well, the influence is obvious. If anything I do looks like an incorrect interpretation of something I learned previously, the error is mine (and I say so).

Are your interpretations of said stylized techniques correct?

My interpretations of the techniques work for me; I couldn't say if they're correct in that I'm sure any number of instructors could tell me, "That's now how I teach it," or "that's not how I do it," or even, "That's structurally incorrect." I chose only what I was comfortable doing and what I'd found preferable.

If you answered "It is my interpretation therefore "correct" does not apply," what was your reason for changing it?

Any changes I made were made to — quite bluntly — suit what I am capable of doing. That's what makes this the "average citizen's" curriculum; I'm pretty damned average, if not less than average.

Shouldn't "average people" be learning from professionals, from people much more experienced than are they?

I'm the perfect person to write a curriculum for average people. That's because I can relate to average people and communicate effectively to them. When this is coupled to my research and love for the subject matter, it produces what I think is a unique result. That's why, in a market already flooded with self-defense books, I thought there existed a niche for *Shorthand Empty Hand*.

Do you really trust "intuitive footwork?" Most of the beginners I know have to learn how to move properly for fighting... NOT WALKING.

I do. I've adopted my preference for natural footwork because I've found I don't like and have real difficulty applying complex footwork; it's as simple as that. Most people don't have trouble walking, yes, which is why I'm capitalizing on that.

Where did you get your theory of "Focus on nothing and everything?" Your description, "Instead, take in the whole body as a single entity,

seeing everything and nothing at once" IS the purpose of looking at the persons *dan tien*... their center... their "everything."

It's a concept about which I've read and with which I've practiced over the years, mostly because of my horribly nearsighted vision. Focusing on the *dan tien* as some teach it seemed perfectly in keeping with what I'd been told previously, or at least a variation thereof. If it overlaps, that's fine by me.

How often do you train? You have a lot of weapons and gadgets. How much time per day or per straining session to you practice using them?

I train regularly. I practice with my weaponry fairly constantly, though I don't get to the shooting range as often as I would like. I doubt anybody does.

Can you really do everything you talk about? REALLY think about this because you cannot go and show people concepts you cannot do yourself.

The system I set up is tailored precisely to what I *can* do; that's why I am confident that just about anyone can learn to apply it.

Have you been in any real confrontations before? How recent was your last one, and did you win or lose?

I don't answer that question because no good ever comes of it. If I'd been in a documented altercation, it would be public record; if I've been in undocumented confrontations, it would be stupid of me to admit this; if I've been in none, this will simply be seen by some as spurious proof for the assertion that, hell, if I haven't gone out and fought someone, how can I tell anyone else anything about self-defense? The system is not about how tough or cool I think I am, or how tough or cool I want you to think I am. I realize a lot of people cannot look at someone else's effort in self-defense without seeing ego; this is because they are themselves tangled up with it and trying to prove something to somebody. This is not my goal and it is not my focus.



If you're just joining us and don't follow online martial politicking, you may be wondering what this incredibly long article is about. *Shorthand Empty Hand* is not without its detractors. At a site where critics of me and this program gather to share their hatred of me, an amusing essay denouncing the *Shorthand Empty Hand* textbook was posted prominently. I consider the criticisms it contains beneath me, for the most part, but responding to them is both a stimulating exercise in rhetoric and a means of promoting the book while entertaining the reader. Enjoy.

When it comes to Phil Elmore I am NOT impartial. ...I despise the guy... ...Phil Elmore ...has a teenager's understanding of martial arts. ...I really wanted to review this book, go into specific detail about the idiocies it contained. But I shouldn't... ...He's not a complete idiot, of course, our Phil. I've never said that... ...Am I obsessed with Phil Elmore? Well, he does nag at me, like a hang nail,

like the bruise I have on my shin right now. It wasn't even as if all his tips are bad, or all his information is ridiculous. I try to read his work objectively. Usually I fail ... hence this rant... Phil Elmore, who co-founded a martial art and writes self-defense manuals, is a childish, immature martial artist... ...He's dangerous. To himself, to martial arts and especially to anyone who might read his work... ...You still need to ask me why I despise Phil Elmore?

These are the honest — and obviously heartfelt — words of the man or woman posting as "JKDChick" at the Internet's preeminent troll pit, the "Bullshido" forum. I don't think it would be unfair or immodest of me to characterize myself as the most-discussed individual on the site, eclipsing far more deserving and far more famous martial arts personalities. One sub-forum of the site is (or was) named after my first martial arts text; I've been sent downloaded graphics indicating that I did or do have my own icon there (a cute little smiley face with glasses and a goatee); I am the subject of countless angry threads there in which I am ridiculed and excoriated. It's obvious that I — little or, okay, not so little me — occupy the conscience of the Internet's largest group of would-be martial arts police, whose wildly inflated estimate of the importance and significance of their favorite site is matched only by the vast gulf that yawns between what they *think* they know about the martial arts and what they *actually* know.

Given "JKDChick's" pithy condemnations, you might be asking yourself just how accurate could be the commentary wrapped around them. The answer is, of course, *not very* — but when your explicit and avowed purpose in writing your screed is simply to bitch about someone whom you "despise," it's difficult not to meet, at the very least, your realistically low goals.

In an attempt to address as much of this polemic as possible — even containing, as it does, one or two begrudging compliments — I will go back to the beginning and address it point by point. Quoted text from the file, which was a "front page" essay on the aptly titled BS-do website, appears here in purple. I am quoting from it, rather than reproducing all of it. One hopes the shield of "fair use" behind which the Bullshido forum membership hides its thefts of copyrighted material from others' websites (for the purpose of reproducing and ridiculing it at the forum) will afford me similar (if equally disingenuous) aegis.

Before I do, however, allow me to indulge in the rather arrogant act of quoting myself. Before "JKDChick's" poison penmanship was brought to my attention, I — at *The Martialist's* discussion forum and in a rare moment of clarity, insight, and prescience — wrote this of critics of *Shorthand Empty Hand*:

Criticism of the book *invariably* centers on whether the critic grants his permission or approval (neither of which I require) for the *existence* of the book. ...Those few who've actually attempted substantive critiques of the book have either stated the obvious ("it's short," which of course it is, or "it's basic and for beginners," which of course it also is) or complained about the book I *didn't* write ("the book doesn't have this and this, so it's wrong or bad"). The **fact** is that the material in the text is simple enough — and fundamental enough — that no one with any sense should be able to take any real issue with it.

To date, *no one* has ever managed a reasonable critique of my work that dealt with the *content of that work* — for those that tried I could refute easily. Why do you think I have published point-counterpoint editorials at *The Martialist*? When someone actually bothers to argue *content*, it's very easy to state your case and defend what you believe in order to refute their criticisms.

No, it is much easier — and intellectually bankrupt — simply to bitch and moan about the source of the material in question, whining that he or she should not have produced the material in the first place...

The fact that such a large body of people spend so much time worrying about what I do tells me all I need to know about the significance of my work. The fact that they cannot then address the *content* of that work and must instead attack *me* as a person tells me all I need to know about the validity of their complaints.

"For those that believe no explanation is necessary," said Joseph Dunninger. "For those who do not, none will suffice."

Few quotes come more readily to mind when wading through "JKDChick's" vitriolic denunciation. To such people, every honest exposition — no matter how earnest — is an *excuse*. To such people, every thoughtful disclosure — no matter how full — is a *rationalization*. It is with this in mind that we

must read "JKDChick's" vehement, insulting, and admittedly biased missive. A more cynical man might wonder just why a martial artist and author of relatively minor stature would rate such obsessive attention — attention that is obsessive by the writer's own *admission*. It would be relatively easy to dismiss this with a Ayn Rand-like shrug of one's shoulders, consigning it to the dustbin labeled "Miserable people with poor self-images hate and envy those who accomplish, who succeed, and who produce." I don't know that I'm willing to let poor "JKDChick" go that easily, however. It is too seldom that I indulge, these productive and sleep-deprived days, in the pseudonymous point-by-point rebuttal I enjoyed so much in the dark, ancient days of the UseNet message boards. Forgive me, then, as I step on the young (old?) lady's (?) feelings in addressing this poorly conceived mess:

We begin with the long awaited article: “Shorthand Empty Hand™: This is NOT a ‘review’”. Basically, it’s a catharsis. After this, I should be done.

