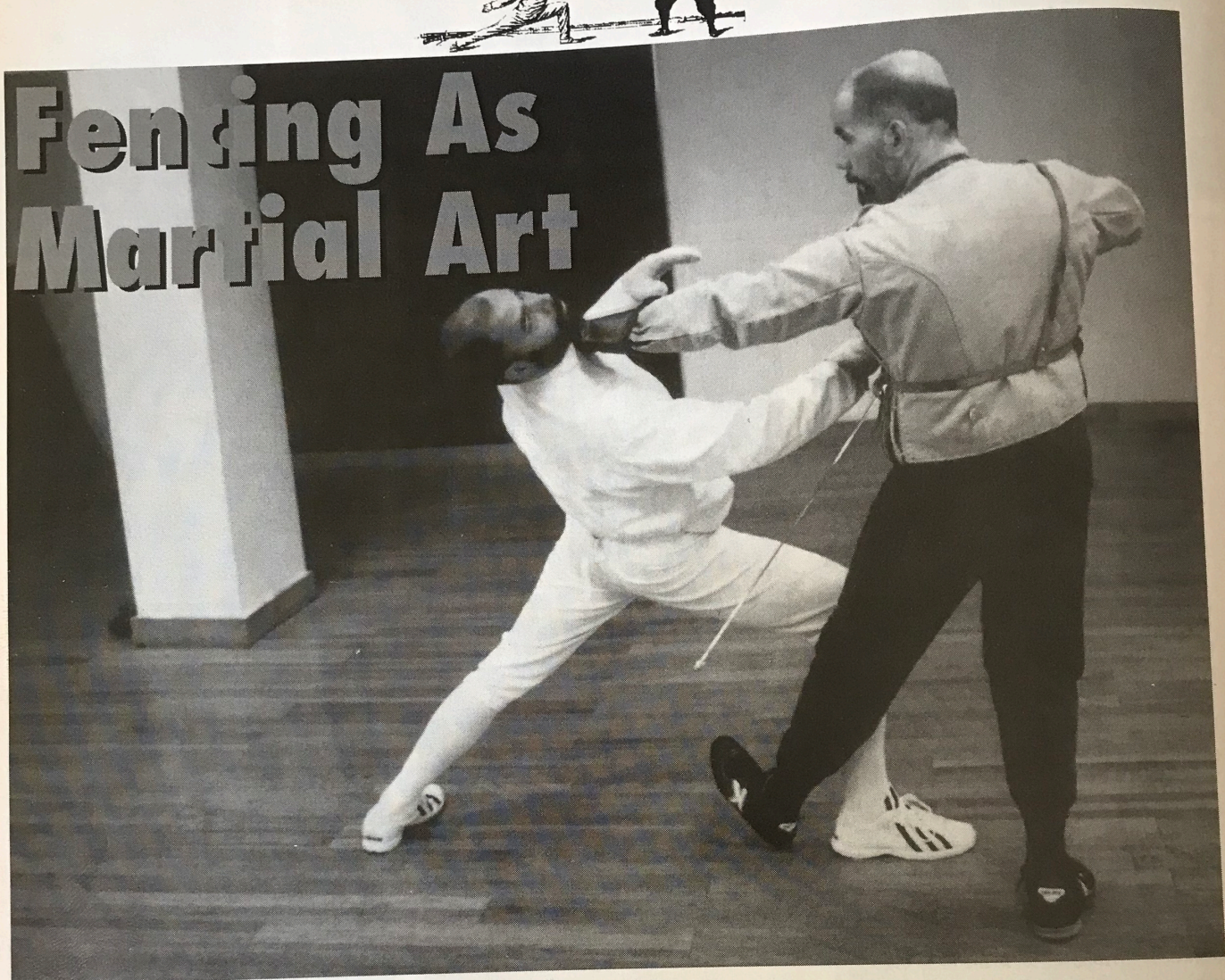


# Fencing As Martial Art



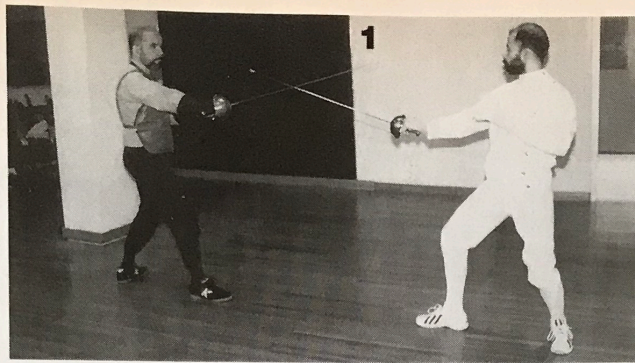
Looking more like a college professor than a classical fencing Master, Maestro Ramon Martinez teaches each student according to their individual ability and the particular weapon they happen to be practicing with. Maestro Martinez is amiable, honest, and forthright. No mysteries here, what you see is what you get. The Oriental mystique replete with an auto-cult like devotion is absent here. Off the training floor after practice, Maestro Martinez' students affectionately refer to him as Ray. Don't mistake a lack of Asian title usage and the absence of a multi-colored gi for ineffective martial art technique. Far from it! For what one would be witnessing is the extremely rare and misunderstood martial art of Classical Fencing.

Maestro Martinez began his training at the age of eighteen under the watchful eye of one of the last true teachers of fencing as Martial Art, the late Maitre d'Armes (Master of Arms), Frederick Rohdes. Maitre Rohdes never considered fencing as a sport, but rather as a true martial art, and at his Rohdes Academy, where he taught in New York City for many decades, classical fencing methods were taught with a real dueling mentality firmly etched into each student's subconscious. Maitre Rohdes modeled his Academy after the Salles' (schools) that flourished in the European tradition of old, and as a result the Rohdes Academy had old world decorum and respect. Discipline was instilled within a highly formal and structured environment. The teacher's

word was law, unnecessary chatter was kept to an absolute minimum. Maestro Martinez trained with Maitre Rohdes at his Academy for ten years becoming his assistant and protege. He was the only one of his pupils permitted to teach with full authorization at the Rohdes Academy. In late 1983, shortly before his death, Maitre Rohdes conferred the rank of Fencing Master upon Mr. Martinez.

