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FROM EMPTY-HAND TO WEAPONS

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THE ARTFUL TRANSITION FROM EMPTY HAND TO WEAPONS

by George Kirby

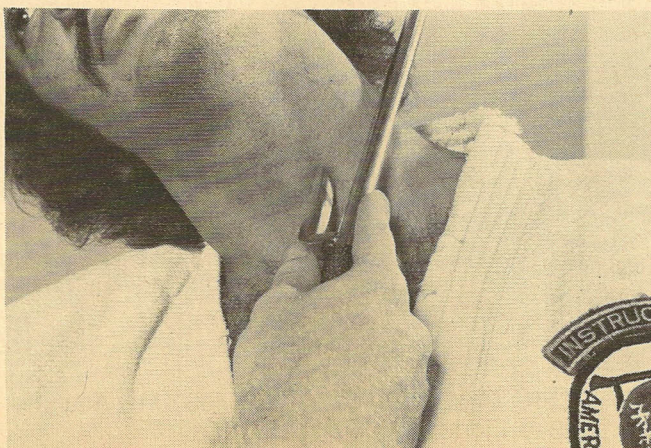
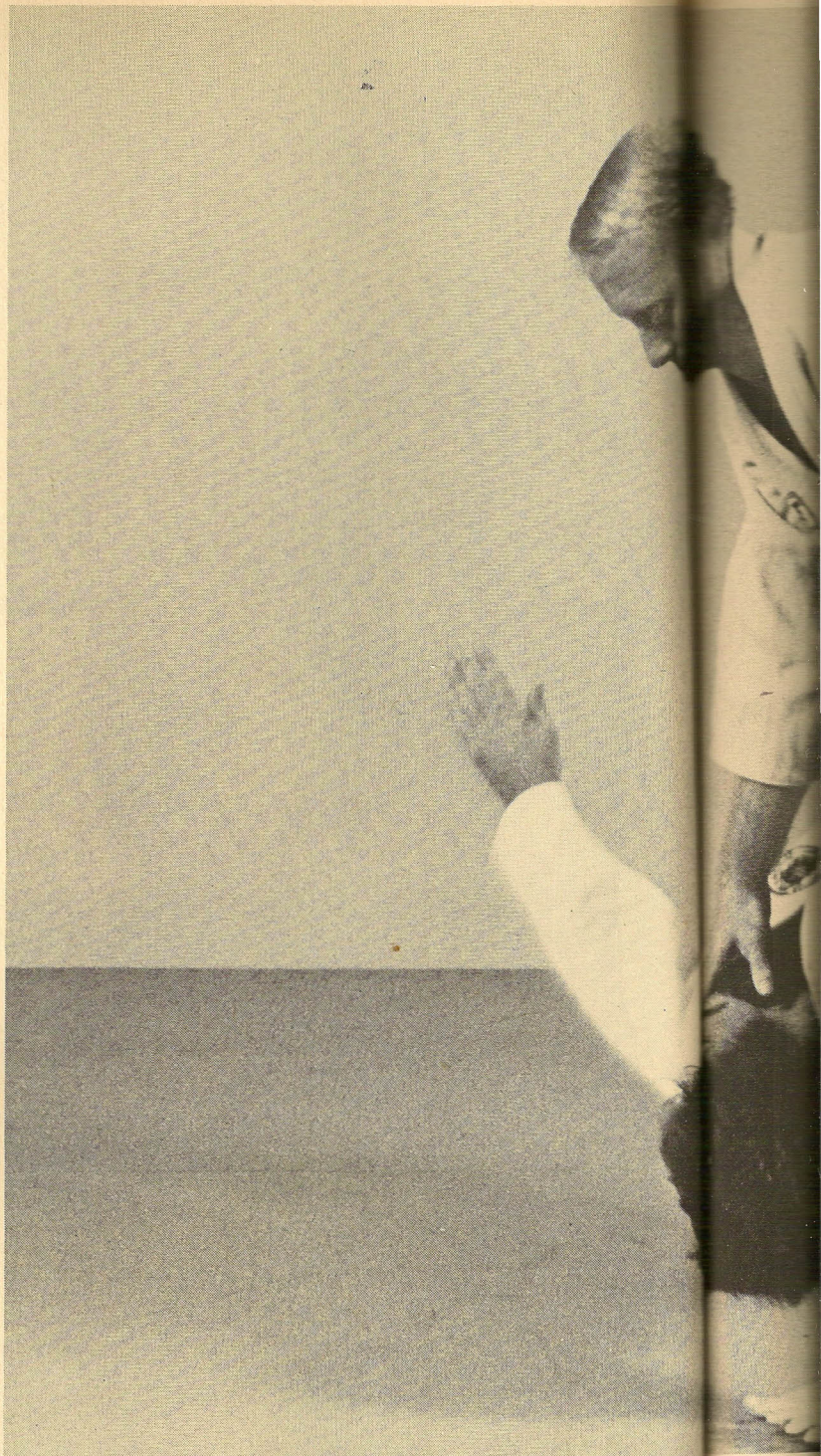
Jujitsu is the gentle art of self-defense. It has earned that distinctive name because of the character of the art. A person proficient in the art of jujitsu has the choice of creating a great deal of pain and injury or severe pain without injury. It is a unique characteristic of the art.