It is and was a mark of Internet trolls to announce, pointedly and repeatedly, that one is done with a given argument or conversation. This is because petty and insecure people — people not very sure of what they believe, do, or are — need desperately to get the last word. *Preemptively* getting the last word is no different, though indicates a level of premeditation that betrays one's lack of faith in the veracity of one's argument. The entity known as "JKDChick" goes on to announce that he, she, or it is not impartial where I am concerned. Here I don't think it would be unreasonable of me to conclude that 'despising' me might have something to do with this lack of objectivity.

I despise the guy. I didn't used to. Back when Bullshido was shiny and new ...I quite liked Sharp Phil. ...Since then, we've had a public falling out of course — or rather, Phil fell out with Bullshido — and all those little niggling problems, issues, discrepancies that I'd blinded myself to started to jump up and down in my peripheral vision, waving tiny red flags.

This is an imaginative revision of history. Years ago, before *The Martialist* was born, I maintained a martial arts section at PhilElmore.com. It was there that I wrote and published my first product reviews and editorials. It

was there that often-cited articles like my “Field Guide to Trolls” and my article, “How to Spot a Virtual Tough Guy” (which appeared in the *Electronic Journal of Martial Arts and Sciences*) were first made publicly available. (It is a point of very personal satisfaction to me that some of the people who criticize me online *even use the terminology that I popularized* in those martial-arts-troll-related articles.)

It was at PhilElmore.com that I first started receiving and publicly posting hate mail, too. I even maintained, briefly, and entire list of sites I thought worth *avoiding* as a waste of time. All of this activity was part of my fascination with “Antrollpology” — the psychology of Internet pretenders and disruptors.

Around that time, a friend referred me to the Bullshido website, which I think was still known as “McDojo” at that time (the name was changed to avoid a lawsuit from the McDonalds people, I am told). My friend figured that I would enjoy a site whose mission statement was the outing of fakes, frauds, and scams.

I participated at the site for a time and eventually — long before anyone knew who I was in the martial arts world online, much less cared — gave it up as a lost cause and a waste of time, for obvious reasons. A heavily trafficked forum full of angry and ignorant children swearing and lying at and to one another is not what I envision when I think of peer review and community-policing in the self-defense industry. I added the site to my list of sites to avoid and promptly forgot about it.

Not long after that, Neal “Phrost” Fletcher — the owner of Bullshido — contacted me via e-mail, complaining about the listing. He didn't think it a fair assessment of his community, about which he has (in my opinion) the most overblown sense of self-importance under which I have ever seen anyone labor. I don't remember exactly what I wrote to him, but I'm sure it was something along the lines that I thought his site overrun with loud kids who didn't know nearly as much as they *thought* they knew.

I don't think poor Neal ever forgave me for thinking less of his website than does he. Since then, he's had plenty of negative things to say about me publicly. I picture him lying awake at night, tossing and turning, thinking, *“Somewhere in North America there is a fat, balding writer with an Accounting degree who doesn't think much of my site! Can you believe it?”*

Since that time, of course, I've risen to some notoriety in the martial arts community. *The Martialist* is tremendously popular and logs high activity even when it is not updated with new material. My writing has been featured in several 'zines and in more than one hardcopy publication, such as *Concealed Carry* magazine. One of my essays was included in the extremely popular and prestigious collection, *Warriors: On Living with Courage, Discipline, and Honor*. Google the name "Phil Elmore" and you'll be amazed at the number of hits. I can say with complete honesty that this is due at least in part to the obsessive complaints of my critics, who absolutely cannot *stand* the fact that I am a private citizen and an ordinary man writing about self-defense. To such people, the success of someone who lacks no special credentials (and whose success thus shames them by comparison) is an intolerable affront.

I still remember when I was informed that I and "my" discussion forum had *an entire FAQ file* at Bullshido. Clearly, in the time since dismissing the forum as insignificant, I had come to much prominence in the minds of those still slumming there. Fast-forward to the dawn of 2006 and I'm supposed to be some sort of bitter reject *from* Bullshido, who "fell out" with the site and was driven from it, according to the revised story. The truth is far different — but what does the truth matter when attacking someone out of hatred?

Phil once wrote an article about the best way to store rattan Kali sticks so that they didn't warp like they do lying flat. ...Then [the awful truth about Phil Elmore's all-consuming evil, one presumes] struck me: I'd never noticed my sticks warping because mine always wear out before they can warp.

The conclusion the reader should reach, in the hate-addled brain of "JKDChick," is that I must never actually *train* with my sticks because they're sitting around warping (or rather, would be warping if I did not lovingly string them up to prevent this). Setting aside for a moment the fact that my admirer describes as lengthy and detailed an article that is really quite brief ("A Quick Tip for Hanging Sticks" was the original title, I think), one has to wonder how much training with sticks he or she actually *does*.

Most practitioners of such arts with whom I've worked end up accumulating quite a pile of sticks — cheap ones, nice ones, special ones, and even metal ones. At the time of writing that article I had a bag of "working sticks" that I carried in the trunk of my car so I would have them for class. The rest of my sticks — the ones staged for future use (or, in the case of a couple of unique carved sticks I picked up in a martial arts store, left to hang as the martial arts equivalent of "safe queens" that are just too nice to use) — I wanted to keep as straight as possible before I got around to using, fraying, and discarding them.



Call me obsessive compulsive, but when a stick starts to fray I don't want to use it anymore. This is because when I got my first training in sticks while training in Chidokwan Karate in college, our sticks bag was a big communal canvas sack full of sticks that were more duct tape than they were rattan. Each class, those that reached the bag first got the ones that were still decent, while those that got there after them made do with sticky masses of gray vinyl that might once have been *escrima*.

At the time, I — a college student with little disposable income not already earmarked for knives, swords, and pizza — vowed I would one day own an impressive collection of high-quality, well-maintained sticks.

Since that time I've given up on hanging the sticks or on maintaining a collection. I use them, break them, and then replace them with sticks of good quality. The bag in my trunk has changed, but there's still a bag there. The rest of my cheaper sticks ended up in the garage somewhere, to be pulled out — warped and dusty — when I need a substitute for whatever reason.

None of this could be known by "JKDChick," of course, unless he, she, or it was hiding in the bushes watching me (which, come to think of it, isn't all that unlikely). It doesn't matter that I've since written multiple articles on sticks and swords and published pictures taken in public settings of me training in just that. What would "JKDChick" care if I showed him, her, or it pictures of me training with respected instructor Kevin Seaman at a seminar largely devoted to stick work? What would it matter to him, her, or it that I've published other articles describing my training and providing photographic evidence of it? No, none of this is significant. The fact that I once wrote a very brief article about how to hang up rattan sticks to keep them from warping is *proof positive* that I don't train at all (or perhaps simply "enough") with such implements, and this is symbolic of my ongoing lack of commitment to the martial arts in general.

Of course, as we'll see later in this *not-a-review*, the fact that I've bothered to explain *any* of that to you is simply another "excuse," another rationalization. It could not be that I have any good-faith intent in what I do or what I say; it could not be that I am simply honest about what I think and believe; it could not be that there is a *reason* for anything I write that can be interpreted as anything *other* than that I am a pretender and a fool. "JKDChick" is one of those who *don't believe*, for whatever personal deficiencies or weaknesses, and thus *no explanation is or will be sufficient*.

Phil Elmore — for all his pretense to “warrior hood” (and please note he has contributed to a Paladin press non-fiction anthology an article called ‘Warrior Lessons

Learned and Unlearned') — has a teenager's understanding of martial arts.

