

## MARRPIO Seminar at Karate Quest

June 13-14, 2008

By Joel Priest

One of the things that struck me most about Modern Arnis is the connections formed. The practitioner's connection to the art, to each other, and to the Presas family, people who've met only once before greet each other like long lost family members re-united. On June 13th that unity was reinforced and then again on the 14th.

Grandmaster Presas opened the seminar on Friday with the history of the Filipino martial arts and Modern Arnis, discussing the enter action in the history of Modern Arnis, the Presas family, of Professor Presas and Rosemary, of their sons and daughters, laying out the roots of the art.

There is nothing sterile or impersonal about Modern Arnis, rather it is organic, rich, and fertile, it grows, thrives, living and breathing. That is what Modern Arnis is to all of us, and that's what brings people from all around to see Dr. Presas' seminars.



After a respectful moment of silence for Grandmaster Presas, we began dumog exercises, responses to kicks, defenses and take downs. Ground fighting is rare to see in many Filipino Martial Arts, it is rarely still practiced, even more rarely still shown. Dr. Presas surprised many there on Friday with his knowledge and skill of this aspect of the Filipino martial arts.

For the first time at any seminar I've been to in the last year, Dr. Presas was accompanied by several of his

students from his school in San Pablo, CA. They took pictures, they assisted those of us who needed additional help, and they assisted Dr. Presas, more than once. They did it all with a sense of humor, a sense of joy at being there, a sense of decency and generosity that particularly struck me. Despite being called on to do all of these things, they did so with a constant smile, with a warm and friendly outlook that was contagious. Karate Quest and Mr. Armijo's students, as well as the rest of us there would like to extend sincere thanks to Mr. Gilbert Cruz and Mr. Ramon Lazo for their help.

Saturday, Grandmaster Presas opened the seminar with a series of drills, each building on the other, related and layered in their implementation and complication. We often speak of flow in the Filipino martial arts, but it takes a level of understanding of flow that is far beyond the common to extend the principle into how you teach. When you can see that flow on a meta level, when each drill or new instruction comes fast, and yet smooth, when the connection between movements builds like acts in a play or steps of an anyo (form), it is not hard to see that you're in the presence of a guro who fundamentally understands the purposes and philosophies of the arts.



his Lakan Antas Tatlo (3rd degree black belt) later that afternoon, the feeling was one of graciousness, and of humble grace. Not only from Mr. Wright, but from each of us who were privileged to share the experience with him and Dr Presas.

Mr. Vincent Domingcil then took the floor to lead us in a series of hand drills, building upon Dr. Presas' and Mr. Wright's earlier fundamentals, and every face on the floor had a smile on it, that fond half-smile only ever seen on a dojo floor. It is an expression of trepidation, probably, particularly amongst those of us who have not done it before. But also, it contained focus and most of all it was doing something we all respected, of walking that one step further down the path toward mastery. Not merely the mastery of martial arts, or of physical fitness, or even of self-defense and combat, but the mastery of ourselves.

Mr. Domingcil is innately charismatic, but there too the transformation happened. Leading the seminar, out on the mat something shone through, something that said "this is a Modern Arnis instructor." And Mr. Domingcil's subsequent award of Lakan Antas Isa (1st degree black belt) from Grandmaster Presas reflected that. Vincent Domingcil is a police officer in Bothel, Washington. He is a master instructor of defensive tactics with the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission, and also a member of the S.W.A.T. team in the city of Bothel.



at least a glimpse, of the path we must walk, and that others have walked in attaining knowledge. Mr. Osborne showed us how far that path goes. A guide forging a trail, well-

We were privileged, on that day, to see Mr. William Wright's excellent knife work, and like all great instructors in Modern Arnis, his presence on the floor was manifest. He was in every corner, assisting every pair, with humor, patience and tolerance. Perhaps there's something built into Modern Arnis that makes our instructors' greater, that makes Dr's charisma and spirit felt through them. Or, perhaps, Modern Arnis attracts those who have that natural strength, that inner drive and goodness. When Dr. Presas awarded Mr. Wright



Finally, Mr. Dwight Osborne took the floor, his quiet, unassuming manner left behind. As he demonstrated the techniques one could see Dr. Presas mannerisms easily as seen in his videos on Modern Arnis, there the practitioners contained a simple, quiet confidence, a pure belief in self, almost to the extent that self is immaterial. Mr. Osborne channeled that, that egoless peace, that raw greatness of spirit, and lent each and every one of us a little piece, or at

known to him, though less familiar to some, as blocks built into abanico, smoothly integrated into the path we spent the weekend walking. Dr. Presas took us back into many more drills that day and we had the opportunity to learn quite a bit more.

There was one final award at the seminar, Mr. Patrick Armijo has eighteen years in Modern Arnis and his connection with the Presas family and the arts principles that Grandmaster founded the art on. Dr. Presas awarded Mr. Armijo his Lakan Antas Anim (6th degree black belt) a recognition of not only his contributions to Modern Arnis, but his mastery of it. Those of us lucky enough to train with him four days a week have been privileged to see the innate greatness of this man, as a martial artist, as a mentor, as a leader, and as a friend. His students, friends, family, and fellow practitioners are rewarded by this spirit and Dr. Presas' recognition of Mr. Armijo broadens the trail for us all.

In addition, Mr. Mick Jolly and his wonderfully welcoming family deserve mention. They hosted the seminar at Karate Quest they also participated in the seminar, and embraced a culture and an art out of simple human decency and did so with absolute grace and without reservation. We must extend our deepest thanks to them as well.



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