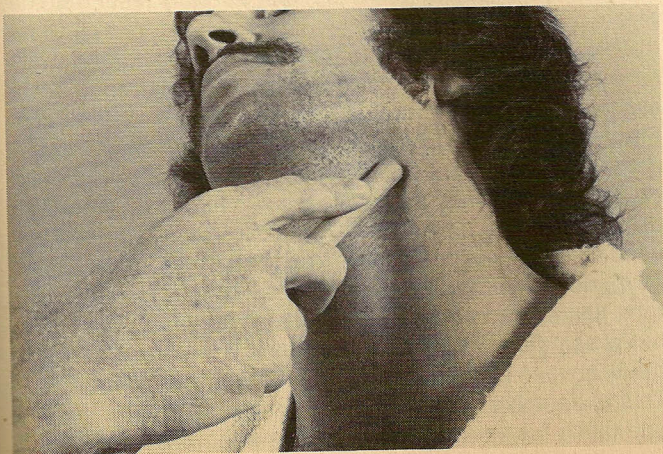
The ability of a jujitsu practitioner to acquire this skill is based upon his ability to become proficient in the use of empty-hand techniques combined with an understanding of ki and the circle theory of movement. If jujitsu is taught as an art the student will gain a unique proficiency in all of these areas. By acquiring a good understanding of empty-hand techniques the student will also have acquired an understanding of ki, the circle theory, and the application of empty-hand techniques to weapons.

Empty-Hand Defined

Empty-hand techniques are those that use ki, attacker momentum, nerves and pressure points, and the circle theory to bring down an attacker. An application of empty-hand techniques is easier to comprehend once each of the elements is understood.

Ki can be defined in a number of ways. It can be called the inner spirit, driving force, or the center of energy. If a person commits himself to an action he is committing his ki; his energy is directed towards that end. An attacker commits his ki to the direction of his attack. He is extend-





The basic concepts of jujitsu can be applied with or without weapons. Here a pressure-point attack, whether barehanded, with a jutte or with a yawara stick, contributes to the momentum of the throw. The attacker's ki is redirected by means of the nerve technique into a circular movement which brings him to the ground.

ing his center of energy in that direction.

When attacked you can use your ki to stop his force and counter it directly (hard arts) as in Figure 1. Your ki can also be used to absorb the attacker's ki and either continue his direction of force or redirect his energy in another complementary direction (soft arts) as in Figure 2. A complementary direction will be explained later.