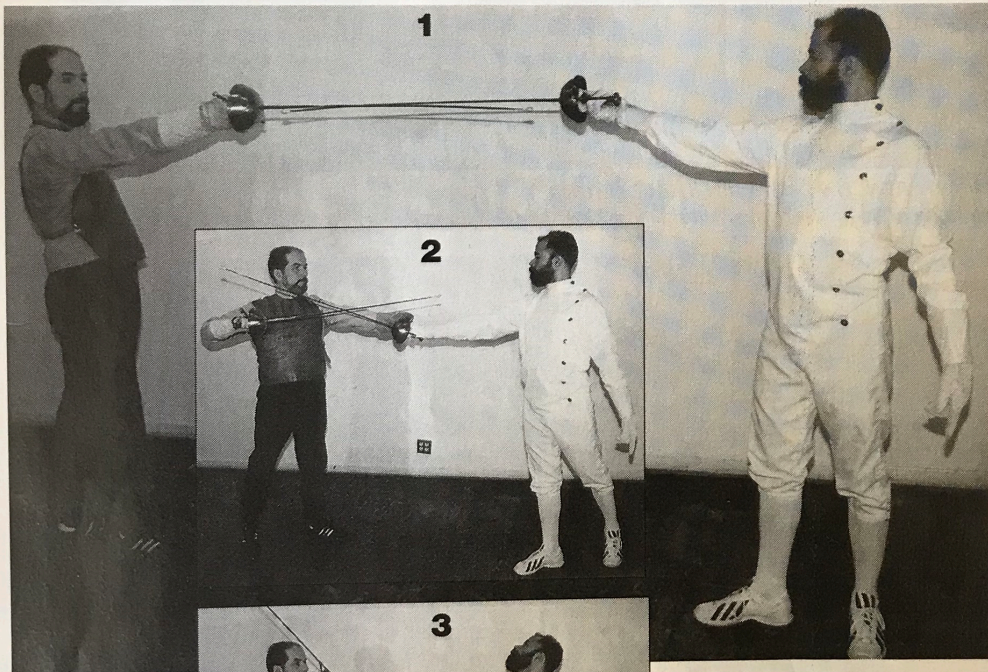
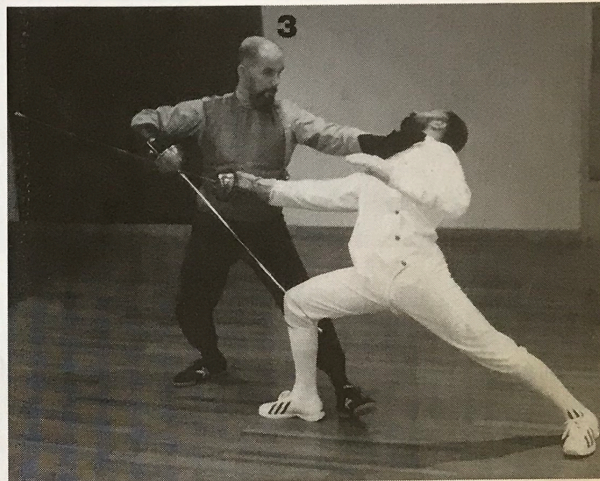
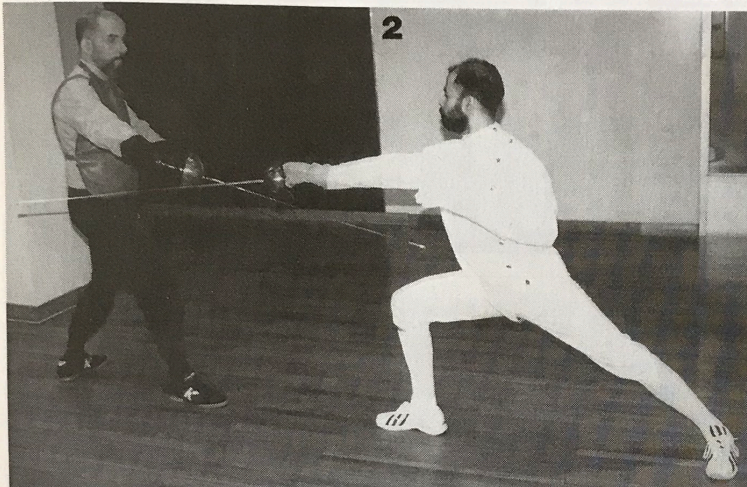
Since that time, Maestro Martinez has painstakingly researched and reconstructed the historical fencing styles of the ancient masters who left behind often elaborate training manuals depicting their various methods. The various schools or styles represented include, but are not limited to, the French, Italian, English, German,

**By John Kovacs**



**ITALIAN RAPIER**

- 1. Third guard, Italian position.
- 2. Attack to right flank, parry in second position.
- 3. Left leg check with left chop to throat.