Oh, how my critics hate and despise the apparent legitimacy conferred on me by Paladin's inclusion of my essay in *Warriors: On Living with Courage, Discipline, and Honor*. "Personally," wrote another critic of mine, whom I even considered a friend until my success in the martial arts drove a wedge between us, "I can't imagine any greater waste of the minutes of my life than reading Phil Elmore's thoughts on being a warrior."



The problem with this interpretation of events is that it completely ignores the point of the essay in question. In "Warrior Lessons Learned and Unlearned," I delved deeply into my own emotions and my own personal struggles in order to deliver to Paladin Press an essay I thought worthy of the honor they were granting me. Many of the contributors to the collection

are quite famous — luminaries in the martial arts field whose work includes many texts now sitting on my heavily laden bookshelves.

My essay is *not* several paragraphs about why I am a "warrior" and why you should learn from me. Rather, it describes the lessons I have learned (and those I wrongly learned and then discarded) during the course of my training in the martial arts. I explain, in self-deprecating and frankly critical terms, the personality traits I once possessed that my training *changed* or even *cured*. The martial arts made me more confident and self-assured, more confident, and more capable. They made me a better *man*. They cured me, in large part, of tendencies to obsessive-compulsion and hypochondria. Not to sound like Chuck Norris, or anything, but training in the martial arts produced such benefits in me that I am eager to tell anyone who will listen all about this fact — and in so doing I will not shrink from telling you *what was wrong with me before and while I started seeing those benefits*.

My point is that the essay is about self-discovery and the never-ending process of learning to be a better person, *not* pontification on what it means to be a black-bag spec-ops warrior badass and *not* presumptive bloviating on high-minded principles and battlefield strategies. It's a very real look at one person's *inner* flaws and battles, in this case mine. *That* is why it's in the book. I don't think the book's editor, Loren Christensen — a veteran martial artist, soldier, and law enforcement official with many excellent books to his credit — would be taken in by a lot of false posturing. Do you?

Moving on (and dismissing a few paragraphs of intellectually empty insults), we actually start to get to some of the material in my book, *Shorthand Empty Hand*:

...But the conclusions that are reached from the totality of [the] knowledge [of teenagers and sci-fi-convention-going gaming geeks] are generally silly, over-blown, pretentious or plain wrong. Phil's got the same problem and it's most glaringly obvious in the pages of this recent "manual", Shorthand Empty Hand.

I will give Mr. Elmore this. He has an excellent grasp of the fundamentals of writing. His style is florid but clear and well constructed. He suffers badly, though, from being his

own editor, what I refer to as the “Stephen King Syndrome”. King is also a master technician of the written word, and a good story-teller ... and he would be even better if he were not so powerful, so much a genre unto himself that no one will edit him anymore. Phil’s got a similar problem, but in his case it’s the fact he uses vanity press and the web to publish himself that handicaps him. His self-indulgence cripples what would be limpid prose in a more self-aware writer.

I love the fact — dearly, I do — that those who "despise" me cannot help but grudgingly admit that *I am a damned good writer*. These words, coming from someone whose hatred is so palpable, would translate to the offer of one's virginity if coming from a fan. I like the term "florid" as it relates to my writing. I even wrote an entire column in defense of verbosity, quite some time ago, acknowledging my fondness for such elaborate prose. While my admirer manages to couch it as an insult, the unavoidable fact is that, yes Virginia, *I am a good writer and even my enemies can't help but admit it*.

...I cannot free myself from this crushing weight of contempt for a man who couldn't hack aikido, dropped out of Wing Chun when his Sifu began to expect his students to be in decent shape and thinks that he needs to carry multiple weapons at all times to defend himself.

These statements briefly touch on more creative reinterpretations of reality concerning why I've studied (or stopped studying) what I have and what I believe when it comes to self-defense. We'll be revisiting this because our poor dear does so, but briefly, I'll address it.

I didn't "drop out" of Wing Chun Kung Fu. After struggling greatly with the decision, I *left* my Wing Chun kwoon and my teacher *because I was not enjoying the training*. There are many reasons someone might choose to do this and I detailed my inner struggle in a rather introspective article about it. I did not leave because I couldn't hack the physical aspects of it; not long after leaving Wing Chun to pursue Liu Seong Gung Fu, which I enjoyed much more, I added to my training lessons in Jeet Kune Do, which is more athletic, more... *aerobic* in its approach than were my Wing Chun classes.

Now, I'll never be a world-class athlete, but when I am doing something I enjoy I will push myself to the point of passing out and beyond. This, too, is not important to people who want so desperately to think ill of me. If I am some sort of weakling, some sort of lightweight, it is easier to dismiss me and thus to minimize what I have managed to accomplish. In this way, my critics can feel better about themselves and not feel quite so inferior when comparing what they've done (or would feel authorized or able to do) to what I do.

In all his writings, Phil's immense solipsism (I can use ten dollar words too) and defensive martyrdom flare up. Phil's inherent insecurities about himself and his training squirm off the page or computer screen. He asserts things like this:

"Most of my accomplishments in this field have been, for lack of a better word, 'unofficial'."

When my Jeet Kune Do instructor told me I had progressed through his beginner's curriculum faster than any other student he'd taught, that was an *unofficial* accomplishment. When my non-traditional teacher David promoted me several times after demanding and arduous sparring tests, that was an *unofficial* accomplishment. When *The Martialist* first started logging half a million hits a month — and representatives from companies involved in the martial arts and weapons industries started answering my telephone inquiries with, "Oh, Phil Elmore? The publisher of *The Martialist*, that Phil Elmore?" — that was an *unofficial* accomplishment. Every time I learn to perform adequately a technique in any of the multiple martial arts I study, that is an *unofficial* accomplishment. The only time any of these accomplishments become "official" in the eyes of spectators like "JKDChick" is when, one presumes, some external entity hands down a rank certificate, a belt, an award, or some other tangible prize. Prizes, feedback, affirmation — these are *not* why I do what I do. That is why everything I've managed to accomplish is "unofficial" and why I make the reference.

Now, sure, it would be nice to have found a single martial art to study with which i could stick for long enough to earn a rank that would impress the rubes, children, and insiders in the martial arts scene. I would be very

happy if that had happened — for it would mean I'd found something that suited me so well, that I liked so much, that offered teaching I found so invaluable, that I stayed for a long time. Unfortunately for me — and perhaps for the martial arts scene in general — this happens all too rarely. Removing factors like jobs and changes of location that might cause one to leave a school due to proximity, there are many, many schools and teachers who simply don't offer what I want. That is why I left Wing Chun. I left it, not to *flee* it, not to leave something too demanding, but to *devote my time instead to something I liked more*. In my case it was Liu Seong Gung Fu and Jeet Kune Do.

What my critics seem to miss — and what I am happy to have them ignore as I quietly go about continuing a decade and a half of training in unarmed and armed arts, styles, and systems — is that even when I move from something to something else, *I keep training*. I am now and always will be a student. I will always learn. I will always strive to accomplish new things. This is something they do not, have not, and probably cannot do.

To those whose only interest is in trying (in vain) to elevate themselves by attacking those who've accomplished more, no amount of derision will fill the empty spot within their souls. Such people live forever in the shadows of others, resenting the fact that those they see as *inferior* have dared what they would not.

"JKDChick" says as much in her screed. She, he, or it would not publish a book and has nothing to offer ordinary citizens seeking self-defense. She, he, or it believes herself to be better or more skilled than me. Therefore my publication of *Shorthand Empty Hand* is more than offensive to her; it is a personal insult. This is genuinely sad. I feel badly for her, him, or it — or I would, if I thought this person was anything more than a petty, angry, self-deluded, mean-spirited twerp.

He makes eternal excuses for why he couldn't keep up training in any one art. The vast majority of SHEH for example is an autobiography of Phil, packed with self-congratulatory anecdotes, spurious "compliments" and over-wrought quotations that serve to justify his lack of commitment, rank or continuity.