Attacker momentum is the end result of the attacker's extension of his ki. It is that amount of energy that is being directed towards a certain point, (Figure 3). The momentum, as an expression of ki, is what is used by a jujitsuka as a basis for his response to the attack. It is the ability to sense and use the attacker's momentum that makes circle theory techniques possible.

Nerves and Pressure Points

Nerves and pressure points are those points in the body, usually at a body joint, where nerve centers can be attacked by a jujitsuka. The attack may be a simple application of pressure by one finger. This may result in controlled pain (with no injury), loss of blood circulation (as if used on the carotid artery), or a stunning feeling identical to electrical shock resulting in a muscle spasm, numbness, or muscle contraction which can be used to loosen up an attacker. The use of simple pressure also makes it possible to control and redirect the attacker's ki.

A nerve or pressure point attack can also be in the form of a hit and occasionally in the form of a kick. In this case the amount of impact force is not as important as the speed at impact and how fast the hit or kick can withdraw. The strike is supposed to stun—not injure. Almost all hits of this type are done with some part of the open hand. There are many successful stunning blows that can be dealt with the palm of the hand and the hand in a cupped position. Again, the intent is to stun, not injure.

Circle Theory

The circle theory is both a very simple and an extremely complicated concept that deals with the movement of the attacker. Simply stated, the basic idea is that through the use of the attacker's ki, his momentum, the use of nerves or pressure points, and the use of your own ki, you are able to direct the attacker in any of a number of directions by extending his ki in a circular motion. To accomplish this, the defender must become the center of the circle with his extremities serving as the spokes that radiate out to the edge of the circle.

Figure 4 gives a basic idea of the circle theory. If an attacker (A) strikes at you with a hit or a club you move out of the direct line of the attack, deflect the hit, and then continue its direction in a circular motion, bringing the attacker down. The movement of the defender in directing the attacker's ki must encourage the circular motion. Even though the attacker may not make it beyond the ground (G) the motion and the ki must be extended beyond that point to guarantee success.

The circle theory also allows movement to the left or right, (Figures 5 and 6), up and, if desired to the right or left as for a kick, (Figure 7), or if for a knife thrust or swipe, (Figure 8) a double circle, one to lock the wrist and the other to execute the throw. The application and combination of circle theory movements are limited only by the defender's skill and knowledge of techniques as well as the attacker's ability to survive them. (Attackers rarely survive the defense.)

You may have noticed that the moves illustrated in Fig-

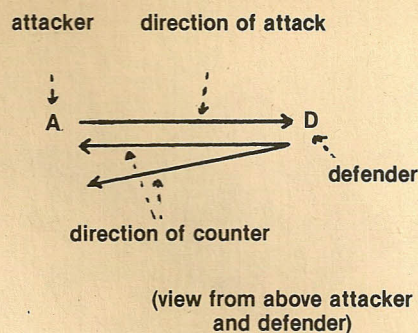


Figure 1

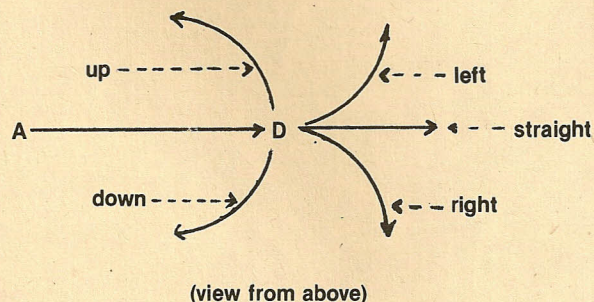


Figure 2

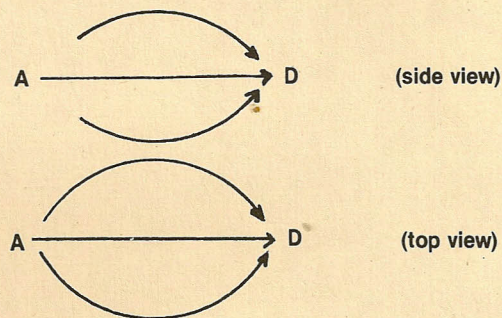
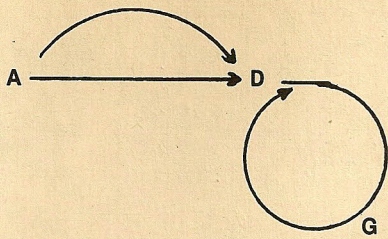


