

Bowie

Knife Fighting

By: John Styers, US Marines Corps
Part I

Knife Fighting

The sight of sharp, cold steel in your enemy's hand is not a pleasant sight. Knife fighting is an ugly business; it means steel; then steel against flesh – and death.

Let's take a look at your enemy's blood.

That's one thing you can't draw from the quartermaster by signing a chit.

But it's a lot easier to draw than size 13 boondockers – you know that your enemy has it... You're far behind the lines, maybe you're a communications man operating your switchboard. Your carbine is propped against a tree nearby. Your outfit is in the area but out of sight. You're alone, and you're intent on your job.

You've been warned that there is the possibility of guerrilla activity and infiltration. Your knife is constantly at your side. It gives you a great deal of confidence, but your real assurance comes from your confidence in your own ability to save your own life with that knife by carving out a heavenly military career for your enemy in whatever particular Valhalla he happens to believe exists.

A twig snaps!

You look up the switchboard.

An enemy is rushing at you, both hands raised-in each a knife!

He's got one objective: To drive them downward into your chest!

"MOVE, BOY!"

You move. You whip up your knife; you leap into the guard position. Your enemy slows his advance; immediately he realizes that before him is no frightened schoolboy. Instead, he sees a calm, fighting man – poised ready for instantaneous action, armed with deadly steel, its point directed menacingly at his throat.

You advance cautiously into your proper range, your knife never wavering from his throat. Both of his fists are out in front of him. They are your first targets.

Too late, he realizes that your range is greater than his, and that he has allowed you to come in too close. Like the fangs of a cobra your blade strikes out in a full cut and you are back in your blade again pointed at his throat.

There is a dull thud on the ground and a mild ping as the knife falls from your opponent's left hand, along with parts of his fingers if your cut has been accurate and hard.

You have stunned your opponent; you can afford a split second before pressing the attack. From your guard position you lower yourself quickly, and with your blade still pointed at his throat, you scoop up a handful of dirt and return to the guard position.

You are ready for the kill. Your enemy is now in a do or die rage; his only thought is to kill YOU any way he can. He raises his blade beside his head and changes.

You heave the dirt, execute an in-quartata, and yell. Your target is his heart.

As he hurtles by the spot you vacated a moment before, your blade is almost wrenched from your hand as it cuts its way out of his body.

Your opponent is now lying about five yards beyond the spot in which he had intended to leave YOUR lifeless form.

Cautiously you inspect the corpse of your enemy. Your job was clean. There was no need for in-fighting.

"Just like that?" you ask cynically.

We nod.

"But that wasn't me in that knife fight," you insist. *"It must have been some other guy, an expert, maybe..."*

You don't need to be an expert to stand your ground in the guard position and engage an enemy with confidence. A sound KNOWLEDGE of knife fighting and PRACTICE of its basic PRINCIPLES will make you a dangerous opponent for any knife-wielding enemy.

Knife fighting is based on the age-old science of swordsmanship. These principles of swordplay were utilized by James Bowie in his fine techniques with his Bowie knife-making Bowie and the Bowie Knife one of the deadliest blade combinations the world has ever Known.

Holding The Knife

Here, take this knife.

Now, hold it straight, not cocked upward. Put your thumb directly on top of the handle, on the SAME side as the FLAT EDGE of the blade – that's right, the cutting edge faces DOWNWARD.

Now, clamp the fingers securely UPWARD around the handle. Lock your wrist when the ELBOW and the POINT of the knife are in a STRAIGHT LINE. THE KNIFE IS MERELY AN EXTENSION OF THE FOREARM.

Keep the thumb about a quarter of an inch from the thumb guard. This space is allowed to take up the shock caused by the impact when your knife strikes its target.

Tips

- 1.) Keep the wrist LOCKED at all times.
- 2.) DON O arch the thumb on the thumb guard.
- 3.) Keep the blade ON LINE with the Forearm.



The hold. Fingers are wrapped securely around the handle, thumb on top, point of your blade is on a line with the elbow.

THE STANCE

The proper fighting GUARD position is taken directly from the stance of the skilled swordsman. There are only two changes. These changes are made, only when learning, after the proper SABER STANCE has been assumed. In actual combat you snap IMMEDIATELY into the KNIFE FIGHTING GUARD POSITION.

The Saber Stance

- 1.) Face your opponent as attention.
- 2.) Execute a LEFT FACE.
- 3.) Execute a “*close interval DRESS RIGHT.*” (Glance at your opponent, placing the left hand on the hip at the same time.)
- 4.) Point your RIGHT FOOT at your opponent and advance it about TWO FEET in his direction.
- 5.) Raise your RIGHT FOREARM, aiming the point of your knife directly at your opponent's throat. Your ELBOW will be approximately six inches forward from your HIP.

6.) The knees are slightly bent until the lower part of the RIGHT LEG is straight up and down-ready for instantaneous advance or withdrawal.

7.) The CUTTING EDGE of the blade should be facing DOWN and to the RIGHT in an unstrained, natural position.

8.) YOUR WRIST IS LOCKED.

9.) Keep the upper part of the body ERECT at all times. This is the proper SABRE STANCE. Notice how easily you are able to advance and withdraw-forward and backward. Movement to the left or right is more difficult.

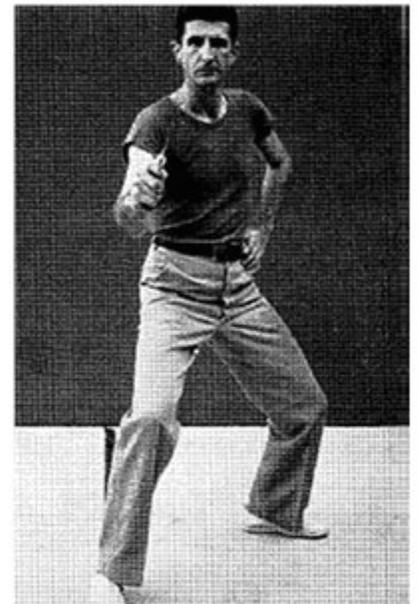
In practice, a knife, bayonet or stick may represent the saber.

To assume the knife duelist stance from the saber stance.

1.) Assume that there is a STRAIGHT LINE between you and your opponent. Move your REAR foot from one to two feet LEFT of the line, forming a 90 degree angle to your opponent with your feet. IN THIS POSITION YOU HAVE COMPLETE STABILITY. You can propel yourself easily and quickly either BACKWARD or FORWARD or to the LEFT or RIGHT.



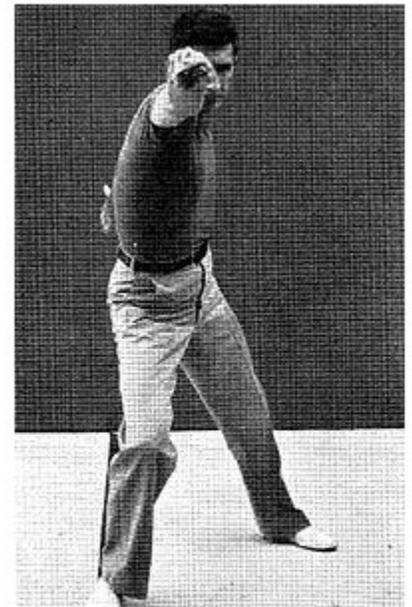
The saber stance, foundation for the knife fighter's stance.



Saber stance to knife fighter stance. Move rear foot to left.



The guard position. Left arm free. Knife arm drawn back.



The thrust. Blade drives into target. Free arm snaps back.

2.) Draw the arm which holds the knife BACK, CLOSE TO THE BODY and, at the same time, square your shoulders to your opponent. In saber fighting the arm can be safely extended because the weapon is long and the handle is equipped with a hand guard. In knife fighting you have a lightning-fast blade but there is little protection for the hand.

3.) The LEFT ARM swings FREE of the body.

Your body should be relaxed WITH THE EXCEPTION of the LOCKED WRIST and the THIGHS which are taut because of the bent knees.

Your shoulders face your opponent squarely. In this position there will be no lead with your shoulder and knife betraying a natural of your attack.

The guard position will become a natural reaction. Place a saber or a rapier in the hand of an experienced duelist and he will immediately snap into the guard position with a reflex action almost as strong as drawing the hand from a hot surface. This may be difficult to understand at first, but be assured, it is true and a moderate amount of knife-fighting practice, you'll find yourself assuming the guard position without thinking about it, the moment you have a knife in your hand.

Tips

1.) Keep your feet at about a 90 degree angle.

2.) The blade is drawn in, close to the body, and held in an unbroken line from your elbow to the point.

3.) Shoulders face the opponent squarely.

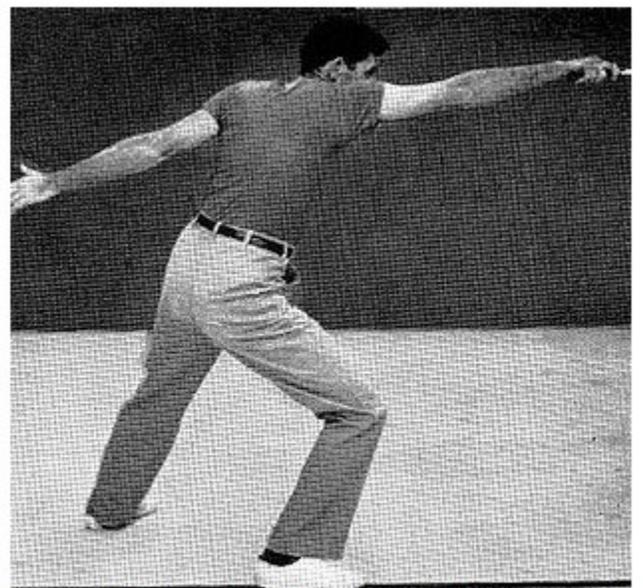
4.) Torso and head are erect.

5.) The arm on hip should swing free, but care must be taken to prevent it from extending beyond the hand which holds the knife.

6.) Your blade points directly at your opponent's throat. PRACTICE all the points of the proper stance until you can draw your blade on command of "*On Guard!*" and instantaneously snap into the perfect position without losing a second to make major adjustments.



The side view of the guard position. Major portions of the body will not be extended into an opponent's range.



The straight thrust, side view. The torso pivots on axis spine. Your legs provide added range.

PRACTICE until ALL of the points in the ON GUARD position become coordinated into ONE natural movement.

ALL OF THE ATTACKS AND DEFENSES OF THE SKILLED KNIFE FIGHTING ORIGINATE FROM THIS GUARD POSITION.

THE THRUST

From the guard position, the blade is thrust forward with explosive force **DIRECTLY** at the target. The free arm is whipped back to add power and velocity to this **POINT-AT-TARGET** attack.

The **BLADE POINT** travels straight to the **TRAGET**, backed by the full power of the forearm and shoulder.

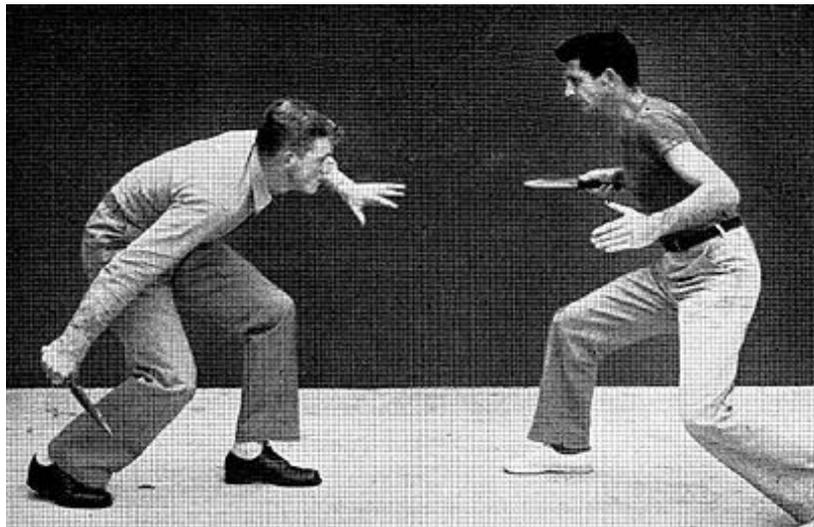
The **THRUST** starts with the knife, poised and ready in the guard position. **NO PRELIMINARY MOVEMENT IS NECESSARY**. The blade is snapped directly to the target. If the target is your opponent's throat your point should strike in a direct line to the throat. On the thrust, the free aria has been whipped back, **TURNING THE FULL BODY WITH A SNAP**. Instead of the full spread of the shoulders and chest which had been exposed to your opponent, you now present the **NARROWEST** view of your body. The upper portion of the body has pivoted forming a straight line your blade point back along your arm, across the shoulders and down the free arm in the rear.

In executing the thrust, the beginner will have a tendency to lean forward and push. The result of a push is usually an **UNEVEN** and weak action. Your attack should be instantaneous. From the front, your opponent should see only the blur of appoint on the extended arm, the sudden disappearance of the broadside view of your upper body; in its place, your enemy will find only the thin silhouette of the **NARROWEST** portion of the torso.

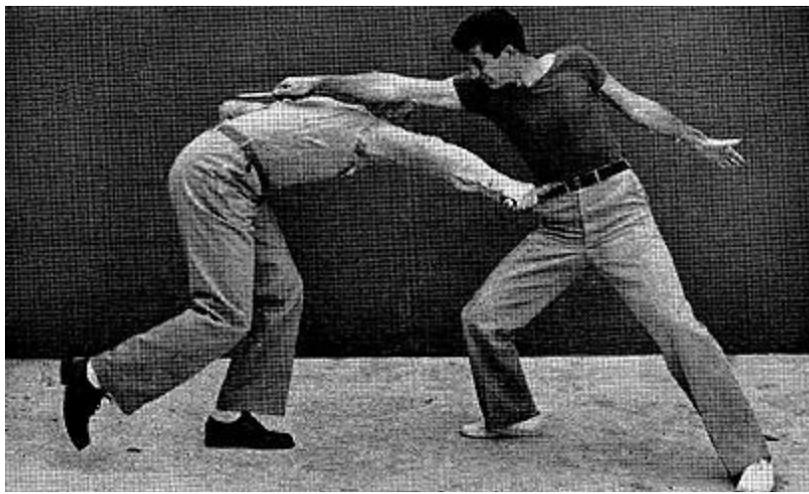
The attitude of your blade, well back and pointed at your opponent's throat, is like a pistol leveled at a target – ammo in the chamber, the hammer back, your finger on the trigger. The *point* is your *bullet*. **THE THRUST**, when properly executed with your opponent within thin range, will be so swift that he'll never see it.