Here we come back to such people's inability to accept that which is earnest, that which is *genuine*, as honestly offered in good faith. I include my martial biography in *Shorthand Empty Hand* specifically so as not to misrepresent myself as an "expert." I don't consider myself an "expert" and will never appoint myself one. I would reject that description if it was applied to me — even if it was applied in the context of a field in which I **do** have impressive credentials, such as technical writing. (I have been a technical writer for 12 years and I am very good at it. I am well-paid. My father has been a technical writer for almost *twenty* years and I first learned the trade from him. If anyone called me an "expert" writer, good as I am, I'd defer to him over me. That doesn't diminish what I can do; it's simply arrogant to go around referring to yourself that way.)

There is no pleasing my most vocal critics, however. If I tell you exactly what I have and have not done, precisely what I have and have not earned, I must be making "eternal excuses." It could not possibly be that I'm proud of my training and what I have done, while recognizing that I have no credentials that would impress anyone. I have no appeals to authority to make. To persuade you of anything I have only my words, the reason with which I argue my opinions, and the degree to which what I say resonates with the reader.

I am of the opinion that if I first tell you exactly who I am and what I have done, you are free to choose to read on or not. You are free to decide if the opinions I then express make sense to you or do not. That is the respect I have for the reader. My critics, meanwhile, believe anyone reading anything in the martial arts — anyone who is not one of their number — is a moron who is easily taken in by dangerous and inadvisable techniques and methods. They believe you will literally fall for anything, if they are not standing in the breach to warn you off with pointing fingers, stolen and photoshopped pictures, and angry Internet posts laden with vulgarity.

It is the compulsive need of someone who has never garnered much respect or attention to be seen and judged worthy by others. It's sad and dorky and very stereotypical. I was like that once, fat and awkward, too "smart" for my own good and just convinced that if I didn't MAKE people like me, I wasn't worth much. I got better. It's called growing up.

If essays of this type are what this person considers "growing up," I'd hate to see what he, she, or it would consider aging gracefully. I find it curious that someone affiliated with a forum where I am such a frequent topic of conversation, where I have my own FAQ file, and whose members are convinced I am leading (or am likely to lead) astray some vast number of ignorant fools who don't know better than to listen to my opinions about self-defense, would then declare that I have "never garnered much respect or attention." It's also simply ironic that someone making such childish attacks would presume to judge anyone else's maturity.

The Martialist is well-respected as a publication, my work is well-respected by people capable of rational thought, and I don't do what I do for anyone's approval or affirmation — but even if we stipulated all of this and then dismissed it, I'd say the one thing anyone could verify that I get, especially online, is *attention*. I don't do what I do for that, either, but it always helps to know that people will read what you write (even if they don't agree with it). For a writer, knowing your words will be read makes you feel powerful — for your opinions, the opinions of one person, are being considered (even if they are rejected) by an audience that could number in the hundreds or the thousands. *That* is intoxicating and I don't deny its attractions — but to me, it is the *writing* that matters. I would write even if I knew my work would never see the light of day, simply because these ideas have to get out of my head.

Phil tries to respond to and attack his critics in many a heavy-breathing sweep of language. We'll just step away from the arrogance inherent in the use of words like "punditry" and "pedantry". We'll nod and smile at someone who describes their detractors as "hoplophobic" (it basically means "an irrational fear of guns" and is a recent made-up word, not in dictionaries yet. "Hoplophilia" is another related word, which I'll leave you to figure out on your own). What's important is this: there is a slim chance that during the construction of the paragraph in SHEH that contains those phrases, Phil was thinking of Bullshido briefly. I felt all warm and fuzzy.

I've said before that I've been debating and arguing online since the old UseNet days. I'm very, very good at it. I was never on the debate team in school, but I think I should have been; I think quickly, type almost as fast,

I'm good with rhetorical tools, I recognize rhetorical ploys, I'm logical and methodical, I can be humorous when need be, and I *enjoy arguing with people*. I know that sounds arrogant, but it's also true, so I can't apologize for it or diminish it. I don't *try* to respond to my critics; I *demolish* them. I do so easily because they *make* it easy. Take this incredibly lengthy piece to which I am responding. It's almost completely childish personal attacks (and what little substance it contains we'll address presently). That's not hard at all to ridicule, to refute, and to dismiss — for all you have to do is explain the *truth* and throw in some counter-insults.

We'll also have to forgive "JKDChick" his, her, or its ignorance. *Hoplophobia*, a word I've used in some of my writing online as well as in *Shorthand Empty Hand*, is a term coined (or at least popularized — I *believe* coined) by famous firearms columnist and "The Gunner's Guru" Jeff Cooper, whose writing in *Guns and Ammo* I have always enjoyed. It was Cooper who gave us "The Modern Technique of the Pistol" and it is Cooper who has left an indelible mark on contemporary weaponscraft. I don't expect a *hoplophobe* like "JKDChick" to know any of that, so she can be forgiven for failing to see this as an informed allusion rather than me making up words to sound smart and smug.

I also don't expect someone like that to see past his, her, or its foolish biases when it comes to weaponry. That's a matter of philosophy that one either understands or does not. Being armed — being *prepared* — is the acknowledgment that you are not omnipotent, that no matter how well trained you might be there will always be someone (or a group of someones) who can take you.

Those who see being armed as paranoia or, worse, as indicative of poor martial skill (or a lack of confidence in those skills) are the ones who are incredibly, supremely, unbelievably *arrogant* — because they actually believe they don't "need" any of that, that their training and their misconceptions about how confident and competent they are will be enough to see them through any situation. Worse, they simply give in to defeatism when considering those situations in which weapons are necessary, proclaiming them scenarios for which one simply cannot successfully train. That is the problem with the narrowly defined mixed-martial-arts attitude that is the only widely accepted training doctrine at websites like Bullshido. It confuses sport for reality and substitutes wishful thinking for realistic preparation.

It's a fact that people with impoverished vocabularies become easily nettled when confronted with someone who enjoys words, who uses them to good effect, and who enjoys uncommon or complex turns of phrase. There is little I can do about that. No doubt a good many of Bullshido's members have reached this part in my rebuttal because their lips got tired while they were busily sounding out each sentence.

The themes of both *The Martialist* and SHEH aren't things like "warrior hood" and "objectivism. They are deeper and darker than that: constant assertions of betrayal and abandonment; monotonous repetition of honesty, sacrifice, and bravery; the solitary hero's battle against the withering scorn of the "establishment". Buried in the storm of words is the idea that some how what Phil's trying to sell is reality.

It is sad to see someone so deluded about reality that he, she, or it is willing both to decry those with a more honest view and to demand his, her, or its views be validated regardless of relevance. A reader of *The Martialist*, writing from the UK, actually summed up my publication and my outlook better than I have managed to do myself:

"I have read the introductions and discussion on Martialism on The Martialist website," he told me in an e-mail. "In brief, your argument for Martialism, as I understood it, is [that by] ignoring how, when, why, etc., one may be drawn into violent conflict, it is critically important to be as well equipped and prepared for it (whether by weapons, tools, tactics, training, etc.) to maximise the chances of emerging from it with your objectives met. You stress the importance of pragmatism, practicality, and applicability in a real situation, of both physical and philosophical aspects of martial training, emphasising them over approaches that rely on being compelling, easy to absorb, concordant with popular views, etc."

That is the theme of my publications. Is one of which I am proud. It is life-affirming. It is the firm conviction that self-defense is the inalienable right of all human beings — young or old, fat or fit, skilled or merely scared. It is my goal to help all those ordinary citizens out there for whom the ridiculous MMA-mindset and the unrealistic blather of countless would-be "experts" is of no help at all or, worse, discourages those who might otherwise study

self-defense.

"JKDChick" goes on to whine about my co-founding of the Shanliang Li martial system. "Creating a martial art is not something most people are going to do," she mewls. "Not even those of us who've been training for most of our lives." That is, of course, the emotion underlying so much of the criticism leveled against me. How *dare* I? Well, I do a lot of things most people simply can't be bothered to do or to accomplish. I do it for *me*. I need no one's permission and no one's approval. I realize this is rare in the circles traveled by people who admit they are "obsessed" with those they "despise," but that's not my problem.