**SPANISH RAPIER**

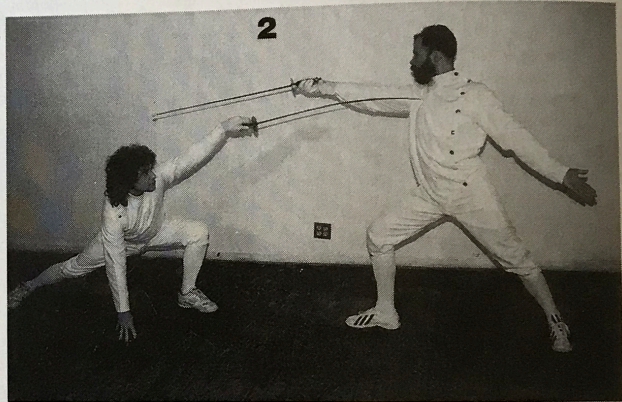
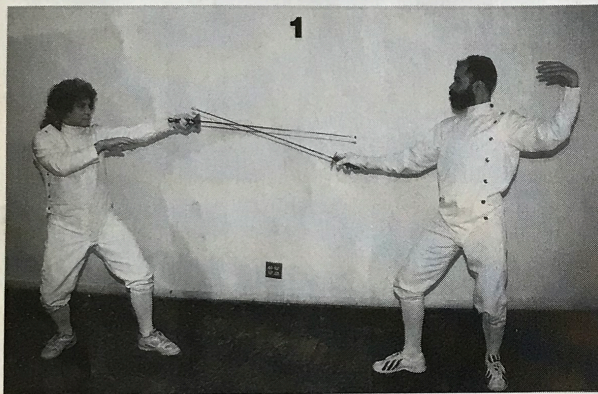
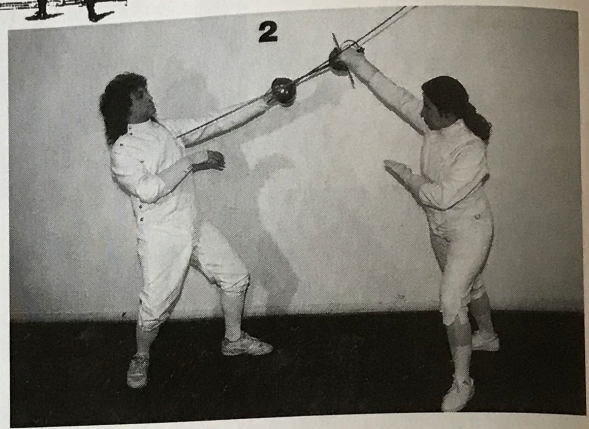
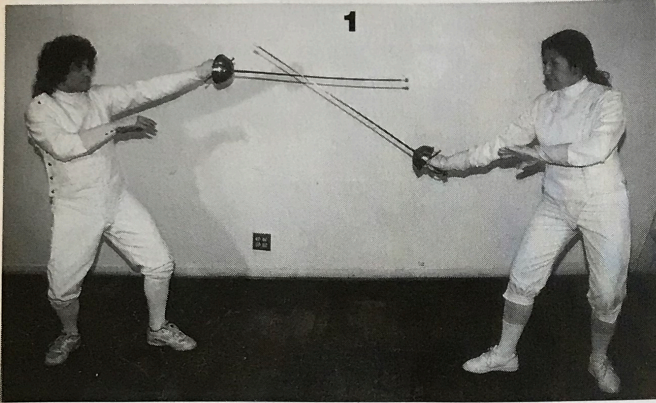
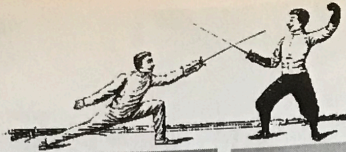
- 1. Spanish Rapier guard position.
- 2. Angular face attack with parry.
- 3. Counter attack to throat with left arm check.

Hungarian, and especially the Spanish, of which Maestro Martinez, after fifteen years of intensive research and study, unveiled to the public for the first time at the Aston Magna Academy, which was held at Rutgers University during the summer of 1995.

The term given to Spanish swordsmanship is "La Verdadera Destreza". This phrase cannot be directly translated, but the closest approximation is "the true art and skill". Maestro teaches the Spanish rapier technique to a select group of students. To witness its beautiful circular movements and tactics is like observing poetry in motion. Maestro Martinez also teaches the Italian rapier technique, which as he puts it is more direct and "in your face". A comparison that comes to mind would be as if you were to compare the circular movements of Pa-Kua versus the more straight line approach of Hsing-Yi. Both the Spanish and Italian methods of rapier technique have their benefits, and a few of the Maestro's students have competency in both approaches. Rapier technique and training hold a very special place at the Martinez Academy. Old style classical swordsmanship encompasses much more than just the use of the blade. It includes the art, science, and experi-

### ITALIAN RAPIER

1. Guard position.
2. Simultaneous sidestep with parry and counter.



### FRENCH VS. ITALIAN SMALL SWORD

1. French attack by lunge.
2. Italian counter attack under blade by extending rear leg.

ence that have evolved from the genius of the master swordsman of yesteryear.