He won't know what hit him. He won't see it coming. Nor can he **PREVENT** getting **HIT**.

This is true in professional boxing. If an opponent is *open* and *in range* of a left jab, he's going to be *hit*.



If an opponent tries to make an underhanded attack he will come within your range but you will still be out of his reach.



Your advantage over your opponent is a range of eighteen to twenty-four inches. If the enemy attacks, he comes into range.

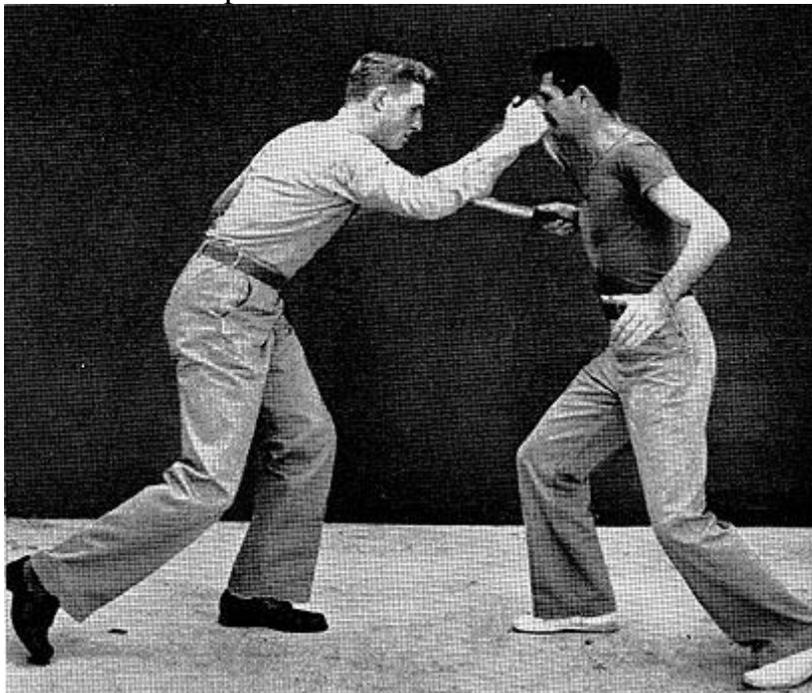
The only way to avoid getting hit is NOT to be THERE to get hit. Simply said. Simply explained – later. But here's hint:

DISTANCE is of utmost importance. It is INSURANCE again NOT being THERE to get hit, AND STILL BEING IN A POSITION TO run your opponent through.

Tips

1.) When THE THRUST is executed in practice and the blade is not driven into human flesh; the blade completes its thrust in mid air where it stops abruptly with a NATURAL WHIPPING ACTION.

It is the conviction of the writer that the Bowie-shaped blade was scientifically designed by James Bowie for the control of this natural whip.

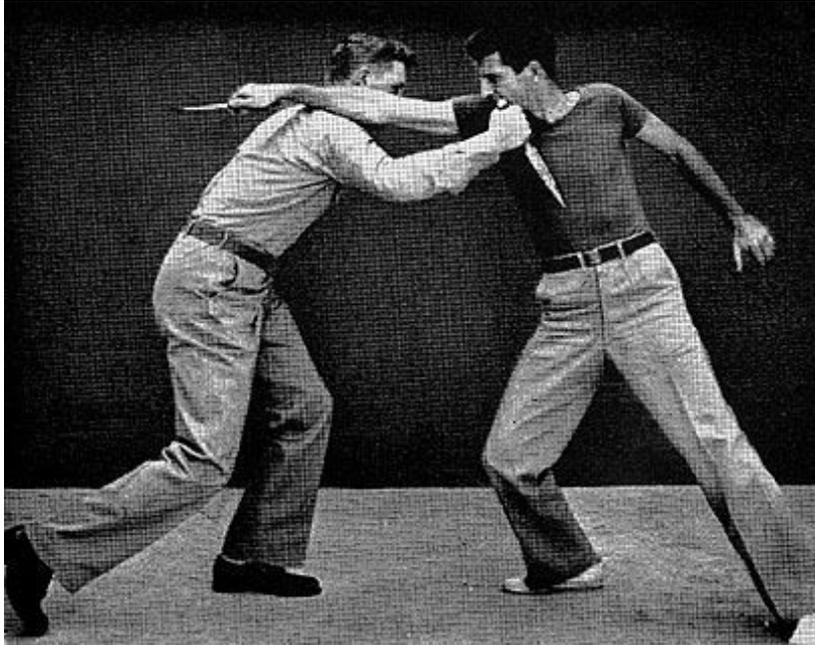


If your opponent tries an overhand he must come in close; your straight thrust pivots your chest out of his range.

2.) The THRUSTING HAND, when fully extended, should have the KNUCKLES UP, the THUMB LEFT and the knife arching slightly downward into the target. The FULL THRUST is executed regardless of your opponent's distance-as long as he is IN RANGE.

3.) Do not be too anxious to draw the weapon back prematurely. Let the extended arm SNAP OUT TO THE FULLEST.

4.) Only in a well-executed thrust which does NOT strike home, will you find the whip-like movement of the blade. When the point reaches its target, penetrating flesh or bone, the whip is taken up by the substance which is hit.



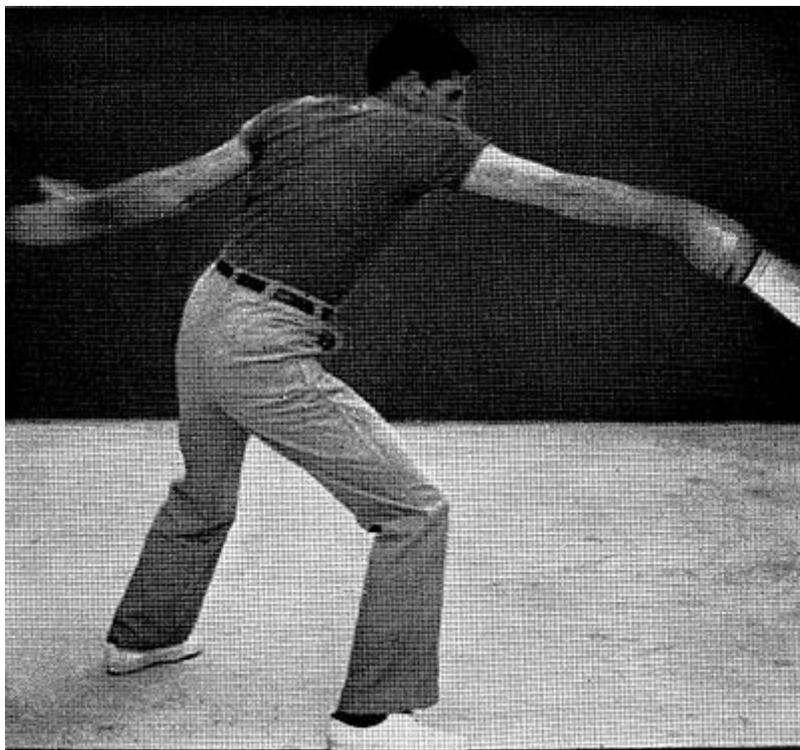
An enemy's overhand stroke leaves him wide open for your thrust. He can be stopped before he reaches effective range.

THE CUT

The thrust is the foundation of the CUT. With the thrust you take your knife to the target. If a FULL thrust does not strike the target the natural whipping action will take place. This whip is THE CUT.

The Vertical Cut

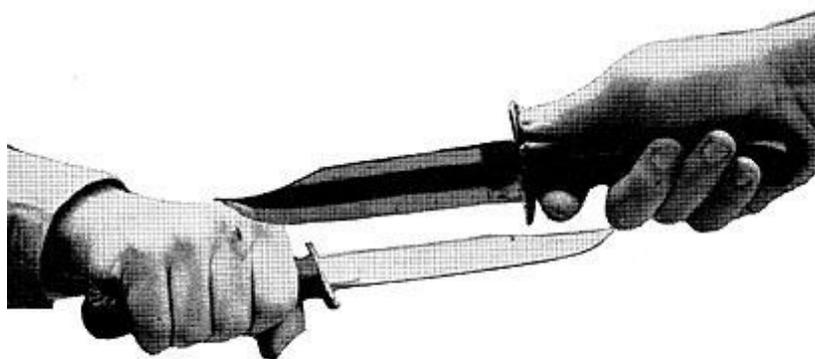
The VERTICAL CUT is a thrust which ends abruptly with the THUMB UP, the NAILS to the LEFT.



When this thrusting cut goes straight to its target instead of ending in mid-air, this same whipping action will take place.



The vertical cut – fast and effective for a long range slash. Whip down.

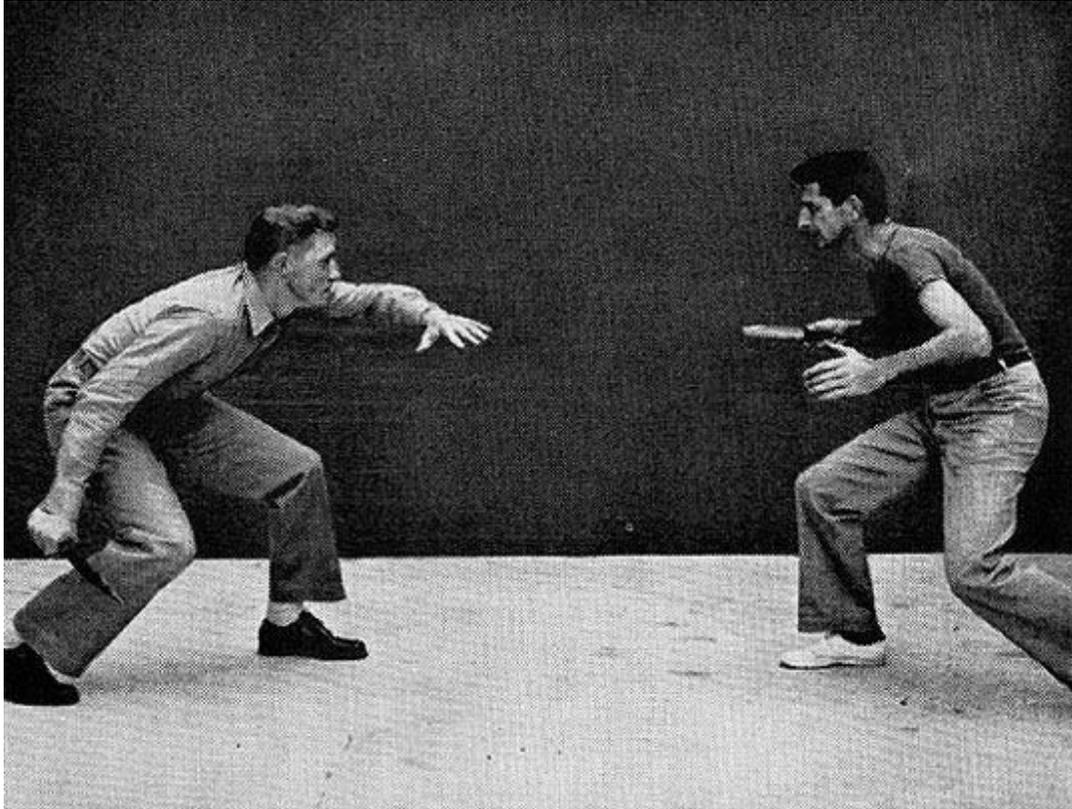


The natural whipping action of the thrusting cut makes the blade drop.

An extended extremity, such as protruding arm, is an excellent target for the VERTICAL CUT. In this cut the blades flashes DOWN and UP, biting gashes into the flesh or lobbing off fingers. The blade, when executing this action does not only whip DOWN and UP, but when it is viewed from the side, the observer will notice that it also RIPS FORWARD. Where a stiletto or narrow pointed knife would penetrate like an ice pick and leave a puncture wound, the Bowie-shaped blade will whip down into the target, ride forward, then snap UP.

THIS IS ONE CONTINUOUS ACTION. The movement has been completed in one ninety-fourth of a second when recorded by a highspeed camera.

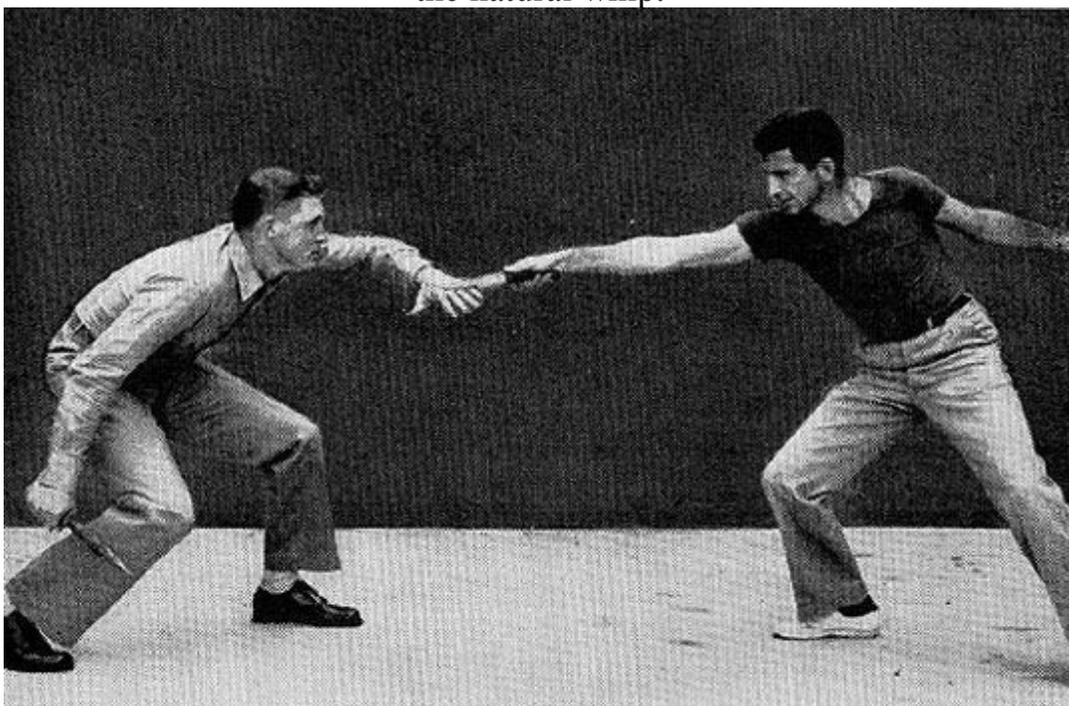
All tissues, muscles, veins, or tendons caught in the path of the scimilar-like hook of the Bowei blade will be sliced clean through.