Taking quotes out of order, we'll deal with the same topic before moving on to other deliberate misconceptions:

Oh, and the strange, strange concept that being able to string together words in a sentence makes you a qualified martial artist: "... (Pearson) would only found the style with my help. I was not qualified to found a fighting style (Ed: You think? Italics added) on my own, but I did bring to the table my background as a sometime journalist and longtime martial student".

To me that's like my saying I'm not qualified to fly a fighter jet on my own, but I can drive a car and I've seen "Top Gun" like 5 times, so I can teach you flight tactics.

Missing completely is the acknowledgment here that while I had (and have) no credentials qualifying me to start a martial art or found a martial system according to *spectators*, I had (and have) my ability to communicate (invaluable in helping someone publicize and relate a system) and I have *years* of earnest study in the martial arts *even if my critics choose to dismiss that*. Techniques and methods I prefer became part of Shanliang Li; that is simply a fact. However, I don't go around saying, "You should listen to me because I co-founded a system!" It is simply true — like saying I wear glasses or that I consume too much salt.

Also missing is any understanding of the concept that while my critics have been busy complaining, I have continued my studies. It has been years since the initial founding of Shanliang Li, a process not yet complete (the

website is still under construction and the curriculum not yet fully defined). Shanliang Li is also not *mine*. It's David's, and I accept that I have co-founded it because he told me he considers that true. If he had not said that, I would consider my assistance... well, *assistance* only.

Writing *Shorthand Empty Hand* is likewise not, I don't believe, "creating a martial art," which implies a degree of completion that a short book of this type cannot have. Writing the book certainly is codifying a system and perhaps that distinction is semantic only. If that's the case, fine. It's also possible that once I finish writing all the books in the *Shorthand Empty Hand* series, what results *could* be considered an art rather than a system. When that happens, it happens — and even *more* time will have passed, during which my critics will have merely talked while I will have continued my training.

I don't consider myself unqualified to tell you how I think self-defense should be performed or pursued. *Shorthand Empty Hand* is also most definitely *mine*. Is it a martial art? Is it just a system? Is it a method? Is it a concept? I don't know what you think and I don't believe it matters. It is merely my opinion, distilled as simply and efficiently as I can offer it. I said nothing I would not tell a family member or another loved one. I offered nothing of which I am not proud. I did not misrepresent the ways in which I arrived at those opinions. The reader is free to choose accordingly.

Of course, if I *really* want to parse my words, I could explain the difference between the phrases "was not" and "am not."

As I predicted, none of this deals with *what I've written*. Rather, it deals with *whether the reader grants his, her, or its approval for the fact that I wrote what I did*. I cannot overemphasize the frequency with which criticism of my book revolves around the statement, "**Well, I would not have written a book with my experience...**" Implied every time that is said is that the critic believes himself superior to me, more skilled than me, more experienced than me. If he would not start a system, my starting one is an affront. What this means is that everyone making this statement is not judging my work; he or she is reacting to his or her feelings of comparative inferiority.

Phil has other obsessions, of course: the necessity of pre-emptive force, how you must attack first, and destroy your

opponent; a nearly debilitating rage towards panhandlers; and weapon obsession and paranoia.

The importance of preemptive force is not an obsession; it is merely a reality. I don't expect someone who trains unrealistically to understand that. I certainly do confess that I do not like street people and I absolutely despise beggars; I've written about this topic extensively at *The Martialist*. An understanding of the importance of weapons is hardly obsession and paranoia, but *hoplophobes* frequently project their mental weakness on others in jumping to this conclusion. I have written extensively about this topic, both generally and with regard to hoplophobes specifically.

In his own words “I remember thinking that I was walking around unarmed amidst a couple of thousand people who all seemed to be ‘strapped’” — this after encountering TWO people who carried knives.

This is simply and transparently dishonest. My admirer takes the original quote out of context in order to distort what I was trying to say. The complete quote says this:

I have been a student of the martial arts since 1990. I am passionate about self-defense and a firm believer in preemptive force. I believe all human beings should have the means to defend themselves against society's predators. I am also an avid student of all forms of weaponry, from knives, sticks, swords, and more exotic martial implements to modern firearms.

My interest in self-defense and my pursuit of martial skill started when I was a freshman at Alfred University (though I do remember reading some karate books in the library of my high school when I was in the 9th grade — it's safe to say I was at least curious back then). I used to DJ a radio show with a friend of mine on W.A.L.F, 89.7 FM, in Alfred. During one show, my friend invited a guest who spent her time off-microphone playing with a butterfly knife. At the time I thought this was unusual, so I related the story to a classmate the next day as we waited for the professor to arrive. Another student a couple

of chairs behind me, overhearing us, produced his butterfly knife.

I remember thinking that I was walking unarmed amidst a couple of thousand people who all seemed to be “strapped.” Not much longer after that, my neighbor (the fellow who occupied the room next door to mine in our dorm) showed up with a small Cold Steel tanto he’d purchased during a weekend in New York City (where he lived). I obtained from him a Cold Steel catalog and started planning.

My fascination concerning — and interaction with — knives developed thereafter, as I amassed a collection of self-defense blades of my own. During college I found myself confronted by a heavily armed occult group, from whose members I learned a thing or two (mostly what not to do with knives and machetes — it’s a very long, very complicated story). It was meeting the leader of this group in 1992 that really spurred my interest in the martial arts, pushing me to enroll in the Alfred Martial Arts Association.

Thus it was that I started my “formal” studies in Chidokwan Karate in college. I was fortunate to get into the slot as a physical education requirement, for those not yet seniors seldom rated the coveted classes. This was the first truly physical activity I’d ever pursued in my life, having been a dismal “athlete” in high school. I warmed to it quickly and soon became quite obsessed with Karate.

Sounds a little different, doesn't it? Instead of meaning the reader to take my conclusion seriously, I am clearly stating that I was — probably unrealistically — freaked out by meeting two seemingly random people in quick succession, both of whom had the *same kind* of knife. I am relating the story because it led me through a series of bizarre events that culminated in studying formal martial arts for the first time (and was the beginning of a life-long love of blades, which is simply background). That sounds a lot less interesting and a lot less damning than simply saying, "I met two people with knives! Everyone is armed! Gaaaaaa!" My overreaction to what was, in context, an unusual coincidence at best set me down a path that had far-reaching consequences.

Recently, there was a public and embarrassing meltdown over his Wing Chun Sifu's devastating comment:

“You on the other hand barely train and are viewed by your former and present instructor AND former and present classmates as a dead rank beginner with VERY LITTLE skill or real life experience... despite your "15 years" in martial arts.”

Ah, yes, the famous quote — one I have addressed many times and one I counter with quotes from two other teachers, one of them a recognized traditional instructor. The only person embarrassed by any sort of "meltdown" after I left Wing Chun Kung Fu — quietly and respectfully after deciding that I was not enjoying my training there — was my former instructor, who made quite a fool of himself consorting with people who, when he was associated with me, had nothing but vile insults to offer where he was concerned.

Everyone knows that the assessment of a teacher one has rejected, one who has attacked you for writing a book he didn't believe you should write (which he'd never read), *must* be fair and impartial — especially when he offers his assessment after several days and multiple posts of an ongoing argument. Right?

Let's just say that my instructor, in my opinion, both legitimized my book through his too-loud protests while demeaning *himself* in attacking, unprovoked, a former student — a student who never treated him with anything other than respect and kindness. His opinion is worse than revisionist history — it is simply not impartial.

Remember, too, that my instructor promoted me not once, but *twice*. If I was the poor student we are expected to believe I was in his revision of history where I am concerned, why would he have promoted me both times? I was one of his senior students. I had been with the school since it opened. We were *friends*. Compare and contrast this to the various negative things he had to say about me after we had our falling out. There is a paradox here. If I was a poor student, my teacher promoted me when he should not have and allowed me to remain at his school when he should not have. If I was not a poor student and I earned my promotions and my

position in the school, my former teacher's assessment cannot be accurate. Both cannot be true at the same time.