In essence, an invaluable aid for one to fully understand and comprehend the traditional teachings of the masters of yore, would be to research and study the voluminous material that the master's left behind. These teachings of the Spanish rapier for example would include those of Don Jeronimo de Carranza (1569), Don Luis Pacheco de Navarez (1600), Girard Thibault (1628), Don Alvaro de la Vega (1681), and Don Frabsisco Lorenz de Rada (1705).

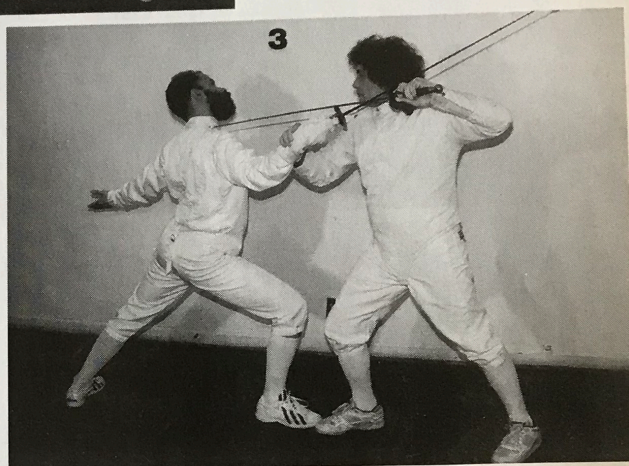
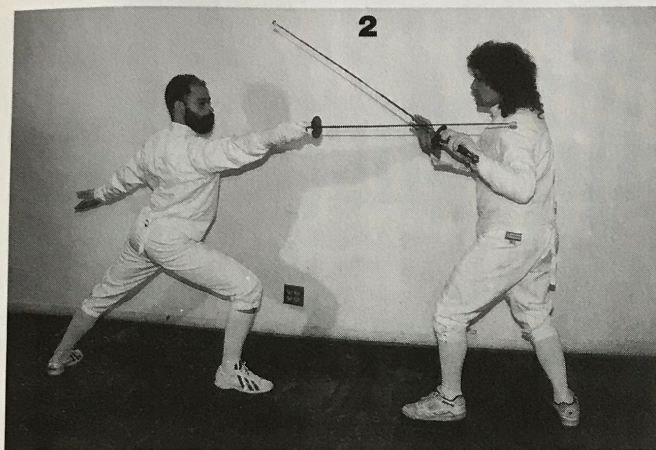
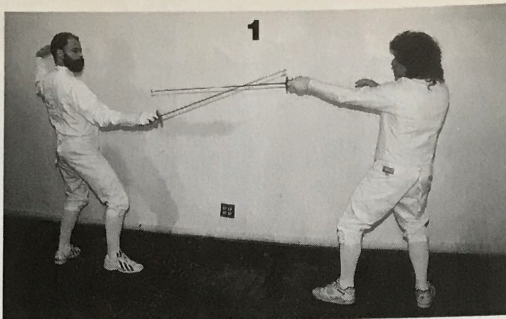
Maestro Martinez has delved deeply into the teachings of the ancient masters to bring to life the mindset, character, culture, religions, philosophical and political environment in which these schools developed from. He is continu-

**When a martial art is turned into a sport it loses its very essence.**

ally in the active quest of self-perfection and spiritual growth that is possible through the active teaching of this noble gentleman's art. The Maestro truly walks the walk. No false bravado and chest thumping are evident in his behavior. One feels totally safe and at ease in Maestro Martinez' presence.

A deeply spiritual man, Maestro Martinez has gone back to his own Spanish lineage and has embraced the teachings of Islam as the ancient Moor's of Spain proudly did. Although a practicing Muslim involved in one of the largest Sufi traditions in the world, he does not proselytize his convictions to any of his students. Interestingly enough his wife is a devout Catholic! One can only conjecture what there dinner time conversion is like. His wife also has had the privilege and honor to

**FRENCH VS. ITALIAN SMALL SWORD**  
 1. French guard position left, Italian position on the right.  
 2. Left French small sword thrust to chest.  
 3. Followed by simultaneous Italian arm check/parry and throat thrust.