Keep full thrust distance from opponent's nearest extremity. If nearest target is hand or forearm, execute a thrusting cut.



The vertical thrusting cut to the hand. The blade is cocked in preparation for a wrist action to supplement the natural whip.



Vertical thrusting cut ends with the blade biting down, ripping forward, then snapping up again – all in a continuous action.

The Horizontal Cut

The HORIZONTALCUT, straight across and back, is purely an unfulfilled normal thrust. The tendency of the average knife fighter to crouch usually places his head and face in such a position that they present excellent targets for the HORIZONTAL CUT.



The horizontal thrusting cut. A full thrust is directed to right side of your target. Slightly cocked blade assists whip action.



The blade will whip across its target automatically when the arm is fully extended. Try for cuts on enemy's head or face.



The finish of your horizontal thrusting cut. The blade whips back across target, achieving two cuts with only one thrust.

The Hand Cut

The HAND CUT can be an exquisitely attack. From the hand of skilled knife duelist this cut, practically unknown to the overhand or underhand knife fighter, can usually be relied upon to effectively strike the first blow. A deeply sliced hand will greatly reduce the strength of your opponent's knife hand, but if you hack off a few fingers with your initial HAND CUT you have it made!

Practice

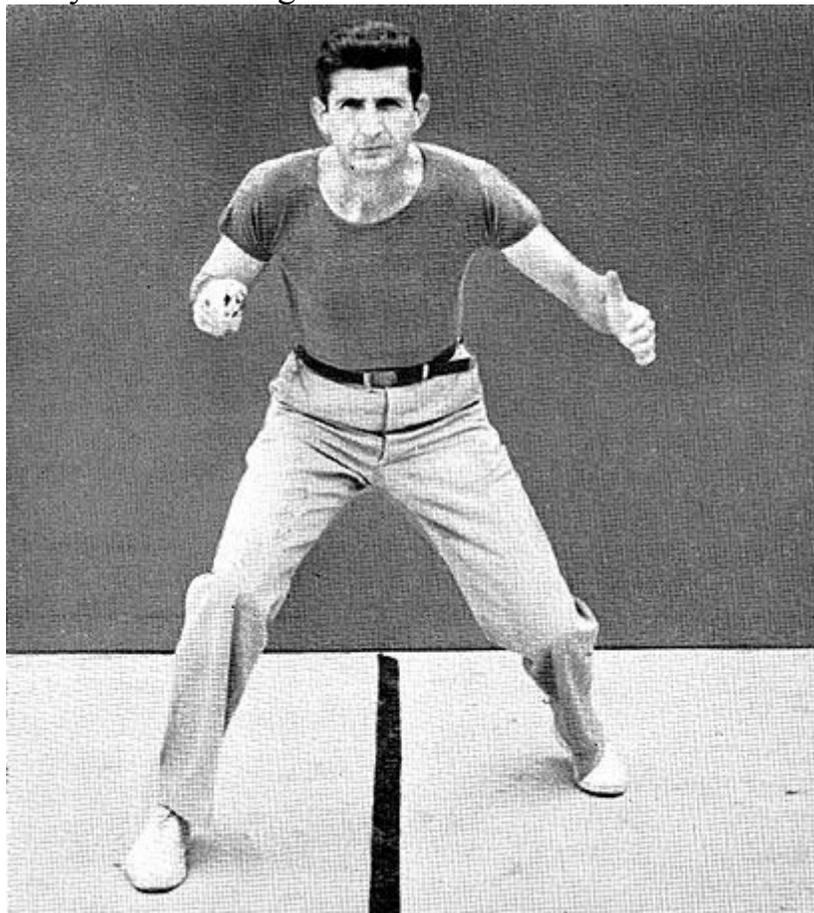
These cuts may be practiced with an actual or simulated weapon, but when learning, the use of the hand in lieu of the weapon is advised. Master the whip of the HAND and you will develop a better understanding of the action of the blade.

When the hand alone is used, the fingers should be extended and joined; the edge of the hand opposite the thumb becomes the imaginary cutting edge of the knife. The hand is thrust out vigorously, coming to an abrupt halt at the fullest extension of the arm. A whip-like snap of the hand will take place. This practice will be valuable if you are ever confronted by an opponent when you are unarmed, for the edge of the hand, in this position, is used like an axe; the fingers joined at the tip are like the point of a blade.

After mastering the cut as directed, you may then increase the effectiveness of the blade by a snapping WRIST action in a whip-like manner, directing the cutting edge of your blade to its target with greater velocity. This sharp wrist-snapping cut is of utmost importance when tier target is so close that it must be reached without fully extending your arm.

Tips

- 1.) When learning the full extended cut, which is a result of the unfulfilled thrust, there will be a marked tendency to assist the action with wrist movement. **AVOID THIS WHEN LEARNING.** The cut is a completely natural action of the arm. Later when you understand this natural action, you may add additional wrist action to supplement the natural whip.
- 2.) Draw the blade back to the guard position immediately after cut is made.
- 3.) Keep the blade pointed at the throat at all times except when definite attacks to other targets.
- 4.) Practice executing the full **VERTICAL** and **HORIZONTAL CUT** until the action is clean. The blade must avoid making circles at the full extension of the arm. These circles are the result of forced action of the wrist or forearm, preventing the **NATURAL ACTION** of the blade.
- 5.) Begin your practice with the hand so that you may better understand and control the whip action.
- 6.) Continue your practice until you work out the stiffness in the elbow joint. The tendons in this area will feel the strain while you're learning the thrust and cut.

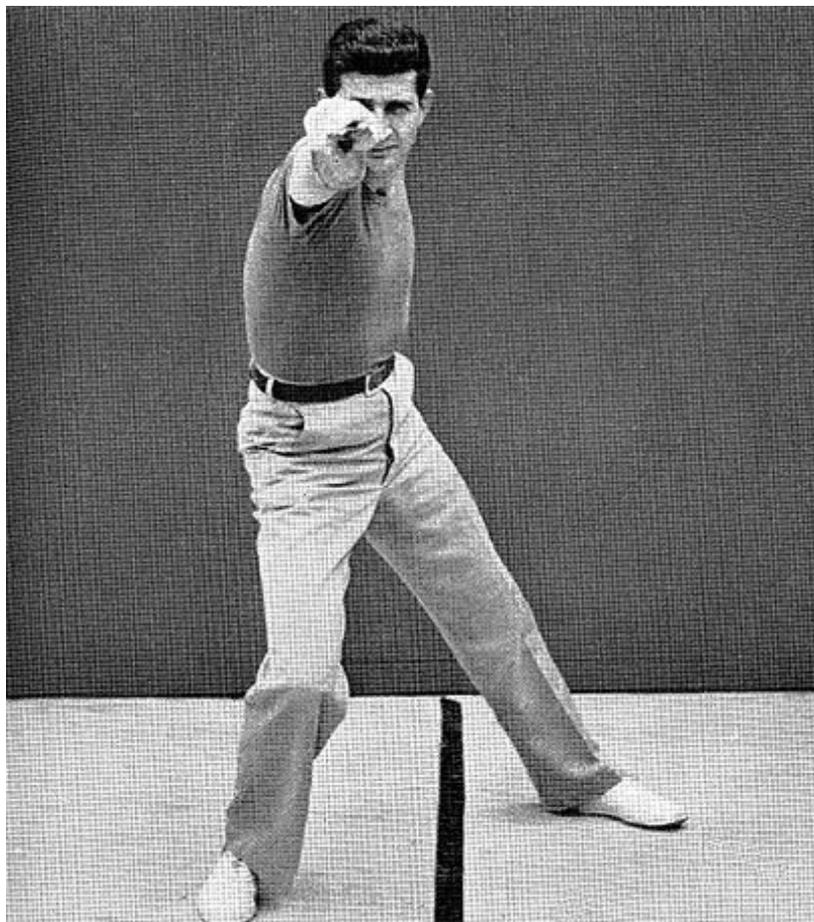


The in-quartata or out-of-line starts from the guard position. Conceal the nature of your attack until opponent is in range.

IN-QUARTATA OR OUT-OF-LINE

The defensive movement in fencing known as in-quartata or **OUT-OF-LINE** is a fine movement of the feet which throws the body approximately three feet out of the line of your opponent's attack if he attacks with so much force that you do not choose to be there to meet it with a stop thrust.

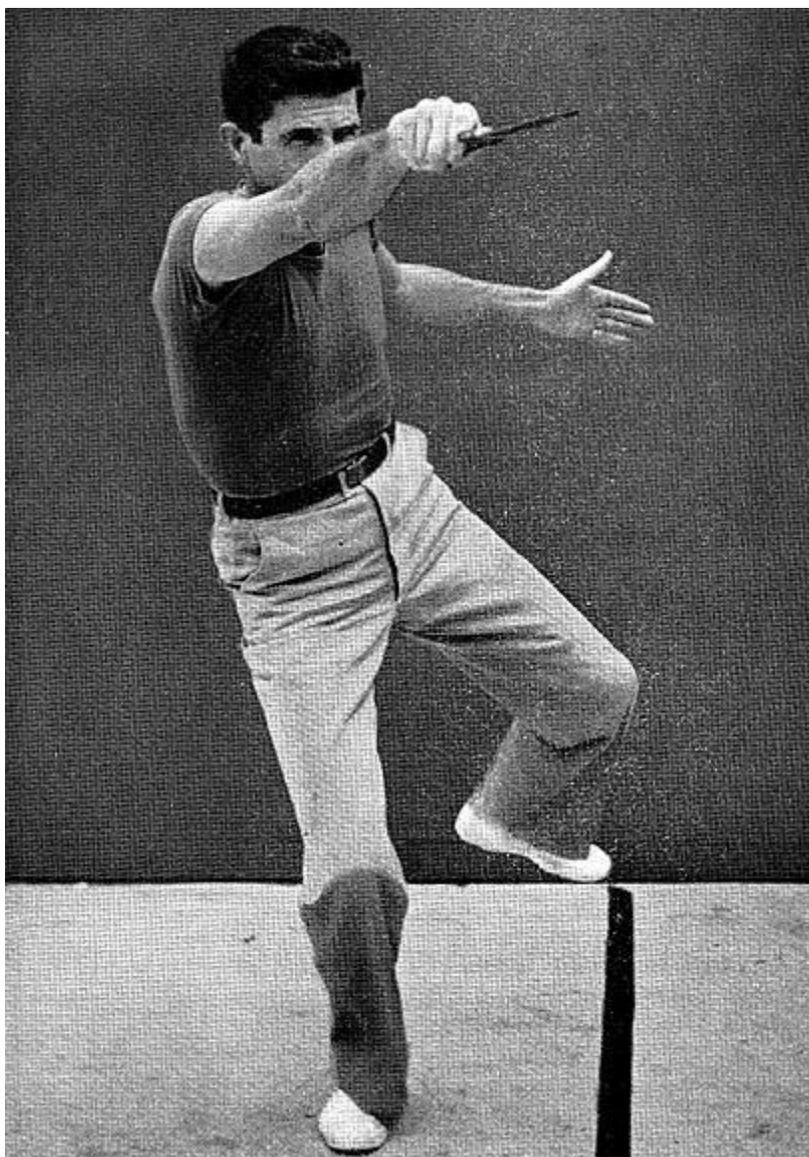
From your guard position, knees slightly bent, you execute a full thrust as the torso vigorously pivots, assisted by the free arm whipping back.



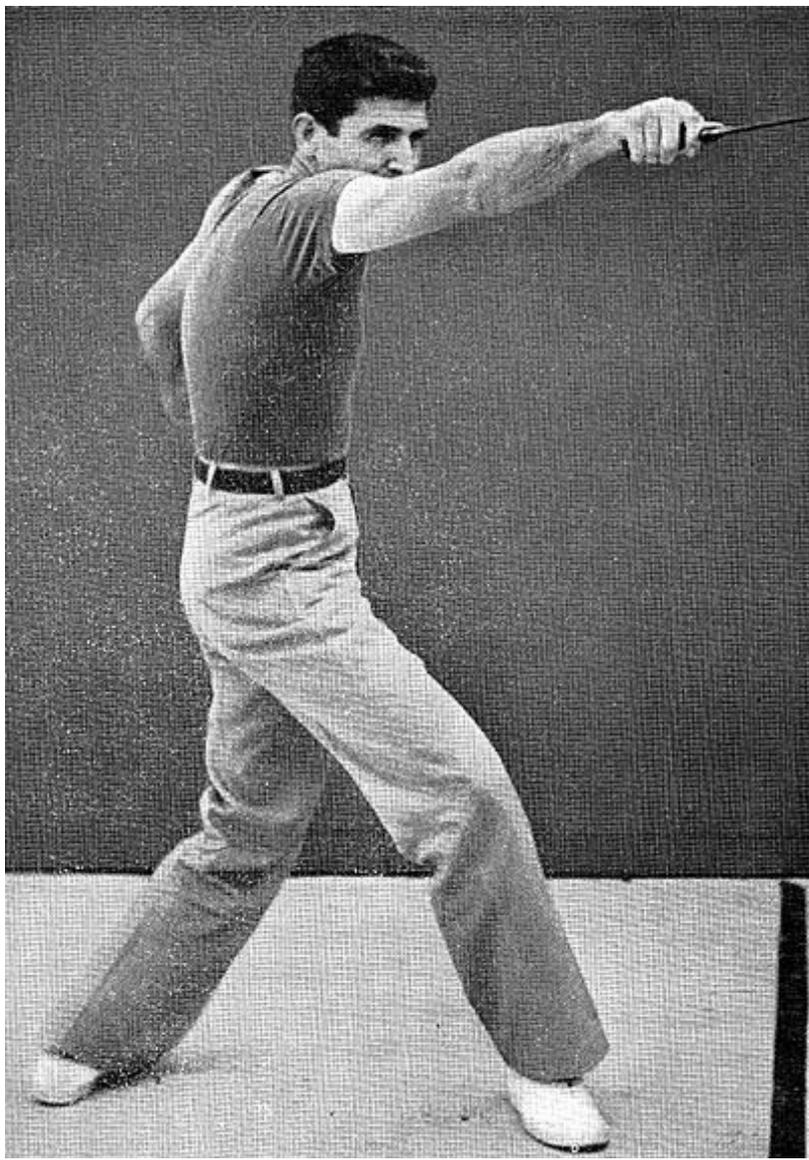
When opponent rushes into range, thrust home and apply power with the rear leg, directing the body to the right side.

You will also utilize the FULL POWER of your REAR leg to pivot the whole body on the FORWARD leg. Your rear leg swings around in an arc and lands on the opposite side. Your entire stance should now look like a full saber thrust from a saber stance, but YOU ARE AT AN ANGLE TO YOUR OPPONENT.