Is it so hard to understand, really, that when people get angry with you they sometimes say things that are less than objective, less than impartial, and therefore less than accurate?

Phil has a gift though for overstating the obvious. Intelligent, basic principles, which all competent teachers espouse as building blocks, get presented by Phil with far more weight than they deserve.

What my critics don't seem to understand is that they cannot have it both ways in *this* regard, either. Either I am overstating the obvious building blocks or I am spinning a web of dangerous drivel. Later in this same pile of foolishness, "JKDChick" calls me (and what I write) just that — *dangerous*. How can the obvious be so dangerous? Well, it can't — unless one's hatred blinds one to just that. My book was written *for beginners*. Of *course* it states the obvious.

Forward pressure, called by Phil in SHEH forward drive or space domination is the first fighting principle that most people learn. Put simply, it's harder to fight backing up, so you need to be able to press in on your opponent, to take control of the space between you. The assertion though, that moving forward is ALWAYS the right thing to do is just ... well, it's not wrong precisely. It's USUALLY a good thing, but footwork is more about controlling distance than JUST moving forward. ...In SHEH I felt like I was reading the ramblings of a 17 year old who just skimmed the "Tao of Jeet Kune Do" and thinks he's being profound...

I specifically state in *Shorthand Empty Hand* that it is necessary sometimes to back up in order to take advantage of your footwork or in moving off line — but I also state that you should be overwhelming your opponent, driving forward, whenever possible. This is a fundamental principle of WWII combatives, one of the heavy influences on what I do and what I see as pragmatic self-defense. The fact that my admirer can't debate this concept without hurling silly personal attacks just ices this rancid cake.

It's FRUSTRATING, to see some good mixed with so much bad. Admonishments to be aware, not get too focused on any one thing in a fight, keep your hands up, maintain space, move forward, the fact that your feet can't beat your hands for speed — this is all good stuff. Simple, basic, isn't-this-all-obvious? stuff. It all bears repeating. It's not new and Phil does have the honesty to say that.

This is probably the only really honest portion of this not-a-review — and it's actually a pretty accurate assessment of the book's contents. One has to wonder what about that suddenly becomes "dangerous" when my admirer is searching for a bravura conclusion to this sad outburst.

Another gem from SHEH: "This slightly blurred holistic vision not only helps you perceive movement ..." That's just stupid talk. Slightly blurred holistic vision? Please. In a book ostensibly written for rank beginners with no experience, all that phrase does is invite people to cross their eyes and squint. Holistic adds nothing but potential confusion. I know what the guy means — most martial artists of experience will immediately know he means you need to see the whole body, even if only in your peripheral vision, but using the word "blurred" is just dangerous. The only time my vision blurs in a fight is if I've been hit really hard.

Now, with the rest of the material in the book leading up to this quote excerpted, this terribly inscrutable sentence might seem a little more accessible to the common beginner. Unfortunately, this is really more about "JKDChick" getting angry when confronted with a word he, she, or it had to look up in a dictionary. I'm sorry; I don't assume my readers are morons. I realize that assuming everyone but you is a moron is the prerequisite for becoming part of the Bullshido moderators' team, but I'd hate to see that become a universally accepted standard.

Here's what I said:

Focus on nothing and everything. Much debate has taken place in the martial arts world regarding what or where to watch in a physical altercation. When you face someone whom you

must fight, for whatever reason, do you watch their eyes? Do you watch their hands? Do you focus on the *dan tien*, the body's center? Do you watch the leading elbow, the shoulder, the hips? On what should you focus?

The answer, much as it might sound like a convenient dodge, is all of these and none of them. When you face off with someone, blur or unfocus your vision slightly. Do not stare at any given part of the opponent's body. Instead, take in the whole body as a single entity, seeing everything and nothing at once. This slightly blurred holistic vision not only helps you perceive movement in the other person, but makes it easier for you to dehumanize him — to see him as an opponent rather than a person, which in turn makes it easier for you to deliver physical force if you must.

Not so hard to absorb now, is it? My Wing Chun instructor (yes, that one) encouraged even us poor, benighted beginners to focus on the body's center, the *dan tien*, taking in everything and nothing at once in order to perceive movement. This is not a hard concept. It might seem hard to those who think certain mysteries are the purview of only the experienced and the worldly, but it's fairly easy to grasp.

Phil's rhetorical bag of rhetorical tricks is always getting hauled out. He's a master of the straw man — in SHEH Phil "defends" the principle of keeping your hands up against its detractors, citing arguments I've heard no one espouse.

This is completely false. I wrote an article, for example, called *Three Criticisms and Defenses of Hands-Up Ready Stances*, which became the core of this section of *Shorthand Empty Hand*. The criticisms I addressed came *directly* from Internet forum commentary on an earlier article in the series, *Maintaining Space and Weapons Transition*. The earlier article was cited at a discussion board and I found it in my referrer logs. The criticisms of it struck me as misguided, so I noted them and wrote the second article to address them. Furthermore, these criticisms are the ones I've seen most often with regard to hands-up ready stances. Claiming they are "straw men" is both intellectually dishonest and lazy. It is denying reality for the sake of scoring a rhetorical point.

Oh, and while we're at it, what's with the phrase "Phil's rhetorical bag of rhetorical tricks?" Is that another publication of the Department of Redundancy Department?

He's good with the "appeal to authority" gambit too, sloughing off responsibility for his attitudes on various masters, writers and posters on Pax Baculum.

This is a meaningless statement and easy to make when not backed with any substantiating quotes. I'm not even sure exactly what it means. I *think* it means I make appeals to authority, though it might mean I dismiss as appeals to authority valid criticism of me. Either way, I don't assign responsibility for anything I believe to anyone but me, though I do believe in crediting my sources and influences.

Phil sets up straw man after straw man in his articles as standard operating procedure.

It is more than a little annoying to see someone redefine the logical fallacy of the "straw man" as "anything Phil says with which I don't agree." Forming a straw man is deliberately misinterpreting your opponent's position in order to attack that position more easily. It is not simply any premise with which my admirer disagrees.

SHEH is particularly bad for it, by the way — the idea that "real" people can't afford to train hard because they can't afford to be punched in the head and go blind gets multiple mentions. Now, I've trained for upwards of 17 years. My instructor's been at it longer. I've asked the Bullshido community of over 10 000 members for information. And with that entire pool of people and experience I believe there was ONE documented case of someone going blind from a punch and that was because of cerebral swelling. Maybe two.

This is what comes of relying too much on the mythical "10,000 members" of one's forum for important medical information. Setting aside the fact that any webmaster will tell you that for every hundred members a forum lists, one in ten of those is actually *active*, to dismiss the dangers of, say, a retinal detachment from a severe blow to the head is to *deny reality*. (According to *reality*, *one out of every ten thousand people* in the United

States will be affected by a retinal detachment this year. *Any hard blow to the head* can cause such a detachment. I'm not at all concerned with the incidents of such problems among competitors and athletes, who — particularly in, say, boxing — are prescreened for such risk factors and are the least likely to experience them before the fact.)

Of course, focusing on incidents of blindness in sportfighting takes what I said wildly out of context and changes its emphasis. Here's what I *actually* wrote:

You see, life is not a Kung Fu movie. It is not a game. It is not a reality show. It is not a Pay-Per-View airing of the Ultimate Fighting Championship™. The average citizen has responsibilities and a life to live. He doesn't spend six hours a day, every day, training. He can't afford to slug it out with some disgruntled mixed martial arts athlete because he can't risk getting punched so hard he goes *blind*. He can't take the chance he'll contract a blood-borne illness while he and his challenger bash their fists into each other, leaking from cuts to their faces and knuckles. He's not interested in indulging someone else's ego. He's a grownup living and operating in a grown-up world and he can't show up to work at the office on Monday with two black eyes and a nose wrapped in bandages.

Changes the focus and the thrust of the quote a bit, doesn't it? Again, reality and truth are not considerations when one is on the warpath.