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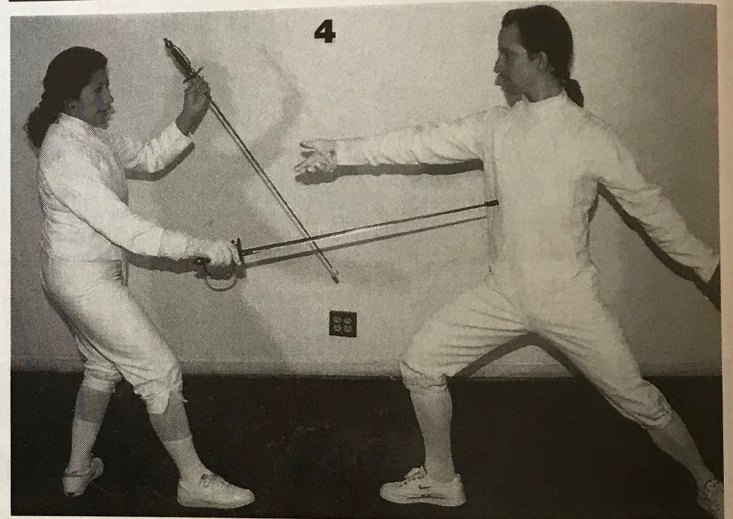
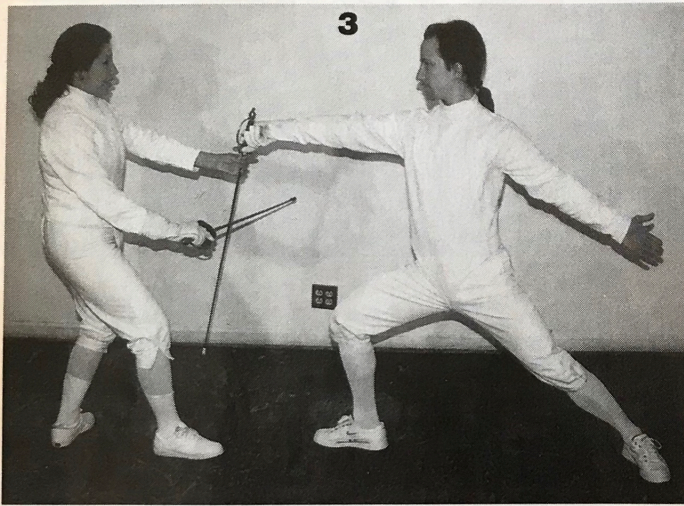
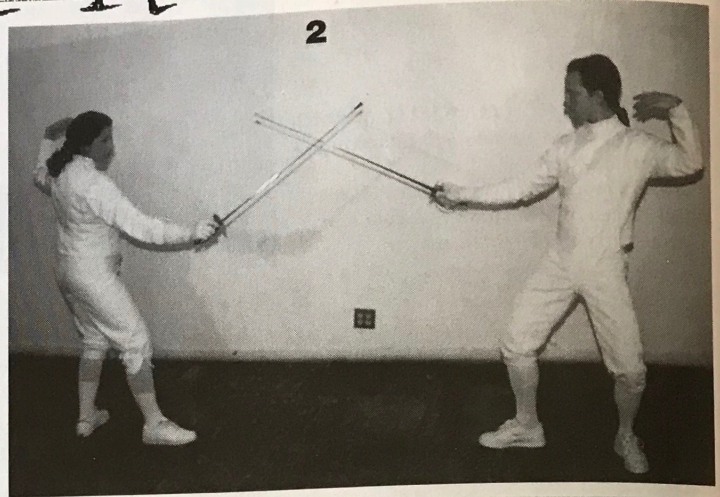
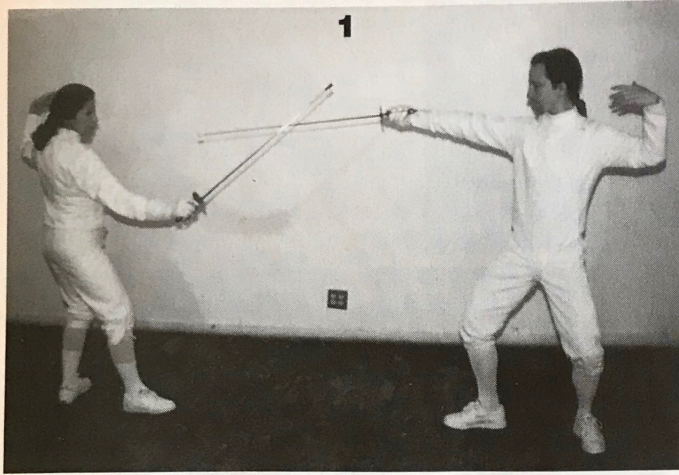
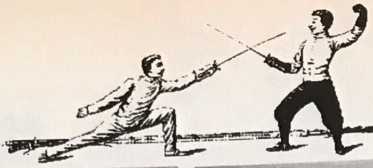
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**FRENCH SMALL SWORD VS. FRENCH SMALL SWORD**