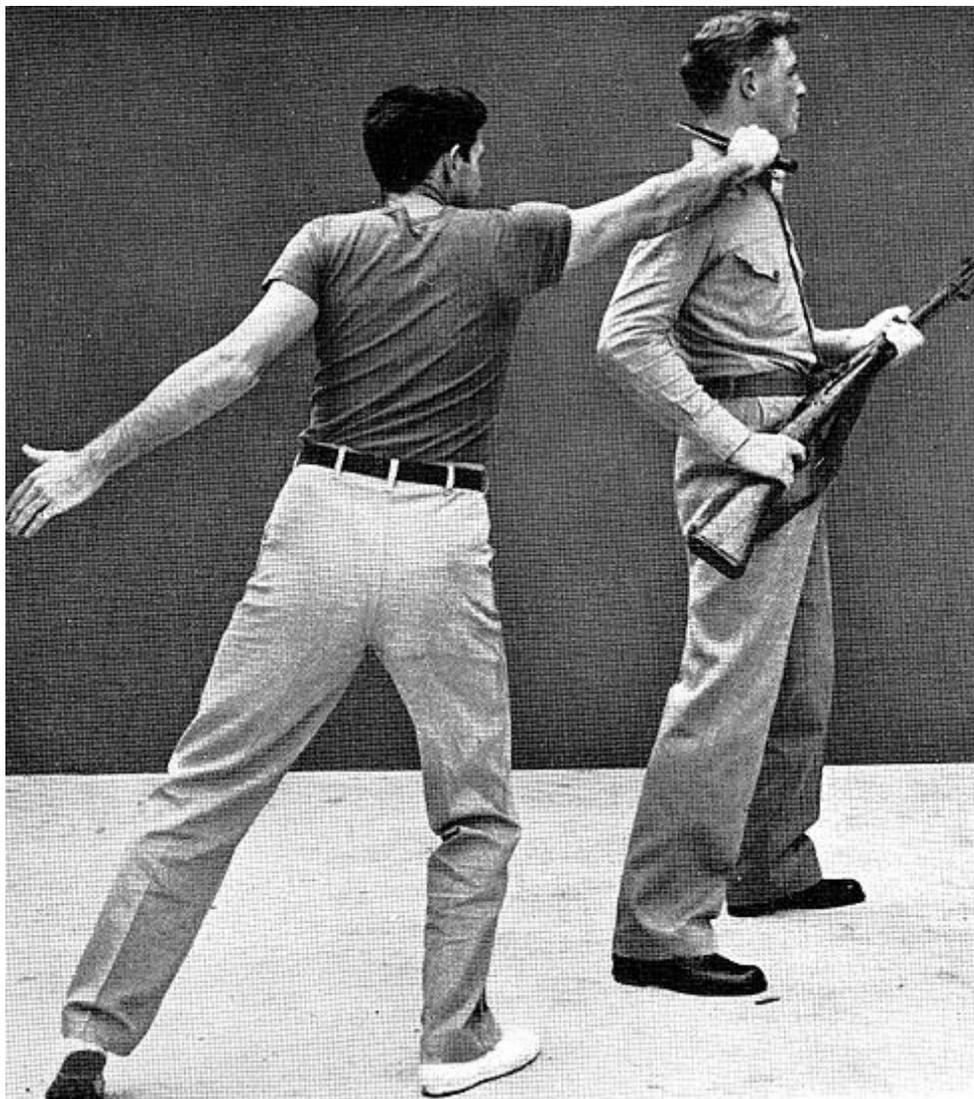
Your opponent's momentum will carry him over your original position, by about two or three feet. There will be no need for you to withdraw your blade from your opponent, his momentum will carry his BODY OUT OF THE BLADE!



Your rear leg will push off and swing to the right, pivoting the body out of line with the oncoming rush of your opponent.



The full pivot out of line, with your rear foot solidly planted. Retain your full thrust, letting the opponent cut the blade out.



If you attack an enemy from the rear or flank, try a straight thrust to the throat with the full edge, not the point, of your blade. Immediately draw the knife back, snapping the cutting edge of the knife across opponent's throat, making two cuts.

DISTANCE

Now we're going to try to clear up some of those doubts in your mind. Sure, your opponent's got a knife – maybe he's got two knives. And maybe he knows how to use them.

But, here and now, we want to cut you in on a big slice of scoop – **IF YOU'VE GOT A BOWIE KNIFE IN YOUR HAND** you're armed with a **BETTER WEAPON** than any other nation in the world has ever devised.

And that's only half the scoop. A **KNOWLEDGE** of the **BASIC PRINCIPLES** of the use of the Bowie knife or **ANY BLADE** simply means that you'll be able to save your blood for a stateside blood bank instead of leaving it on battlefield.

Up to this point you've learned three basic principles:

THE GUARD POSITION.

THE THRUST.

THE CUT.

“All of this,” you will say, “is fine on the drill field or in a gym, but what do I do when I'm in combat and a crazy enemy comes chargin' at me with a wicked lookin' dagger? The guy's gonna kill me if I don't do something to stop him!”

You're right. He'll kill you if you don't do something immediately to discourage him. **CONFIDENCE** in **YOURSELF** is primary **MENTAL** attack. A bucketful of his wild zest will drain from

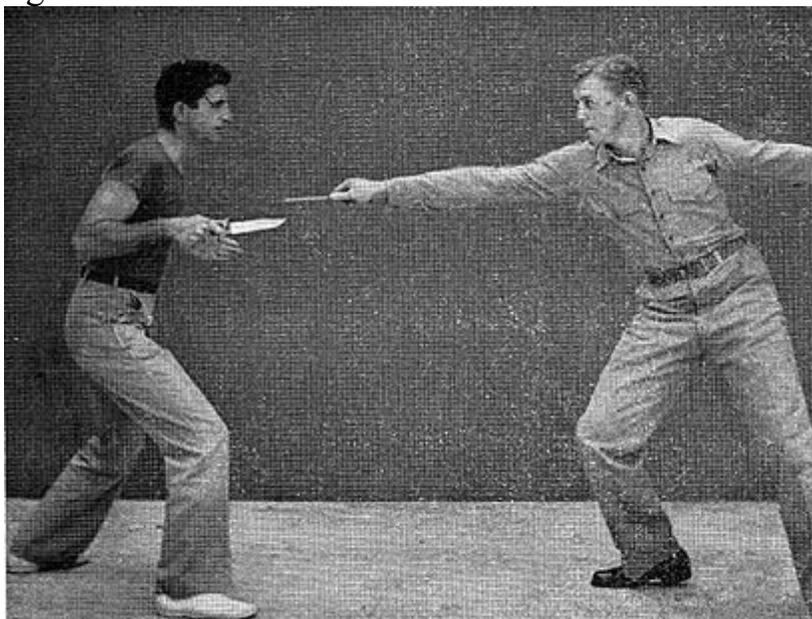
him when he sees you plant yourself in the guard position and DEFY him. He'll stop in his tracks and think thing over. You have won part of the mental duel. But the physical bout has just begun.

SIZE UP YOUR OPPONENT.

You will be able to judge the EFFECTIVE RANGE of your opponent immediately by the way he holds his blade and the stance he takes.

If your opponent has his blade in his RIGHT hand and has his LEFT foot forward, he will telegraph his attack with a body movement, even if he holds the blade in the **saber manner**.

If he holds the blade in the OVERHAND or UNDERHAND position, or in any position other than that of a **saber**, he will definitely LIMIT the effectiveness of his RANGE. This is the predominant stance of most knife fighters throughout the world in spite of the fact that it is contrary to the 400-year-old fencing principle of keeping the RIGHT FOOT FORWARD.



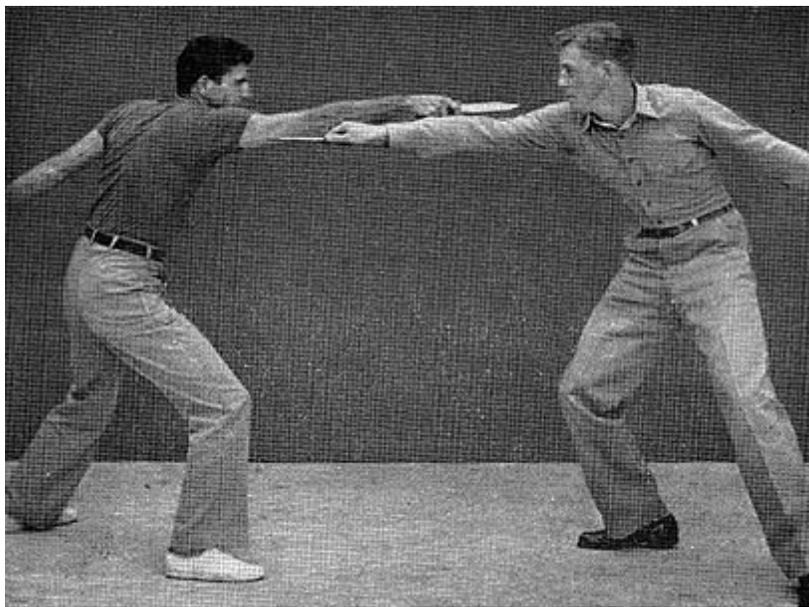
(A) Keep yourself out of range of your opponent's full thrust. If he attacks, you'll be forcing him to come into your range.

If he extends his knife-holding hand to any marked degree, regardless of his grip, he is also LIMITING his range.

With practice, you will IMMEDIATELY notice these errors in your opponent and TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THEM.

If you are confronted by an opponent who displays these errors, the rule is simple: STAY ONE FULL THRUST'S DISTANCE AWAY FROM YOUR OPPONENT'S NEAREST EXTREMIT.

From this range you will be in a position to continually SNIPE at him with LIGHTING-LIKE cuts. You will be amazed to find that, although he is in range of getting cut by your blade, he cannot try for a cut on you without by ONE or TWO FEET.



(A) Above picture shows your opponent in the same position as in (A) on opposite page, but you have been to advance.

If your opponent should **BODILY ADVANCE** in an attack, **MAKE IMMEDIATE USE OF YOUR LEGS**: they are slightly bent in the guard position and ready for instantaneous action. If your enemy's advance is slow, you merely **STEPBACK** – **REAR** foot **FIRST**, followed by the **FORWARD** foot.

If you are pressing the attack aiul arc advancing, your first step will be made by the **FORWARD** foot; bring the **REAR** foot up **BEFORE** taking a second step with the **FORWARD** foot.

If your opponent assumes a skille'd knife duelist's stance you will recognize it immediately – **AND BECOME EXTREMELY CAUTIONS**. He will be **OUT OF RANGE**. You will have **NO** immediate **TARGET**, and you will have to work hard to **GET** one.



The slightest extension of your opponent's knife hand presents a target. Strike and recover immediately to guard position.

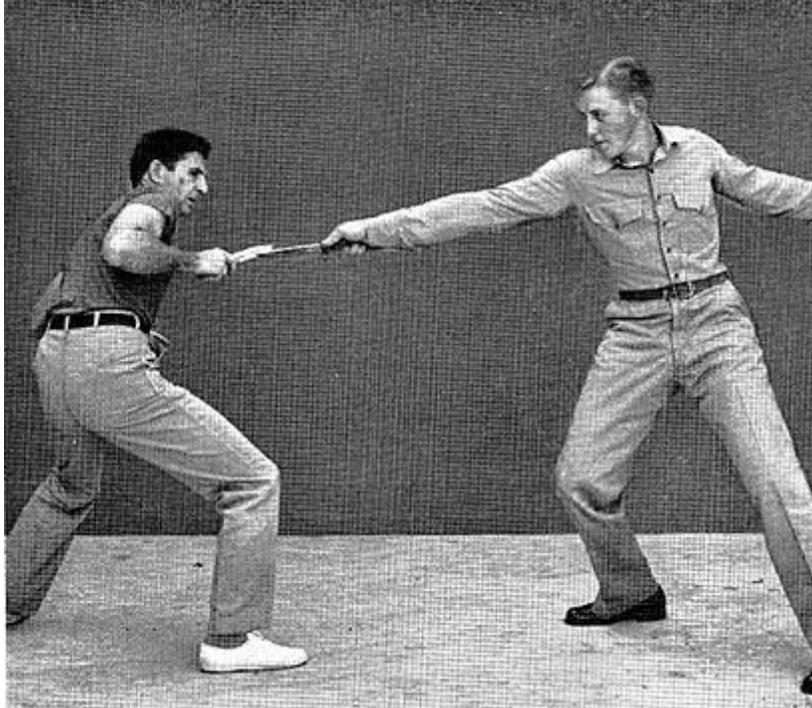
With **THIS** opponent:

1.) Your **DISTANCE** will be **INCREASED**. Stay one full thrust's distance from his full thrust's distance. The distance is from **HAND** to **HAND**. Your blade fully extended to his hand; his blade fully extended to your hand.

2.) Usually the **HANDS** will be your targets.

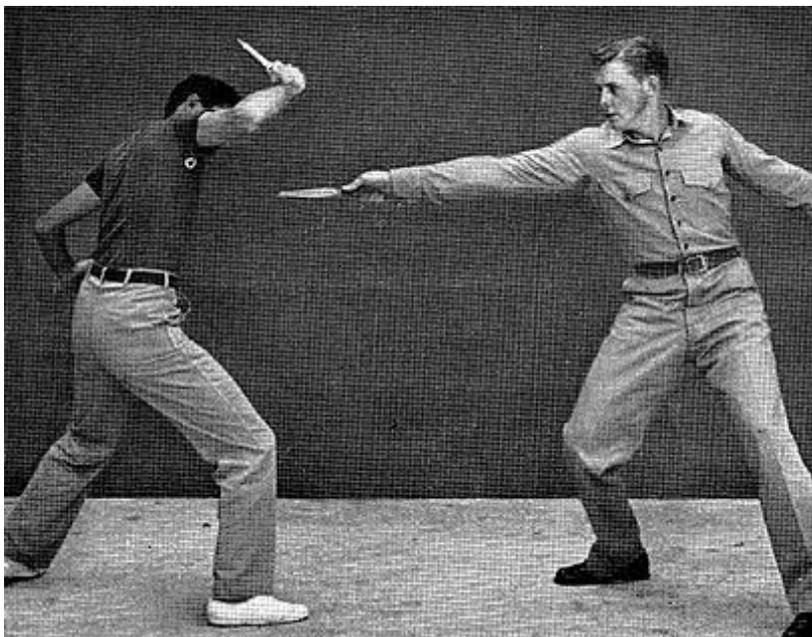
3.) The duel is on, and you will have to resort to fencing **TECHNIQUES** to draw him into your range.