Phil is also obsessed with “personal space”, about not letting anyone close enough to attack you. It's as though he feels he's in a ninja movie, with shadowy enemies poised to strike at any moment. And he's schizoid about it. From one sentence to the next he stresses that if someone is close enough to attack you, you must pre-empt them. The next sentence warns that you can't do this unless your life is in danger and can't just go around attacking people.

This is so dishonest I almost don't know where to begin. Yes, I do discuss the fact that you can't run around attacking people who do not represent a credible threat. This is simply part of a cogent and realistic discussion of the legal ramifications of self-defense that is included in my supposedly "paranoid" book. I also state that when someone *does* represent a credible threat, you must preempt them *if you can*. This is basic and realistic fighting

theory — not some elaborate scheme created by a madman. (Personal space is probably the most important consideration in determining when you must use physical force. Their proximity to you determines what they can do to you.) In the midst of all that, I *also* state that you can't protect your personal space to distraction:

In life, especially if your social interactions are healthy, you will find yourself in venues you cannot control. There will be times when you have no choice but to permit others to violate your personal space because the quarters are too close. If you've ever stood with others in a crowded restaurant or bar, waited in line at an amusement park, walked the congested streets of a major city, used public transportation, or even attended church, you have permitted others to get within striking distance of you. These situations are unavoidable. It is neither practical nor possible to lead a normal life while keeping every other human being beyond arms' reach.

When you must allow people into your personal space, your only choice is to remain aware of them and what they are doing. Stay alert but calm, absorbing what is going on in your proximity. If you detect something inappropriate, act on it. Until then, be content simply to watch or even feel those crowding you. There will be times when you are so crowded that you won't be able to look around easily; at those times your sense of touch (as others press against your arms and shoulders, for example) is your only indication of what is happening around you.

In self-defense scenarios, there will be those times when you cannot preserve your personal space. A sudden attack in which your opponent is abruptly on top of you is one such case. A seemingly innocent social interaction in which an individual surprises you through deception is another. You must be capable of fighting and of seizing the initiative even when taken by surprise. You will never be able to predict every conceivable situation in which something surprising could occur.

In those cases in which you do perceive a potential threat approaching and have both time and space in which to deal with that threat, you can employ the hands-up methodology. Keeping your hands up in the course of a physical altercation helps protect your vulnerable head and neck. Getting those hands up ahead of time provides that protection preemptively while helping to establish your personal space (and sending a strong nonverbal message to that effect).

Again, the impression one gets from what I've *actually written* is vastly different from the deliberate misinterpretation offered by my admirer.

...we descend into the pits of madness, otherwise known as “techniques”. These include: a counter to an arm grab that would be useful maybe 2% of the time, if the guy grabbed you JUST right;

This may be a reference to rolling into a driving elbow when someone tries to grab you, which I do mention in my book. Dismissing it as something that won't work is purely ignorance. All of the commentary offered on technique is similarly misinformed. Poor "JKDChick" doesn't seem to have learned much in her time in the martial arts.

the palm heel, which I hate and always have, since I've messed up my wrists over and over with it;

I hate to put too fine a point on it, but someone who messes up his or her wrists performing palm heels *is not performing them correctly*. One of the advantages of the palm heel is that it takes advantage of one of the body's natural weapons and keeps the hand and wrist in a position in which they are *less* likely to be damaged. This is one of the reasons palm heels are recommended in WWII combatives and programs descended from them.

the edge of the hand (he actually invokes “Austin Powers Judo Chop”) a flashy, stupid technique much beloved of the young and foolish;

One wonders how young and foolish you have to be to dismiss edge-of-hand blows as "flashy" and "stupid." They are another of the body's natural weapon configurations and (again) are recommended in WWII combatives for that reason. The chop (and the forearm blow, which is related) are common to many martial arts I have studied, including Wing Chun and Liu Seong Gung Fu. I don't care if it does invoke "Austin Powers" — real life is not a movie and understanding that is, well, really important.

an avocation of the Wing Chun rooted vertical punch that just left me breathless with laughter;

One can only hope that my admirer's natural reaction to her own ignorance is to become "breathless with laughter," for the Wing Chun rooted vertical punch is extremely powerful — and vertical punches are less likely to damage the hand and wrist than are horizontal punches. This is an anatomical and physical fact. While the personal insults were amusing, this commentary on technique displays a disturbingly high level of ignorance when it comes to the martial arts methods discussed. This is someone with many years of experience?

and the idea that hammer fists are essentially superior to punches.

As I explain in the book, hammer fists *are* essentially superior to punches — unless you enjoy broken knuckles. For example, try punching a cinder block compared to applying a hammer fist to a cinder block. Do the same with the side or top of a human skull. One technique is much more likely to break your knuckles than the other. One technique makes use of the natural weaponry of the body by using the strongest, fleshiest portion of the hand as the striking surface. Can you guess which is which?

Everything — every technique — Phil advocates has some marginal or perhaps realistic value. But almost NONE of them could be properly applied by someone with no training.

This is, of course, false, but if someone thinks everyone is a moron, they are inclined to believe that nobody can manage anything without their intervention.

And he seems to revere the “chin jab”, which as far as I understand it is a palm heel strike under the chin. This, like a groin kick, is not an off switch.

I do not "revere" the chin jab; I simply recognize that is a very powerful technique. Those with any understanding of combatives grasp this. Sportfighters and MMA trolls dismiss it or, worse, think it refers to a conventional jab aimed at the chin.

Of course, Phil hates ground fighting.

I don't "hate" groundfighting. I do, however, hate the idea of deliberately going to the ground in a real altercation — for very realistic reasons, which I explain in the book. I also encourage the reader to seek cross-training in grappling for those occasions when things go wrong. I even offer some suggestions for worst-case scenarios should an untrained person end up getting taken down.

He mistook one section of the new Army combatives manual for the be-all-and-end-all of Army combat training and decided that all they were teaching was BJJ. He was rightfully ripped apart for that one on several Army forums.

I didn't 'mistake' anything; I correctly assessed *the disproportionate amount* of groundfighting and BJJ-related material in the Army's new combatives manual. I also was not "ripped apart" on "several Army forums." I received both positive and negative feedback on the article, at online sites and in e-mail, much of it from people who served and who had seen or experienced the training. They were roughly equally divided. Some demanded to know how I could dare criticize the program, while others told me that I was absolutely correct in my condemnation of it. The Army is as political — perhaps more — as any other organization when it comes to selecting weapons and training curricula. This BJJ-related curriculum simply isn't an improvement over previous H2H programs. My believing this apparently makes me a bad person to those who believe wholeheartedly in the groundfighting-centric sport MMA methodology, but their derision does not change reality.

Implied in criticism of my criticism is that one dare not ever complain about anything the military does or how it goes about doing it. As we all know, our armed forces' leadership is well known for its perfection, its unerring ability always to choose the best methods and the best equipment. It never makes mistakes. Right?

He actually invokes the “broken glass and the other guy’s buddies” arguments about going to the ground. But he is right that you shouldn’t TRY to go to the ground, and once you’re there you’ve gotta assume your fighting for your life. So one more small nugget of good information oozes its way clear of the muck.

Yes, I actually discuss terrain, weaponry, and multiple opponents as factors that make intentional groundfighting dangerous. Yes, I do say you shouldn't try to go there but this might happen and you must fight for your life. This "small nugget" is actually the primary concept of the section on groundfighting, but I guess mischaracterizing it makes it easier to rail against me.

And then the next chapter of SHEH is highlighted by a Sammy Franco quote.

For those who might be unaware, I HATE SAMMY FRANCO. He states openly that women can't fight, shouldn't train and are only good for sucking. As one might guess, this doesn't endear me to him or to anyone who respects him.

Shorthand Empty Hand contains over a dozen quotes, chosen because they were at least vaguely related to the chapters they preface. I happen to have included a quote from Reality Based Self-Defense (RBSD) instructor Sammy Franco with which I agree. To highlight only this quote and then elaborately freak out about it seems a little silly, to me, but then, I'm not an obsessive stalker who despises the subject about whom he is writing. Hell, I think Sammy Franco is kind of a *dick*, to be honest. But the quote happens to make sense.