**1. On guard. 2. Right thrust attack to throat. 3. Left grab and pressing disarm. 4. Completion of disarm of blade with thrust to abdomen counter.**

have trained with Maitre Rohdes at his Academy, where Maestro Martinez and his wife Jeanette first met. It may have been a classical example of love at first swipe (sword swipe that is)!

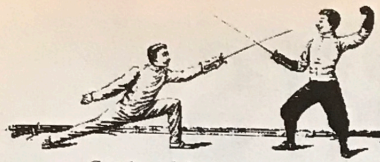
On speaking with the various students under the Maestro's tutelage, one discovers that there are martial artists of various other styles represented. Everything from the Filipino arts to the classical Japanese art of laido, Judo, Karate, Aikido, and Tai-chi-chuan, has been studied by the students. The general consensus seems to be that he provides the only training available in the classical sword arts of European origin, not taught as a sport but as a true martial art. Occasionally the Maestro gets a student who had practiced modern sport fencing, and they are in for quite a

rude awakening when they realize that a good portion of what they have been practicing would be ineffective in an actual dueling situation. Maestro Martinez will only teach techniques that really work with the foremost question in mind "What if the weapon in your hand were sharp?"

Often times a practitioner of sport saber fencing will strike at the opponent with the blunt edge of the weapon. But the people practicing may never have been taught the difference! Fun to practice? Undoubtedly. Good exercise? Depends on how hard you train. Good potential for social environment? Depends on your definition. A famous Olympic fencer was quoted at his club in New York City that fencing is "Nothing but a sport, period". Paradoxically, per-

haps this competitor never learned or had an interest in learning fencing as a martial art. The sporting aspect was enough for him, but to make this kind of outlandish claim is rather ridiculous. After all a beautifully executed toe touch in an epee bout may be the same and garnishing you a point in an electronic tournament as a straight thrust to the chest, but one is obviously more fatal!

Both sport fencing and traditional fencing as martial art have their place. They can both compliment each other, and even enhance each other. But it is definitely important to know that there is a tremendous difference between the two! This very same argument has existed with the other sport oriented martial arts we see today such as Judo and Karate, and more recently with the




*Continued from page 36*

Filipino arts as well. In modern competitive sport fencing as it has evolved (devolved?) over the last eighty years, electrical scoring equipment have been introduced and fencing is dominated by dynamic explosive actions executed with athletic power and speed. The techniques of modern fencing have become a game where one competitor tries to best the other with technique that has a barely passing resemblance to an actual duel. Classical fencing as taught by Maestro Martinez keeps the focus of the training to enable the fencer to survive in an actual combative situation.