4.) Attack your opponent when he is **LEAST** alert to your attack. When you sense that **HE** is about to attack, he will be thinking of **HIS OWN** strategy – **NOT** of his own defense.



Draw your opponent into an attack but keep your body in a well-balanced position and out of opponent's striking distance.

5.) You may wish to attack when your opponent is **IN MOTION** – **EXECUTING** an attack or **RETURNING** from one. In this moment, his **LACK OF BALANCE** and the **DISTANCE** will be definitely **IN YOUR FAVOR**. Once you have launched your attack, catching your opponent off balance, force your attack with straight thrusts and cut.



If your hand is too close to opponent's knife for a thrusting cut, try for a saber cut- a full, snapping chop at knife hand.

TECHNIQUE

Technique is the ability to combine basic principles with their best possible application to make the most skillful and formidable attacks against an opponent. Crudely put, it is the use of every trick you know to get your blade into your opponent.

Techniques is NOT a sometimes thing; you acquire it with the PRACTICE of BASIC PRINCIPLES, in your own, individual Manner.

It will PAY OFF in blood on YOUR blade...

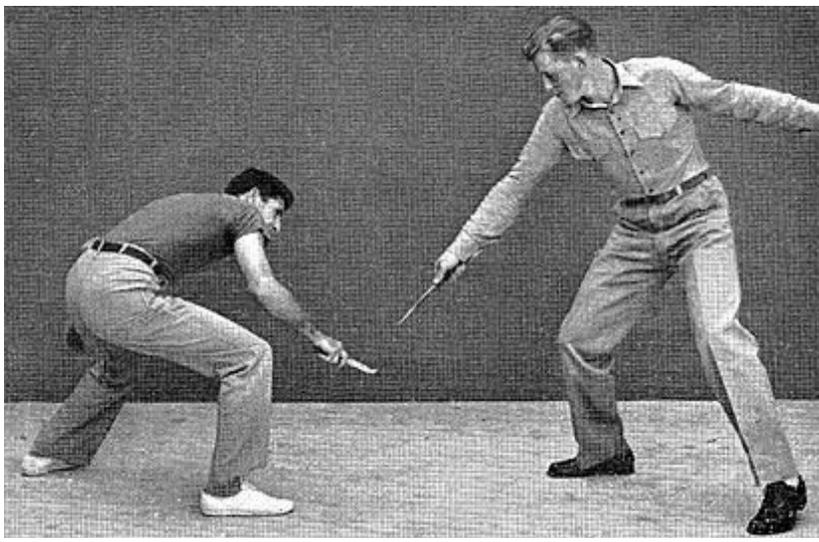
TARGETS

After the fight you'll probably want to wipe off your blade. But if you don't hit anything you won't have to clean it; as a matter of fact, if you don't hit anything, your opponent probably will and what he hits will be PART OF YOU.

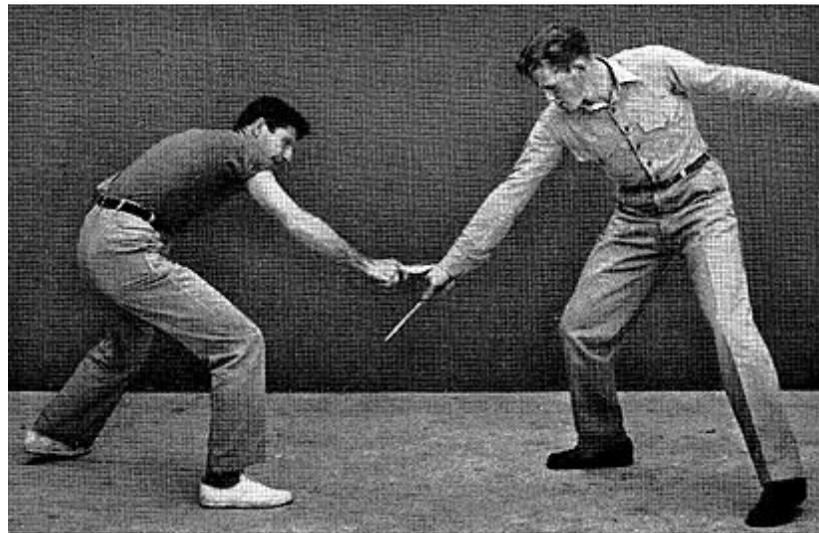
LOOK for targets on HIM, and let them feel your steel. IN A KNIFE DUEL, ANY TARGET IS A GOOD ONE TO BEGIN. THE KILL, HOWEVER, IS THE ULTIMATE.

Here are your targets:

- 1.) The *hand* that holds his blade.
- 2.) The *heart* which pumps his blood.
- 3.) The *throat* which contains his windpipe and blood supply to and from his head.
- 4.) His *chest* area which contains his lungs, heart, diaphragm and various other things he'd rather no have punctured.
- 5.) His *back*, below the shoulder blades. Thrust the knife INBOARD, toward the center of his body. Work your knife handle back and forth; this will do far more damage than a single thrust. in any portion of the back, chest, stomach or throat area PUMP THE HANDLE OF YOUR KNIFE.



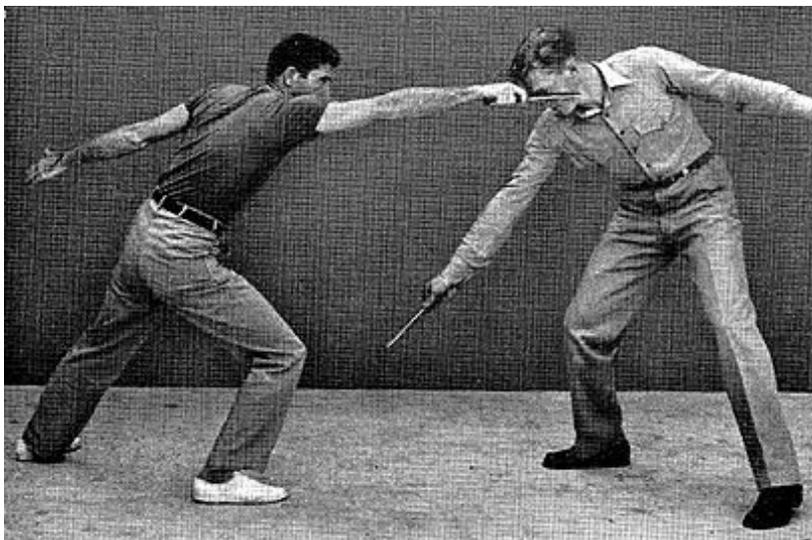
Far an enemy attack, feint a low attack; draw his weapon low.



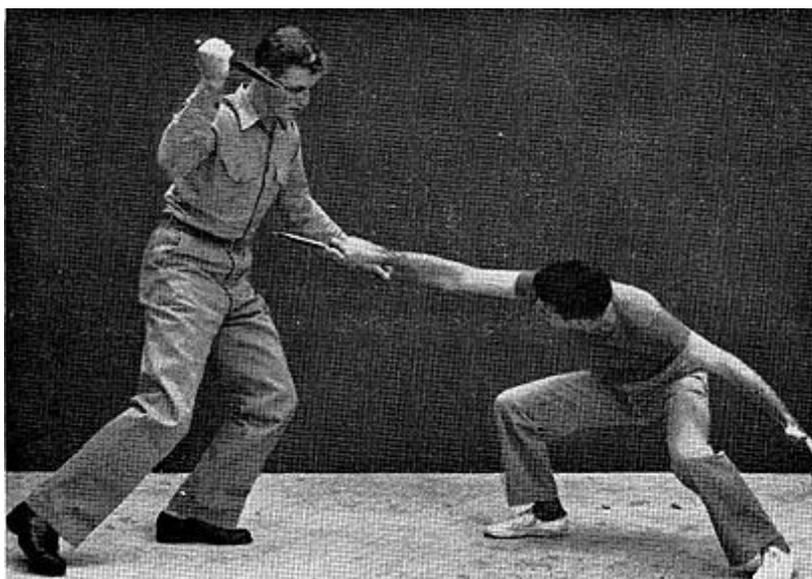
When the opponent lowers his blade, attack his hand or wrist.



Whip the blade up for a thrusting cut to your opponent's head.



Attempt a straight thrust for your opponent's head or throat.

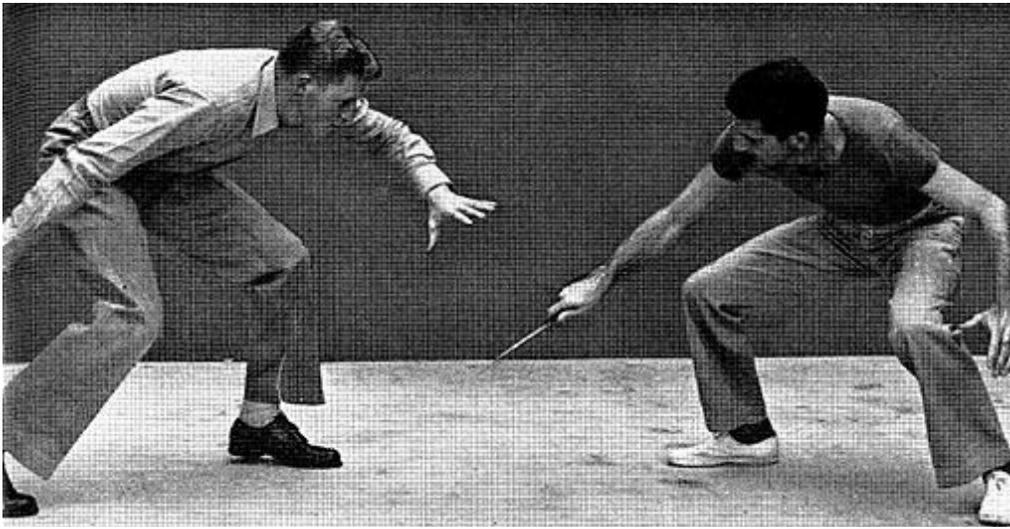


Passata sotto, an alternative for out-of-line. If your opponent rushes with exposed lower right side, thrust to lower chest.

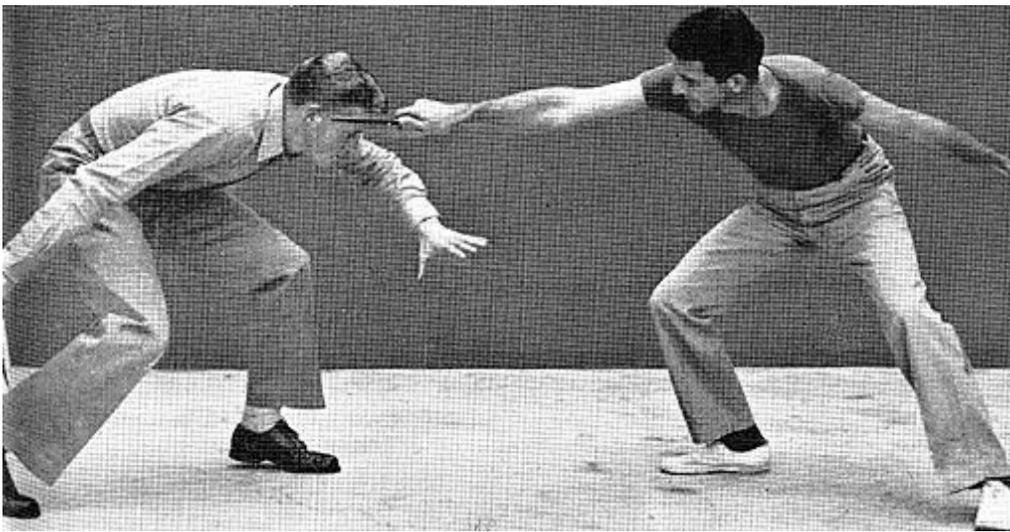
PASSATA SOTTO

Another means of getting your blade into your opponent, other than the direct manner from the guard position, is to perform a passata sotto in which you merely BEND THE TROSO VERY LOW and to the LEFT from the guard position. Thrust directly into the LOWER RIGHT CHEST or ABDOMINAL AREA of your opponent. This is affine attack against an opponent who raises his right arm high in his attack, or otherwise exposes his lower right side. In some instances a left step may accompany the attack.

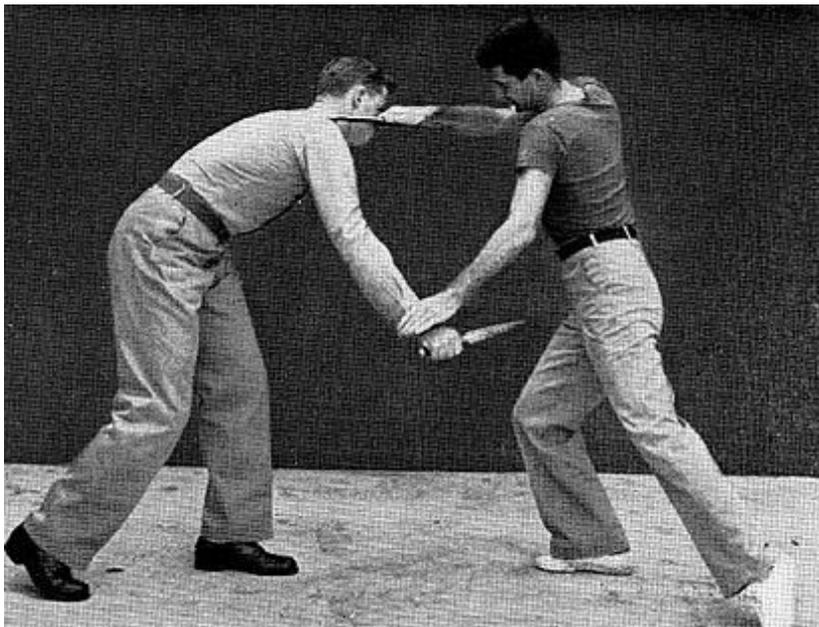
This movement is also excellent for FAKING a low cut, drawing your opponent's blade low, whereupon you strike for his HAND, FOREARM, or HEAD. If he refuses to be drawn low, you may safely risk an attack on his KNEE CAP.



A feint, made to look like an actual attack, should affect your opponent's reflexes, causing him to lower an offending guard.