Figure 3

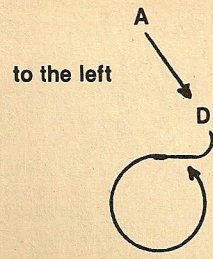
ures 5 through 8 all involve changing the direction of the attacker's momentum. This is accomplished by redirecting the attacker's ki in a complementary direction. A complementary direction is one that is usually less than 90 degrees to the right, left, up, or down, from the direction of the attack. The direction change is usually a circular motion incorporated into the circle that actually results in the throw (Figure 9).

When ki, attacker momentum, use of nerves and pressure points, and the circle theory are understood, it is easier to explain the concept of empty-hand techniques. Empty-hand techniques are those techniques in which the defender uses his body as the center of a circle. (The center of the circle may move as needed to meet the demands of the technique.) One or both of his hands are used to direct the attacker to the ground through the use of maneuvers that incorporate the attacker's ki, momentum, nerves and pressure points, and the circle theory.

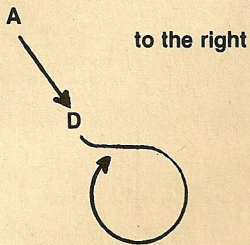
By using empty-hand techniques it is possible to use little, if any, of your own ki in bringing your attacker down. This is possible because you're directing the attacker's ki and using his energy. The harder he attacks the faster and



(side view)
Figure 4



(front view)
Figure 5



(front view)
Figure 6

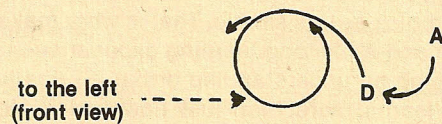
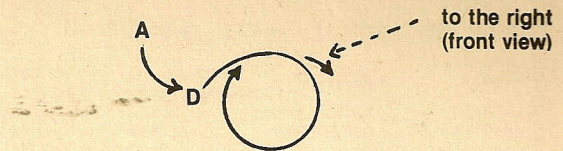
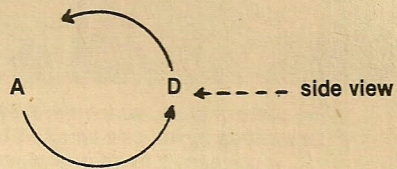
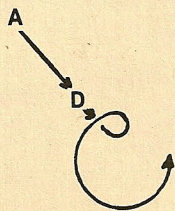


Figure 7



(front view)
Figure 8

harder he falls.

Another characteristic of empty-hand techniques is that many of them can be applied to weapon techniques. Before looking at this aspect though, it is essential to secure a broader background of the interrelationship between empty-hand techniques and the art of jujitsu.

Empty-hand techniques play a large role in the martial art of jujitsu. They are assigned such a large role because most jujitsu systems are open-ended. Jujitsu is a very flexible art. It includes training in many of the skills taught in judo, aikido, karate, and other arts. Jujitsu techniques are designed to apply to a wide variety of situations and empty-hand techniques form the broadest basis for learning.

Teaching Jujitsu as an Art

It is impossible to teach empty-hand techniques separately from the whole art of jujitsu. On the other hand, if jujitsu is taught as an art, the student will develop an extremely broad martial arts background which will give him a thorough understanding of empty-hand techniques.

There are only about 30 to 50 basic moves in jujitsu.

