

JEFF FINDER



USFMAF ELITE JUDGE

My interest in martial arts began in childhood, with basic boxing, wrestling and archery from my grandfather and father in the late 1950's, and some military self-defense from my older brother who was in an academy. During my teens I played with friends who were learning Taekwondo and Kung-fu, and as that was the Bruce Lee era, we all practiced with nunchuks. In college I took Aikido and began Kajukenbo, but it was after graduation that I really became serious about martial arts and enrolled in Kenpo, eventually earning one black belt from sifu Al Thomas in Oakland and another in Ch'uan-fa from sijo John Wong at the Wu Shing Academy in Suisun.

In 1980 I was introduced to FMA by Bob Flores, a childhood friend of Leo Gaje's, whom I met through a friend I met working on a Chuck Norris film (An Eye For An Eye). In 1985 I met grandmaster Angel Cabales at one of Max Pallen's karate tournaments and began learning Serrada almost immediately, studying for a year with Anthony Davis before becoming a private student of GM Cabales. With his permission I began teaching at the Kenpo school in 1986, which at the time became the only official Cabales Serrada academy in the Bay Area, although I didn't receive my formal certification as a guro until the end of 1987.

In 1988 I competed in the first U.S. national FMA championships in San Jose, fighting Arlan Sanford, who soon after was a co-founder of the Dog Brothers. Then in 1989 I accepted an invitation to be part of the first U.S. national team to go to the Philippines for the inaugural WEKAF charter convention and world championships. I went to the finals in Cebu, and again a week later at the World Invitational Tournament in Manila, where I faced future senator Miguel Zubiri in the championship round.

After returning home I served as treasurer on the first regional board for WEKAF elected in the U.S., helping organize the first officially sponsored WEKAF-USA tournament in

Fairfield, California. I retired from competition soon after due to chemical exposure from an industrial accident but maintained my training and teaching all these years.

I've been writing articles on FMA since 1989, beginning with the Eskrima Review and more recently the FMA Digest, as well as a blog (escrima.blogspot.com). In 1998 I was inducted into the U.S. Kali Association's FMA Hall of Fame, recognizing my contribution to the art for developing the first synthetic sticks for FMA training through Stickman Escrima Products.

Having known Master Darren Tibon for over 20 years, my involvement in the USFMAF goes back to the first meetings in Stockton which chartered this organization. Due to family responsibilities I was unable to take on a greater role at that time, but I have been able to attend various officiating clinics and tournaments here on the West Coast to support this organization.