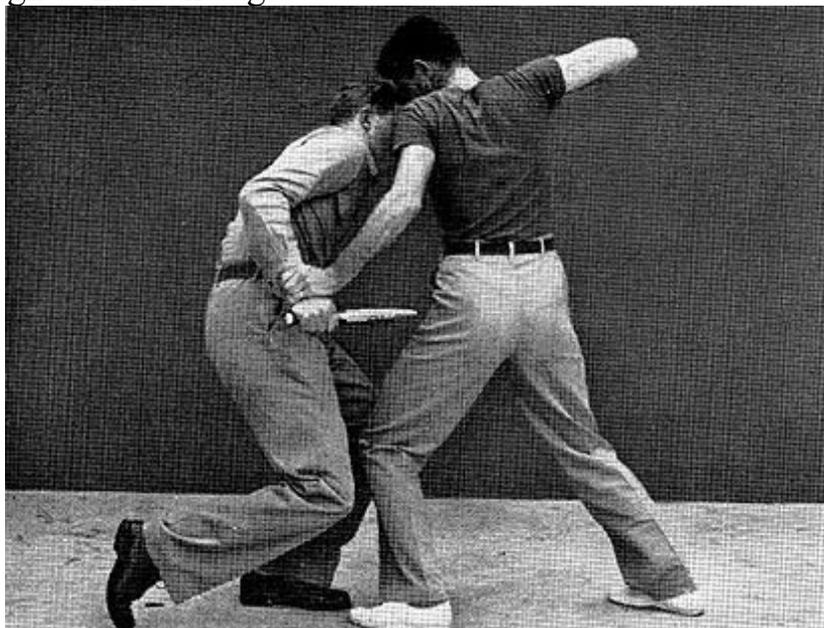
A full thrust or cutting attack may be made on your enemy's momentarily open target. Low crouch puts his head in range.



Keep your free hand in constant readiness to block enemy's blade arm. When it comes in range grab his wrist and thrust.

Your Fighting Knife

A stout blade of fine steel is the prerequisite when you go shopping for your knife. The blade should be tough enough to resist most impacts without showing a fixed bend. When severely strained beyond the point of returning to its original position, the blade should bend instead of snapping off. The steel should be hard enough to hold an edge.



Clamp down hard on your opponent's wrist; at the same time move your body in close and thrust your blade into the target.

the knife should be from seven to ten inches in length and resemble the form of the traditional American Bowie. The handle should be long enough to fit comfortably and securely in the palm. The weight of the handle should equal the weight of the blade in order to avoid the feeling of "*blade-heaviness*" when the knife is "*hefted*." The balance should be near the guard, preferably on the handle side.

Your knife should be equipped with a scabbard that can be secured to the person in a manner which will make it possible to draw the knife easily and quickly by a natural movement of the hand. The scabbard should be secured vertically on the outside of the right thigh. If this position is impractical because of other gear or heavy clothing, the scabbard may be carried in a horizontal or diagonal position on the front or left front beltline.

Regardless of where the knife is carried, it should be in constant readiness for instant use

WE REPEAT:

Knife fighting is an ugly business; we hope and pray that you'll never meet an opponent armed with a blade, the look of a madman in his eyes, hatred in his heart, and the momentary lust for YOUR life.

But you might.

And in combat only ONE opponent comes out of a knife fight alive. if we have succeeded in giving you CONFIDENCE in your own ability with your knife, by the prescribed PRINCIPLES; if we have been able to convince you that your enemy, whoever he is, HASN'T GOT A CHANCE with HIS knife; then we have given something with which to save your OWN life.

Knife Throwing

Part II

Knife Throwing

Only a few of the local boys around Time Square noticed that something was missing. The lights on the Palace Theater sign had gone out. Backstage, the old doorman paused for a last, wistful glance at the darkened house; then he picked up his coat and shuffled through the stage door, locked it for the last time, and stepped sadly into the alley. The Palace had closed; vaudeville had died.

The years which followed left only memories of the acrobats, the ventriloquists, the jugglers, the wire-walkers. But those who mourned vaudeville seldom mentioned one of its most gasp-provoking acts – The Knife Thrower.

The closing of the Palace had been a symbol, it had meant the end of one night stands and spilt-weeks in the provinces; it had meant that a lot of little boys wouldn't go to bed nights, dreaming about a new ambition – to become knife throwers.

The fascinating desire to throw pointed knife across a room and make it stick in a solid surface is a natural inclination, but this urge was always stimulated by the glamorous knife throwing act: a roll on the drums, colored spotlights, glistening blades flying thorough the air, outlining a pert lass in a spangled costume posing against a wooden backdrop. The man in the satin shirt never missed; every knife he threw ping..ged into the board point-first – and stayed there!

Ever wonder how he did it?

Well, here are the practical principles based on the science of professional knife throwing;

THE END-OVER-END METHOD

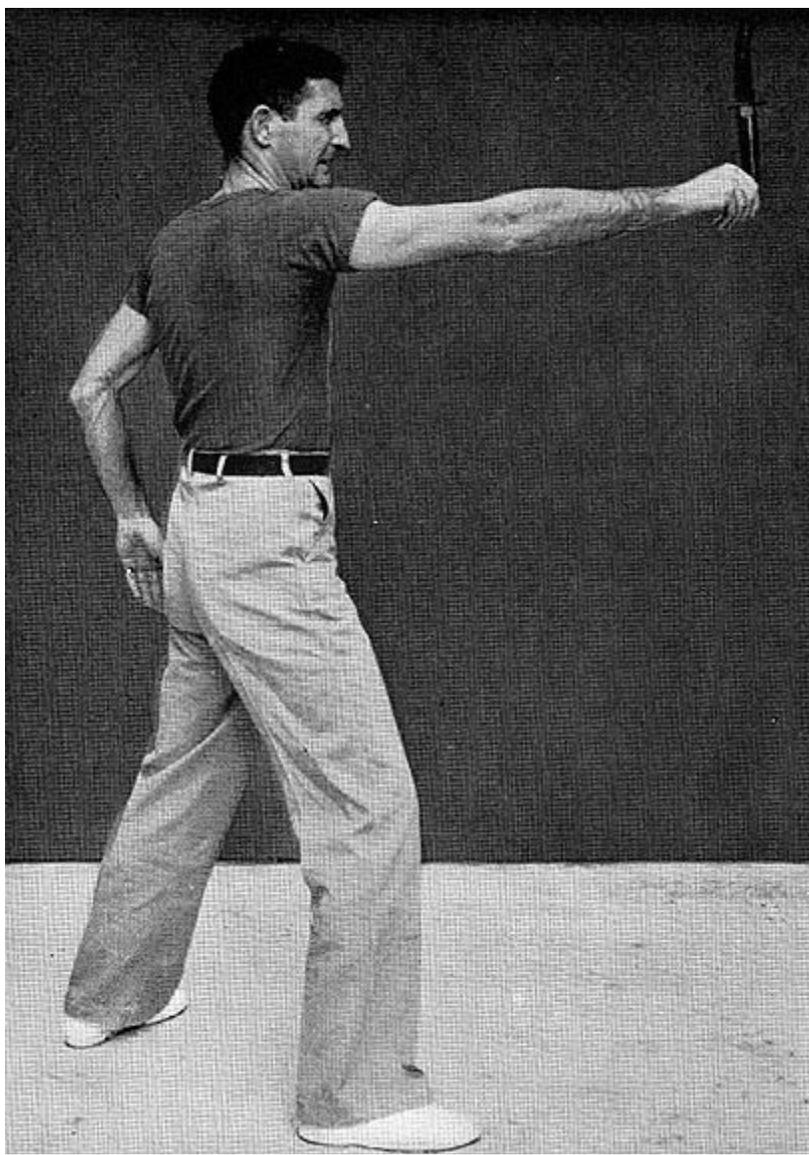
The END-OVER-END METHOD, used by the professional knife thrower, is the most accurate of the three knife techniques; gratifying results may be obtained quickly and safely by observing its easily mastered principles.

The Grip

Raise the right forearm until it is parallel to the ground. Make a natural fist with the *knuckles* UP. Now place the knife VERTICALLY between the thumb and forefinger. If the knife has only one full cutting edge, this edge should face FORWARD.

Straighten the forefinger, vertically, along the right side of the blade and adjust the knife up or down with your left hand until the tip of your right forefinger is even with the point of the blade. Clamp the blade tightly against the forefinger with the thumb.

Your blade is now VERTICAL to the FOREARM; well secured in a UNIFORM manner, and you are ready for *the throw*.



The end-over-end technique. Line up the knife on the target. Your arm is extended fully and your blade is held vertically.

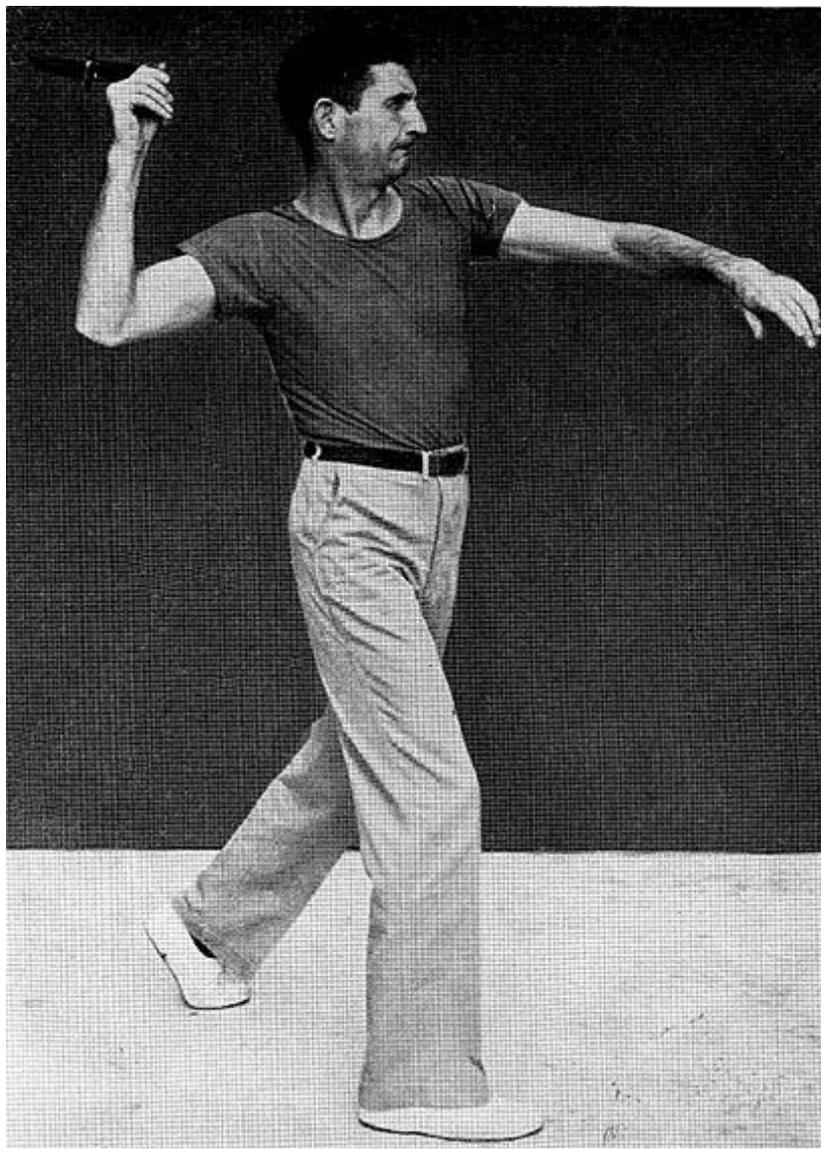
The Throw

From a pistol shooter's position, **RIGHT FOOT FORWARD** extend the **RIGHT ARM**, full length in the direction of the target. Be sure that the knuckles are **UP**; the blade is **VERTICAL**; the wrist is **STRAIGHT** and **LOCKED**. From this position draw the blade back to the right side of your head. Do **NOT** develop a **BEND IN THE WRIST** or in any way change the position of the knife in your hand.

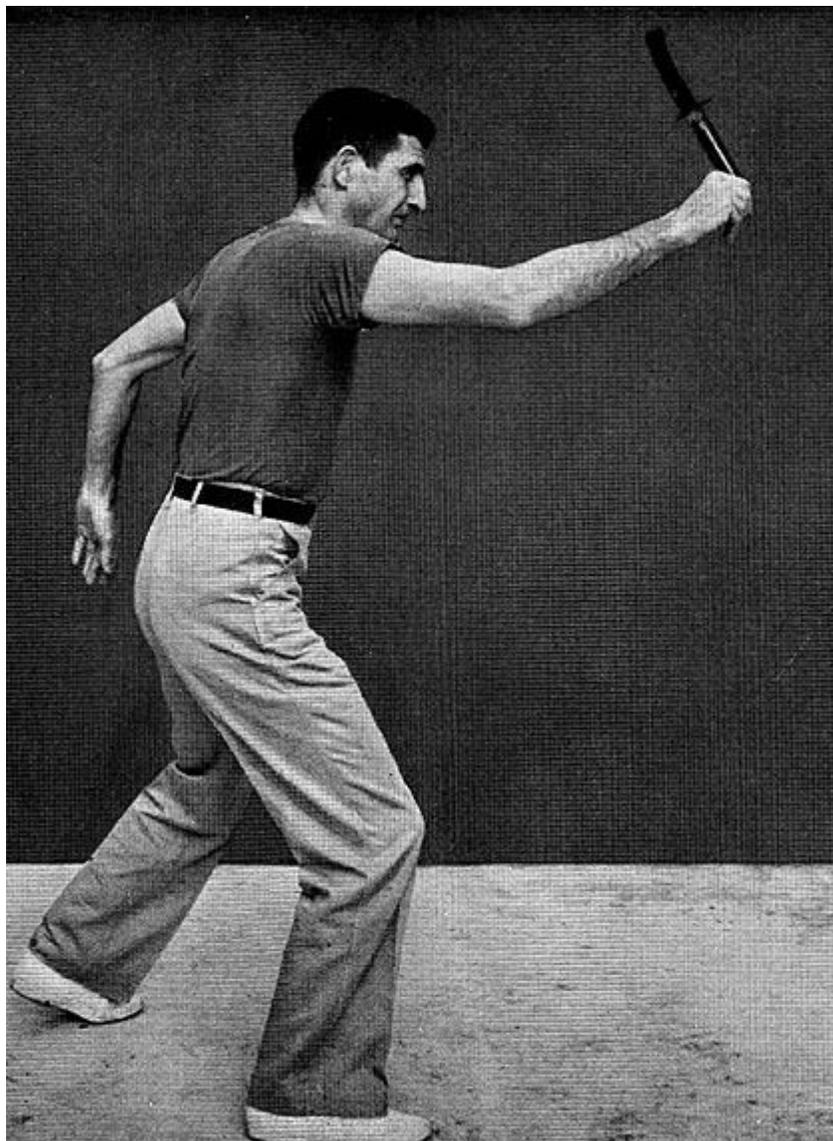
You now have **LOADED** your weapon, **COCKED** it, and are ready to **FIRE**.