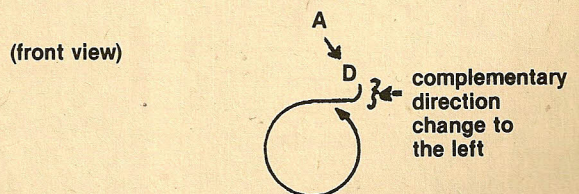
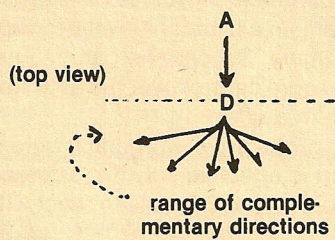
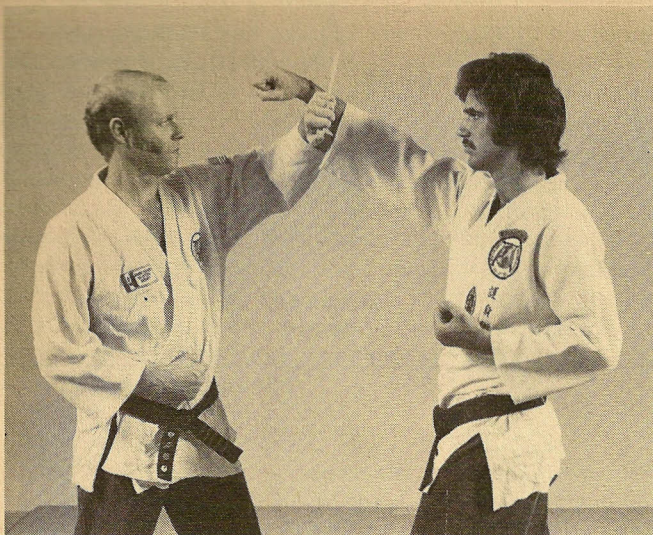
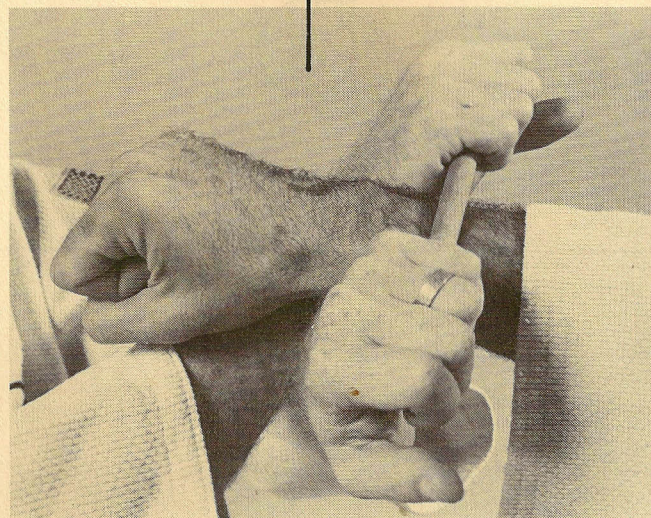
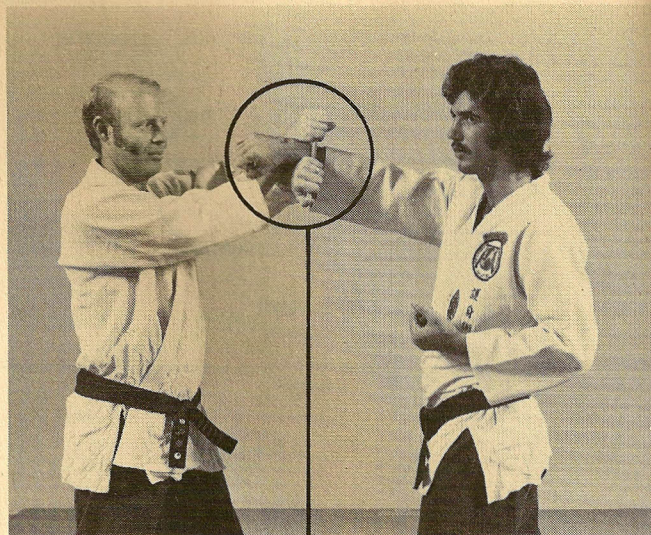


Figure 9



The yawara stick, which hardly looks like a weapon at all, can be used to lock an opponent's bone into place, greatly increasing the effectiveness of a standard technique.