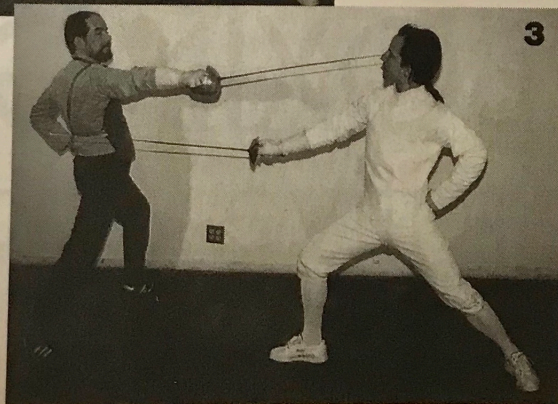
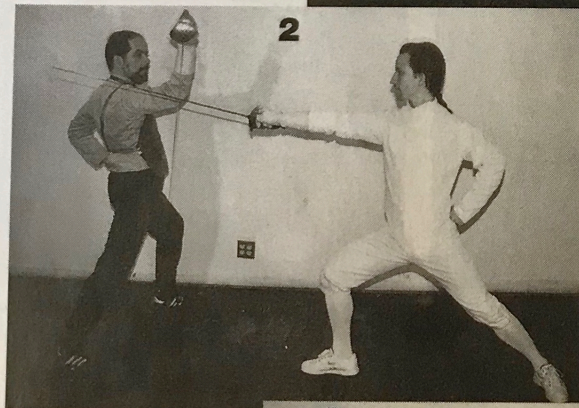
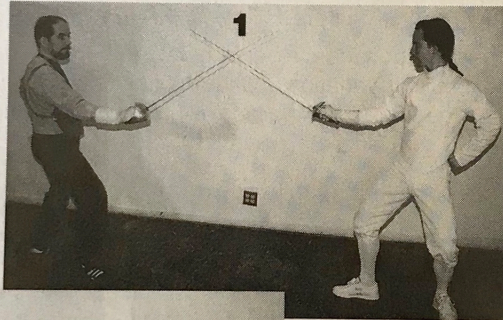
There is a vast difference between the practice of a sport and a practice of a martial art. When a martial art is turned into a sport it loses its very essence. In a sport the goal is to win at a game. The techniques that are taught and learned are geared to win at the game using prescribed rules and regulations, which are

highly subjective to say the least. The participants in the sport develop a style which is totally artificial taking serious risks and attempting techniques that would not be used in a serious combative situation. One can witness this in any modern fencing club where after scoring a point, the person scoring may yell triumphantly then turn his back on his opponent and walk away to continue the match! This could prove to be fatal indeed if done in a real dueling situation!

So if sport competitive fencing is what you want it's not hard to find, there are plenty of people teaching that. But if what you want is classical fencing as martial art, then what Maestro Martinez offer's is just what the doctor ordered! Often times we practice a true martial art for various reasons stemming from the secular to the spiritual. Whatever one's motivation may be, it's comforting to know that in today's chaotic world of quick fix sport oriented fencing and martial arts, the rare and beautiful art of classical fencing is alive and well. A rare and impressive art taught by a rare and impressive individual. Once you've experienced the "cutting edge" difference you will never again settle for less. 

**ITALIAN DUELING SABRE**

1. . On guard.
2. Right check cut with left simultaneous sidestep.
3. Followed by counter cut to right cheek.



# Karate vs. Boxing: A Comparative Analysis

KARATE



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# KARATE

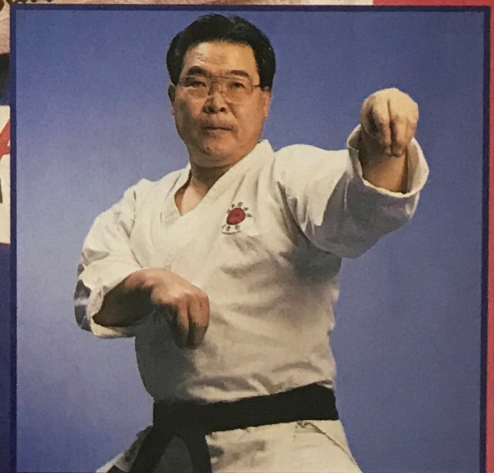
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