Thrust the right arm out, **STRAIGHT AT THE TARGET**, allowing the blade to leave the hand **BY ITSELF**. This action is **FAST**, consequently natural errors can bring about early disappointing results. The following instructions will help to *prevent* or *correct* these errors. When you thrust your arm at the target, be sure that you are making a **FULL THRUST**. Do **NOT** try to apply any **WRIST ACTION** to "*help the blade.*" The arm when fully extended will stop abruptly, causing a *natural whipping* action of the **FIST**. This action plus the **WEIGHT** of the blade, will make the blade leave the hand in a uniform manner **EVERY TIME** if it is *unassisted* by anything other than **VELOCITY**.

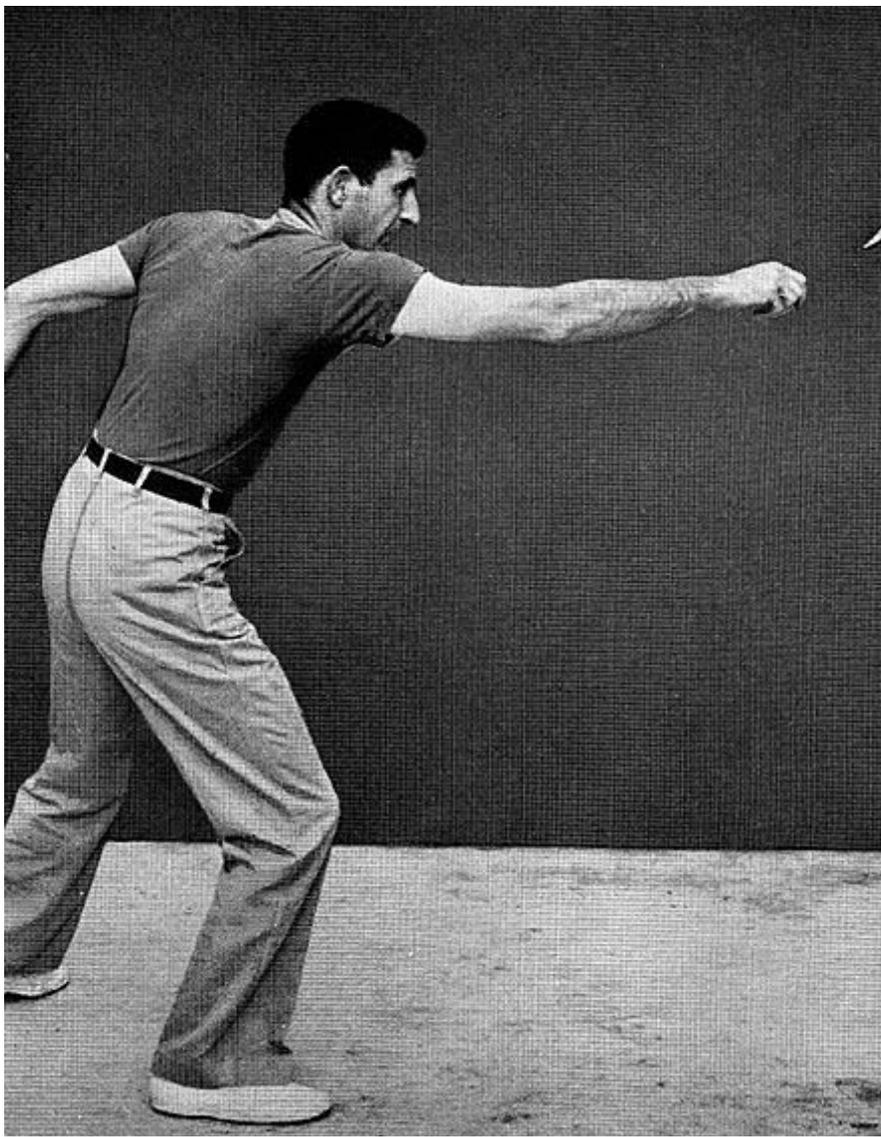
The foregoing instructions should give you consistent results within the first five minutes of practice, provided of course, that you are throwing from the *correct* distance. When you find this correct range, put a marker on the ground as a guide. Later, with practice, you will **SEE** the proper range of **ANY TARGET**, and you will be able to adjust your throws accordingly.



Draw your knife well back and keep the wrist straight. Your forefinger should be pressed firmly against the side of blade.



Thrust your knife arm vigorously straight forward to target. Note that the blade remains at a right angle to the forearm.



When your arm is fully extended in your thrust, knife leaves your hand automatically. A wrist snap might result in a miss.

Your Guide For Distance

If you are using a blade with an overall length (including handle) of approximately 12 inches, you will stand about six feet from your target. If the blade is longer, step back a few inches. At this range, your blade will revolve three-quarters of a full from the time it leaves your hand until it strikes the target.

If, after a few perfect throws, the handle of your knife strikes the target in a downward position, you are **TOO CLOSE**. Move back a few inches.

If your knife consistently strikes the target with its handle facing **UP**, you are **TOO FAR** from your target. Move in a few inches.

If you throw according to these instructions you will gain consistent accuracy, your blade entering the target perfectly each time, and you will be controlling the handle well at short range.

After mastering this range, you may wish to double the distance, **ADDING ABOUT ONE FOOT** to take care of the **ADDITIONAL** quarter of a turn. Do **NOT** advance to this range until you are capable of controlling the handle angle with ease at the *shorter* range.

You need **NOT** have professional “*balanced*” throwing knife to achieve satisfactory results; with this technique you can throw practically anything that has a point. Although thrown in the manner prescribed on these pages, such items as ice picks, bayonets, or letter openers will each demand their proper range.

A balanced throwing knife can be compared to match ammunition, but ANY knife can be thrown with moderately accurate results.

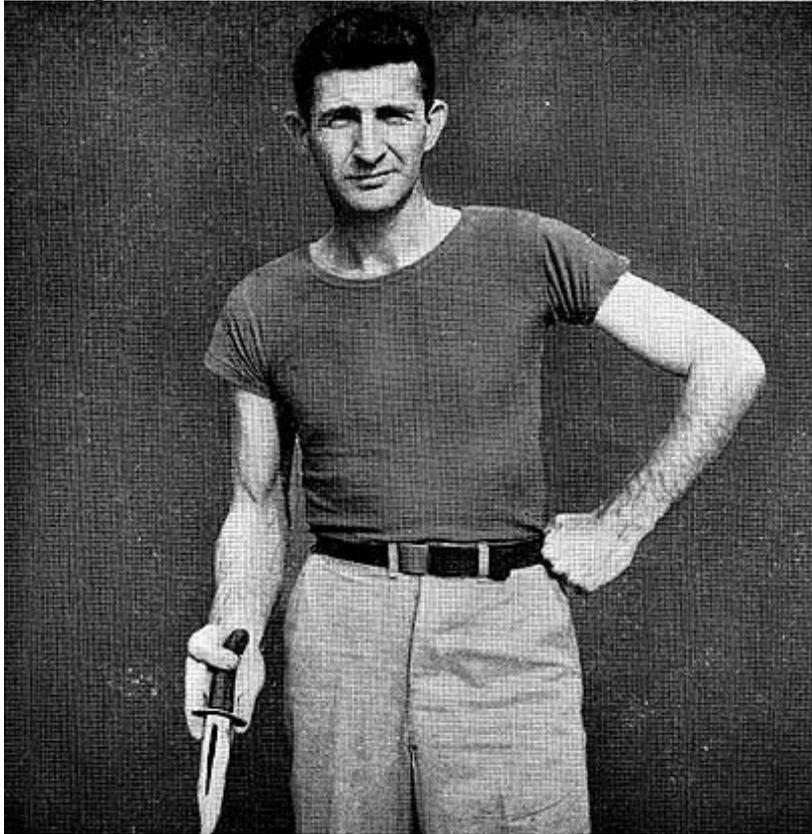
THE POINT-FIRST METHOD

Unlike the theatrical knife thrower, the early frontiersmen and gamblers' of the gold rush era threw their knives POINT-FIRST. This method is very effective at close range and the EXACT RANGE is *unimportant* because the knife does not TURN after it leaves the hand.

The Grip

Raise your right forearm until it is parallel with the ground. The fingers are extended and joined, THE PALM UP, the wrist STRAIGHT.

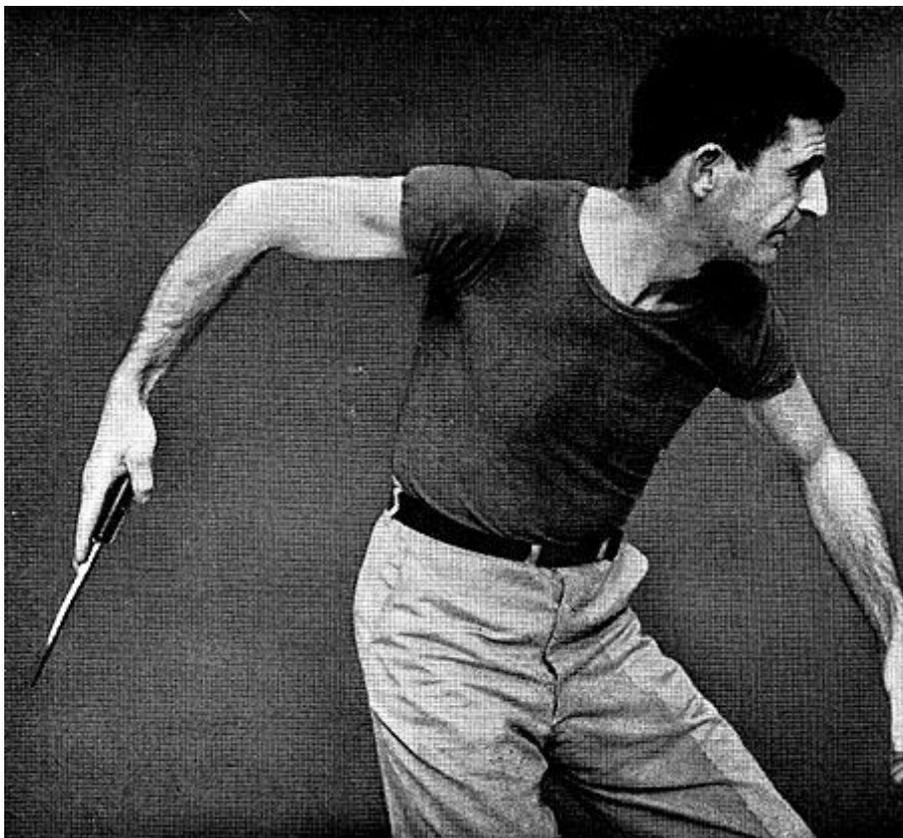
Now place the handle of the blade in the palm of the hand, the point of the blade ON A LINE with the elbow. The handle rests in the palm, forming an extension to the forearm. Without disturbing this line-up, secure the knife in this position with the THUMB. Merely you are now ready for the throw.



This point first technique. The knife lies in the palm of your hand, the thumb hooked on the handle, keeping knife in place.

The Throw

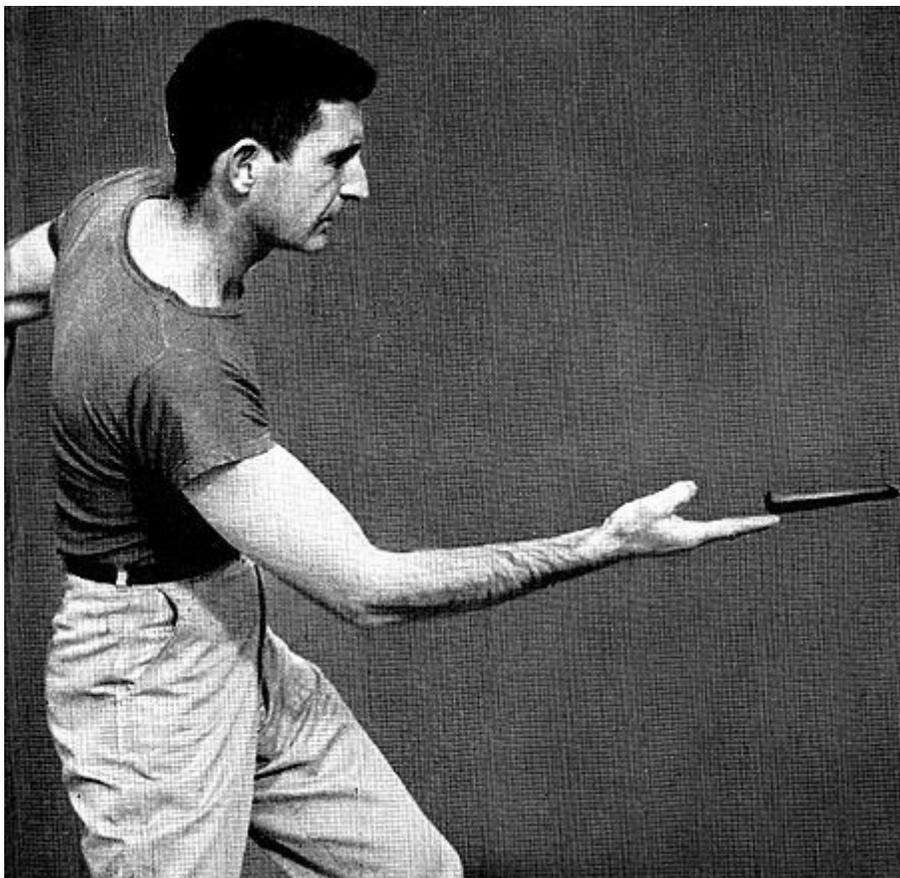
From a LEFT FOOT FORWARD position, draw the knife WELL BACK. Be very careful that you do not upset the ALIGNMENT or the STRAIGHT WRIST. You are now ready to RIFLE the blade to the target with a forward whip of the forearm. SNAP the forearm forward in a direct line to the target, channeling the blade to the target without WHIPPING the FINGERS or the WRIST.



keep your wrist straight as you draw your knife your knife well back. Elbow and the point of your knife should form a straight line.

ALLOW THE BLADE TO LEAVE THE HAND BY ITSELF.

Eventually, after a little practice, you will be able automatically to release the thumb pressure at exactly the right moment. Don't try to SHOVEL the forearm straight out from TOO HIGH A LEVEL. This will cut down your velocity. The proper level to obtain maximum results will be approximately eight inches below the belt line.