They are fairly simple moves if the student can operate in a relaxed manner and become proficient. However, it is the combination of these moves, plus variations, that makes the art as complex as it is simple. That is what makes it an open system and a life-long learning experience.

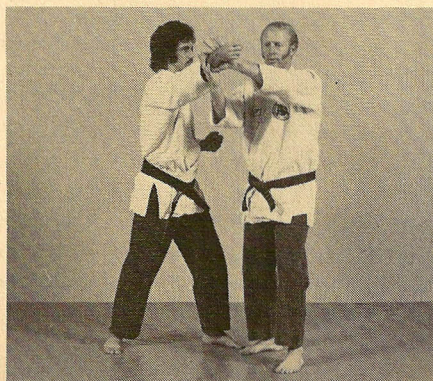
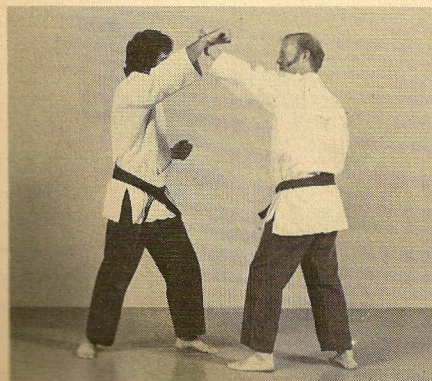
In developing an understanding of basic jujitsu moves the student learns more than just how to initiate techniques. If he is to be successful in mastering the skills he must also develop an understanding of body kinetics—the consequences both of his actions on the attacker and of the attacker's motion on him. It is essential that a successful student of the art know where his attacker will end up.

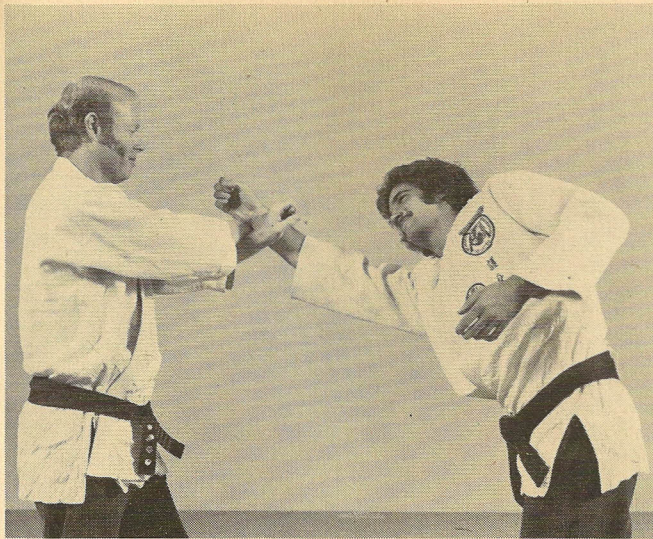
Another aspect of the art is a knowledge of and ability to attack nerves and pressure points. With this skill the student secures two additional attributes. First, he can control the amount of pain an assailant may suffer, with or without accompanying injury. Second, he can use nerves and pressure points to secure control over the attacker's ki and thereby maneuver him as desired.

A third characteristic of the art is developing automatic reactions. Any martial art is effective only if the defender's reactions are automatic. You must be able to react without

thinking. If the student is proficient and comfortable in his knowledge, having found certain techniques that work well for him, the process is simple. But automatic reactions may also be more difficult because of the variety of responses a student has to a given situation. For a hit he may choose anything from a simple nerve stun all the way to a bone-breaking, joint-dislocating throw. Keep in mind that a reaction must be automatic to be successful and it must also be combined with an effective follow-through.