Both he and Phil denigrate "sport fighting" as being unrealistic because it's one on one, ignoring one simple fact: there is NO way to train confidently for multiple attack. None. You know what usually happens when ANYONE gets attacked by multiple people? They get beaten up and/or die. The sum total of Phil's advice is: don't get surrounded. That's nice. You might want to try breathing in and out too.

The sum total of my advice on multiple opponents is just a *little* more complicated than that, explaining as it does the concept of "attacking the corners." (Whether "JKDChick" *hates* Sun Tzu is not discussed in the "essay.") As for my beliefs on why sportfighting is unrealistic training (and dismissing the defeatism with which sportfighters justify their unrealistic approach), you can read *The Martialist's* point-counterpoint editorial on the topic.

Phil Elmore, who co-founded a martial art and writes self-defense manuals, is a childish, immature martial artist.

This "JKDChick," who has accomplished nothing of note in the self-defense field and who resents the fact that I have, is a childish, immature individual whom I could not characterize as a *martial* artist.

Decent martial artists take baby steps towards competence (keep your hands up, have good footwork, forward pressure, don't hesitate on the attack) and build on them into their own personal enlightenments, recognizing that reading Musashi, Bruce and Sun Tzu till your eyes bleed isn't going to make really fighting any easier. Phil feels things like that are the only credentials he requires.

Decent martial artists recognize that attacking others emotionally and dishonestly to elevate themselves actually *diminishes* the martial artist. Decent martial artists focus on their own training and their own productive work, offering something rather than demanding to be validated. Decent martial artists *contribute to the self-defense community*, rather than generating endless megabytes of angry and pointless rhetoric. The only credentials I require are a keen wit, a clear and critical mind, skill as a writer, and the willingness to stand up for what I believe. Any reasonable person can then judge my work on its own merits.

He couldn't hack aikido, karate or wing chun but declares himself relentless.

I left Karate because I graduated the college at which it was offered. I left Aikido because a doctor told me, "The reason your arms are going numb is because the stress on your wrists is too great and you are going to develop tendonitis — stop doing that." (Ask the Aikido practitioners you know just how many of them have "permanently bugged" wrists — and ask yourself if a writer can afford to be debilitated in that way.) I left Wing Chun because I wasn't happy with the training — and I left it for not one, but two arts I enjoyed more. If that is an inability to "hack" something, so be it — but I have to wonder why some people need so *badly* to think ill of me.

I have continued writing and continued training despite the endless derision, criticism, hostility, and vile, personal, petty attacks of people like

"JKDChick" — people who, by comparison, have done nothing and will do nothing to help others in the pursuit of success in self-defense. I have held myself up to constant public criticism despite knowing just how vicious these people can be. I have not been deterred, I have not been daunted, and I will not be denigrated dishonestly. I think that's a pretty textbook definition of "relentless." I'll let you decide.

He feels the need to be heavily armed whenever he leaves the house but considers himself a warrior.

I feel the need to be prepared for emergencies and I am not arrogant enough to think I can "take" anyone I meet with my bare hands and attitude alone. Armed citizens make society safer — but the responsibility they take for the defense of their families and themselves is something society's sheep will never grasp and never admire.

He writes about athletic training but doesn't want to sweat.

I don't know anybody who gets up and says, "I really, really want sweat coming out of me. I mean, that's my mission in life today. Perspiration is great. It is a goal unto itself." I've left my Jeet Kune Do and Liu Seong Gung Fu training sessions so drenched in sweat that I needed to pack a larger towel in my gear bag — but no, at no time did I think about how much I wanted to experience that damp sensation. I think poor "JKDChick" needs to learn that sometimes in life we do things we don't enjoy because we must — and that sometimes in life we are faced with things that make us feel badly, but which we must accept with grace.

He espouses objectivism, free speech and dissent but bans anyone from his forum who disagrees with him.

I espouse Objectivism, I laud freedom of speech, and I tolerate dissent — but I ban from my forum anyone who cannot meet basic standards of intellectual honesty and substantive discussion. "JKDChick" was one such person who was "disinvited" to *The Martialist's* online discussion forum. Clearly, being scorned has left her very bitter.

He's dangerous. To himself, to martial arts and especially to anyone who might read his work and think that they know something about how to defend themselves.

I *am* dangerous. I am dangerous to the legion of children and petty, angry "adults" who pollute the martial arts community with their envy, their hatred, and their pointless politicking. I am dangerous to everyone who thinks self-defense training is the sole territory and exclusive dominion of giant mixed martial arts competitors who have no necks and no brains, or of shriveled Asian icons dispensing colored belts and cryptic wisdom. I am dangerous to the status quo. I am dangerous to those whose envy and whose outrage are enflamed by others' accomplishments. I am dangerous to anyone and everyone whose horrific ignorance of the martial arts is upheld as a badge of honor, as wisdom, as the results of years of experience.

If I write a bad cookbook and someone takes my advice, some food might be wasted and a meal uneaten. If I write a bad self-defense manual and someone takes my advice, the end result could be crippling, rape or death.

If I write a *good* self-defense manual and someone takes my advice, I've done what I set out to do — despite the protestations of those whose unrealistic attitudes about self-defense could result in crippling injury, rape, or death. If I write a book about self-defense *at all*, the result could be the eternal enmity of those who hate what they cannot do and be.

You still need to ask me why I despise Phil Elmore?

No, I don't. But I do need to ask you why you despise *yourself* so much. I need to ask you why, in a world of people whose notoriety and accomplishments eclipse my own, I am the target over which you obsess and the only mark you feel you are capable of surpassing. I need to ask you why you cannot bring yourself to aim *higher*. I need to ask you why I, a relatively unimportant person, obsess you so —for if I am the best you can find, if I am the barometer of what you can meet and defeat, your opinion of yourself is miserably low.

I need, frankly, to ask why you spend so much time thinking of me — for after I finish writing this, I will think of you not at all.

I continued my correspondence with Ashida Kim but remained non-committal. He wrote me back and used the word "Ha!" a lot to punctuate his sentences. ...Ashida Kim was amazing. He was nuts.

*– Beer, Blood, and Cornmeal,
by Bob Calhoun*

About The Author

Phil Elmore is a martial artist and professional writer whose work has appeared in a variety of print and virtual publications. He is not a lawyer, a police officer, or a member of the military. He is a private citizen who believes your right to your life and your property is inalienable. He believes strongly that you must learn to defend yourself to protect both.

The holder of a black belt in the martial art of Liu Seong Gung Fu, Phil Elmore has also attended multiple training classes taught by civilian, military, and law-enforcement instructors in the use of deadly force, including handguns, rifles, knives, and unarmed self-defense.



Phil Elmore, 30 March 2010

The publisher of *The Martialist: The Magazine for Those Who Fight Unfairly*, Phil has studied a variety of self-defense systems and martial arts, focusing on striking systems and reality-based self-defense. He is the co-founder of the *Shanliang Li* martial system and the creator of the *Shorthand Empty Hand* curriculum.

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In this book, Phil Elmore, publisher of *The Martialist*[™]: *The Magazine For Those Who Fight Unfairly*, outlines a basic curriculum of empty-hand self-defense.

Shorthand Empty Hand is your expedient key to physical combat using your body's natural weapons. Stylized but pragmatic, *Shorthand Empty Hand* could save your life.

A bastardized, hybridized form of martial arts and combatives that anyone can learn relatively quickly, *Shorthand Empty Hand* gives the average citizen the power to fight and win when faced with a violent physical attack. No system is the ultimate system and no book can truly teach you what you must do to fight another human being, but *Shorthand Empty Hand* gives you the conceptual framework from which to approach fighting with your bare hands.



Phil Elmore is a martial artist and professional writer whose work has appeared in a variety of print and virtual publications. *Shorthand Empty Hand* is his first instructional martial arts text. Visit him online at his website, **www.philelmore.com**.