Your blade is rifled forward in a straight line to the target by the knife hand. Your wrist and fingers should remain firm.

DON'T try to draw the forearm straight back horizontal to the ground, and PUSH forward. When drawing the blade well back for the throw, it should be poised about 12 inches behind you, or your right side, your forearm and blade, point down, almost vertical to the ground. From this position you RIFLE the blade straight to the target WITH NO FINGER OR WRIST ACTION. When completing the throw, *follow through* with your arm. In whipping the blade forward your forearm will not be horizontal until the last moment. This fellow-through is very helpful in controlling the course of the blade.

Practice

Start your practice throws VERY CLOSE to the target.

If your point shoots UPWARDS, striking with the handle DOWN, you have either WHIPPED with your FINGERS OR WRIST, or have released the blade TOO LATE.

If your blade strikes with the handle UP, you have released the blade TOO SOON.

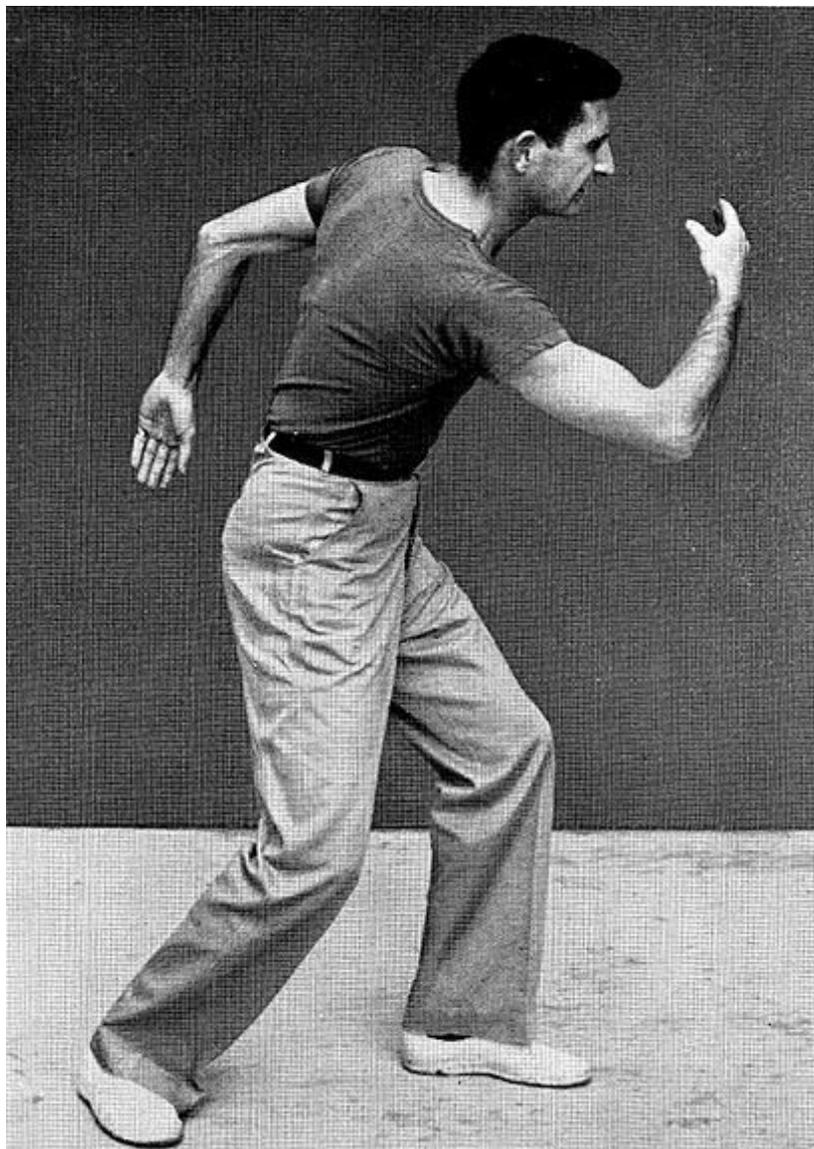
If your blade strikes with the handle RIGHT OR LEFT, it is possible that your blade was NOT in a STRAIGHT LINE with your forearm in the beginning.

A HEAVY blade is preferable for this technique; light blades respond too easily to any error you might make.

The blade for POINT FIRST throwing should have a smooth handle. Knobs or other irregularities will hinder uniform throwing.

There are no minimum or maximum ranges for this technique. Your primary object is to make the blade fly through the air STRAIGHT – and with VELOCITY.

When you have mastered “*sticking*” the blade at a given range, you will be able to detect and correct your errors by MOVING BACK BEYOND your effective range. At greater range, slight errors become more obvious.



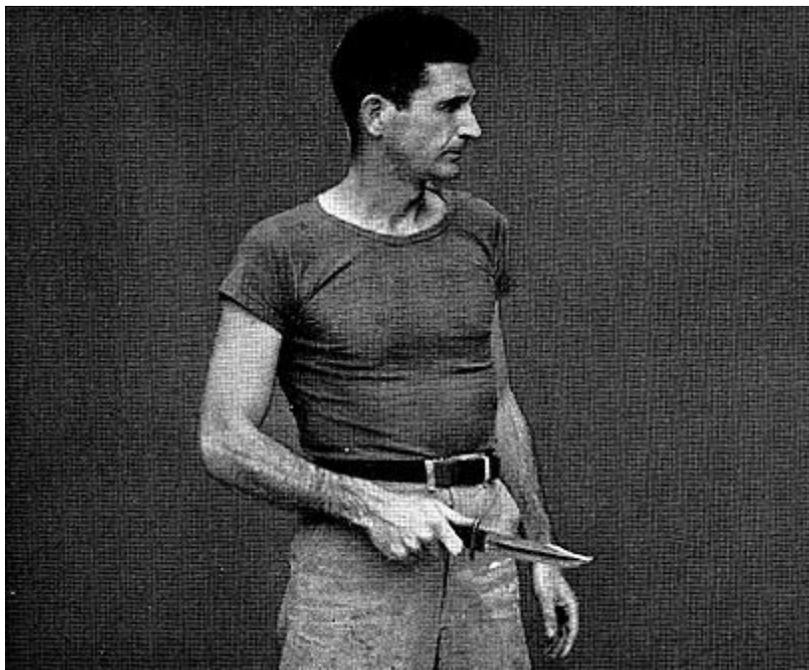
The knife leaves the hand horizontally. Any attempt to guide your knife with a wrist action is likely to foul your accuracy.

THE OVERHAND METHOD

THE GREATEST VELOCITY will be obtained from this technique. The knife shown in the illustrations has completely pierced a truck body and penetrated a one-inch oak panel when thrown at its natural, range, approximately 12 feet.

The Grip

Grasp your knife with the right hand as you would for a knife fight, and throw it from this grip – the fingers wrapped around the handle, the thumb on top, THE SABER HOLD.

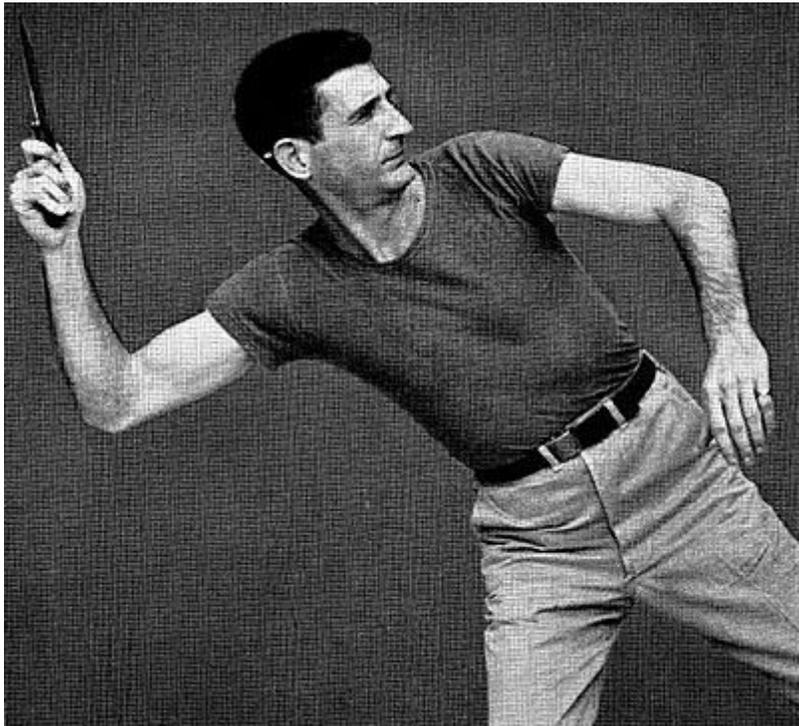


The overhand method. The knife is held by its handle with the fingers wrapped tightly; thumb is placed on top of the handle.

The Throw

With your LEFT foot forward, merely throw the knife as you would a baseball, following through with a right step forward and a full natural swing. Unlike the basketball throw, you will add no intentional WHIP. In this techniques you will adjust the knife and your DISTANCE to conform with your own NATURAL throw.

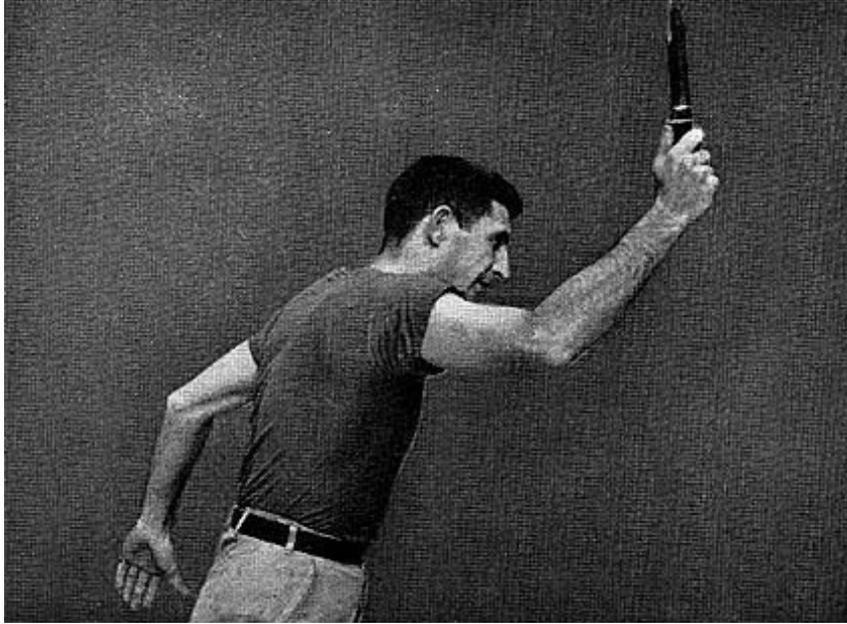
If you fail to achieve consistency at your natural range, it is likely that you are adding an unnecessary wrist snap. If you have a NATURAL WRIST SNAP it will be included in your natural throw and will give you no trouble.



The wind-up and position are identical to the baseball throw. Full power and velocity are obtained in this throwing method.

The handle should slip out of your hand smoothly, the blade making ONE FULL TURN in the air. The 12-inch knife shown in the illustrations will make one tui ci i strike point first at a 12-foot range when thrown by the author. This same blade, when thrown naturally, in the same manner by someone else will make that same turn from anywhere between 11 and 13 feet. YOU WILL HAVE TO FIND YOUR OWN RANGE FOR THE KNIFE YOU ARE USING.

In knife throwing, there is little possibility that you will cut yourself if you are using the proper grip. It is advisable in this technique to have a knife with a smooth handle. If a bayonet is thrown in this manner, many complications can be avoided by holding the handle FLAT in the hand, with the small knob to the LEFT, edge to the LEFT. The grip is the same, thumb on top. When thrown, the flat sides of the handle will slip along the fingers.

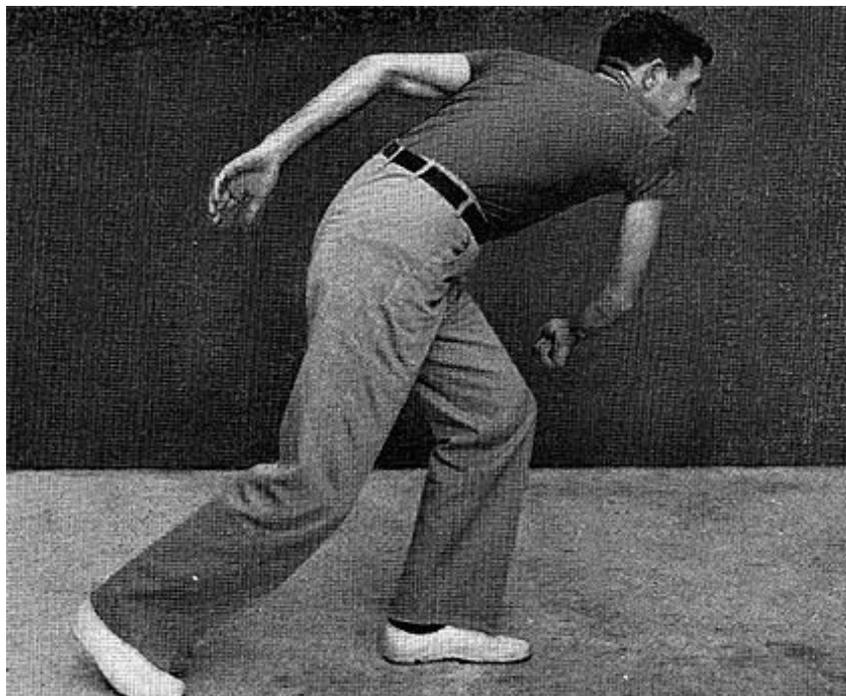


Your natural overhand throw propels the blade to the target. Release the knife without a wrist snap for accurate results.

If you are unable to achieve consistent results, look to your basic swing as well as to the wrist. The swing should be a full overhand throw with follow-through.

IN THE PRACTICE OF ANY OF THESE TECHNIQUES, safety precautions must be taken. A bad throw means a ricocheting blade – and ricocheting blades are treacherous. Knife throwing can be a lot of fun, but it can be a very dangerous pastime.

The “*point first*” knife throwing frontiersmen and gold rush gamblers are gone these many years, but the old Palace Theater has opened its doors again to big time vaudeville; maybe the forgotten art of “*end-over-end*” knife throwing behind the footlights will have a rebirth. Then, too, there’s always television...



Complete your throw with a full and natural fellow-through. When you have found correct range, concentrate on accuracy.



John Styers

Enlisted Marine Corps.

Student of The Late Col. A.J. Drexel Biddle, UCMCR

Combat instructor