An understanding of the interrelationship of all of these facets develops as a student becomes proficient in the art. Some aspects can easily be explained to the student by the instructor. Others are more easily learned through personal experience.





Long-Range Consequences

It is relatively easy to teach a person how to defend himself. There are a lot of simple techniques that can be taught that work well. The only problem with teaching a martial art solely as a means of self-defense is that the student is very limited in his responses in the long run. It is much like going to a computer school to learn how to program computers. You'll learn to program one type of system. However, if you go to college and earn a B.A. in math, with a specialization in computer programming, you can walk into almost any system with very little, if any, additional training. This is because you've taken the time to get a good background, learned the theory, and developed a working knowledge of how computer systems function. It is a harder and longer road, but the results are more rewarding.

A parallel can be drawn in jujitsu. If the art is taught as an art, the student will be learning far more than simple self-defense skills. If he understands how basic moves work and can be combined, he will have developed an extremely broad background from which to draw.

In addition to this broad background the student also will have built an exceptional self-defense system. It is a self-defense skill that is unique in a number of ways. First, the defensive response can be suited to the situation. With a variety of moves at his automatic disposal and with the judgmental skills that develop alongside, the student is not confined to one or two maneuvers that are limited in their effect.

Second, the student can select techniques that can cause anything from minimal pain all the way to disabling injuries. The student also can alter his techniques even

Continued on page 86

Or the same outward arm throw can be performed empty-handed with little or no danger of injury to the attacker's arm. (Note that the throw takes place at a complementary angle to the attack.)

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2½	5'3"	28.00	24.00	38.00	31.00	38.00	31.00	74.00	36.00
3	5'5"	28.00	25.00	38.00	32.00	38.00	32.00	76.00	37.00
3½	5'7"	31.00	26.00	40.00	33.00	40.00	33.00	77.00	38.00
4	5'9"	32.00	27.00	41.00	34.00	41.00	34.00	78.00	39.00
4½	5'11"	33.00	28.00	42.00	35.00	42.00	35.00	79.00	40.00
5	6'1"	34.00	29.00	43.00	36.00	43.00	36.00	81.00	41.00
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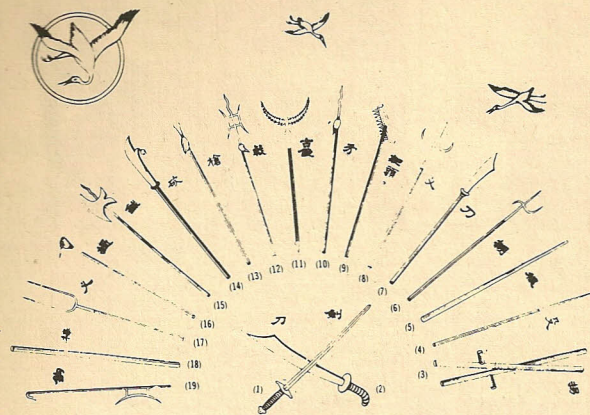
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EMPTY HAND TO WEAPONS

Continued from page 57

while his response is under way if a change in the situation dictates. His broad knowledge provides him with alternate moves that can be used if a follow-through isn't working.

Lastly, the student will have developed a thorough understanding of empty-hand techniques. It is the theory behind this knowledge that makes it extremely easy for a competent student to pick up a good working proficiency with a variety of martial arts weapons (defensive tools) with very little additional training.

From Empty-Hand to Weapons

There are two schools of thought regarding the teaching of weapons. One school contends that weapons can be taught and learned without any other martial arts training. The main disadvantage here is that the student has learned only the mechanics of the weapon without developing an understanding of the weapon and why it works as it does.

The other school is based on the concept that a good knowledge of empty-hand techniques is an essential background for learning the proper use of weapons. The logic of this approach is that if a student has become skilled in empty-hand techniques he has also, in effect, developed a good working knowledge of all the elements, (such as ki, nerves, etc.) that result in such knowledge. The student realizes that in order to execute empty-hand techniques

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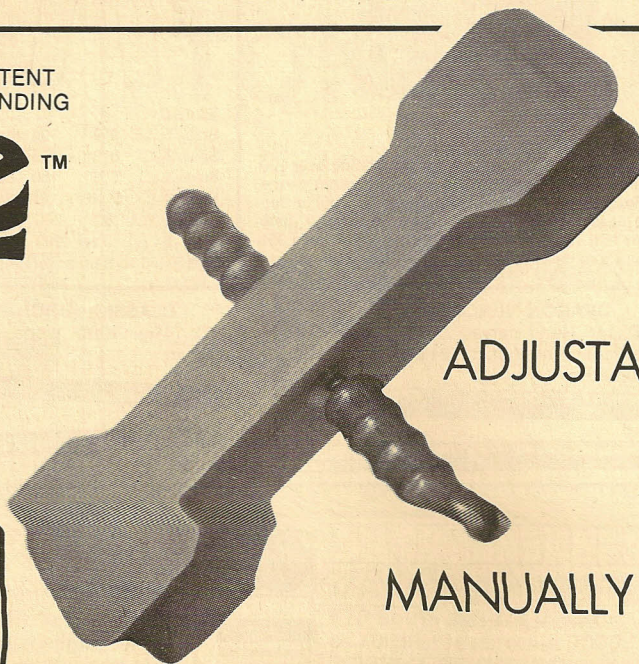
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successfully he must be able to extend his ki through his hands and fingers.

Awareness of this concept makes it easy for a proficient student to apply his knowledge to defensive tools. He will see the weapon as an extension of his body rather than as an independent object. The weapon is not seen as a cold inanimate object that has isolated moves that must be learned just for that weapon. Rather, the weapon is seen as a defensive tool. It is an extension of the body. It is an object that will allow an additional extension of ki and a tool that empty-hand techniques can be applied to with little modification.

Such an awareness makes it possible to teach a brown or black belt weapon techniques with relative ease. They have a good understanding of how the techniques are supposed to work and what must be done for a technique to be successful.

The most common defensive tools used are staffs, all the way from the eight-inch koshi-no-bo (yawara stick) to the six-foot bo. It is very easy to apply empty-hand techniques to these weapons as it is very easy to see the application of these tools, particularly the koshi-no-bo and the hanbo (30-36-inch staff).

Applying empty-hand techniques to these weapons also has many street applications even though a person might not necessarily carry them with him. However, techniques from these weapons can be applied directly to the use of a pen, pencil, rolled newspaper or magazine to execute koshi-no-bo techniques. A cane or an umbrella is an easy substitute for a hanbo.

A skilled student of jujitsu may also develop competence with other weapons, some of which have been given a large role in many karate systems. The jutte, which was initially designed to disarm samurai, can now be used as an effective striking and hooking weapon to sensitive areas. Many koshi-no-bo techniques can be applied to it with the additional benefit of the jutte being used as a ripping and tearing weapon.

The tonfa and nunchaku can also be applied to empty-hand techniques. Rather than being used as striking weapons they are used to entangle and bring their attacker down, possibly without any severe injury. It might be well to note that many of the takedown and comealong techniques used by police officers who use the PR-24 (a police version of the tonfa) are based on empty-hand techniques previously taught to the officers. The knowledge of empty-hand techniques is what makes it so easy to teach the use of the PR-24.

The techniques displayed in this article serve as an illustration of how empty-hand techniques can be applied to a variety of weapons. You will notice an absence of strikes and hits with these weapons in the sequences shown. However, blocks are used. It should be noted that there also are a variety of surprisingly similar striking techniques that can be shown with each weapon, but that should be left for another article.

If you plan to try any empty-hand techniques using weapons you should use a great deal of caution. Weapons are not as flexible as the human body. Your partner can be easily injured unless you exert a great deal of self-control and he knows what's happening and cooperates fully. This is especially true for the tonfa and jutte. Tonfa techniques do an excellent job of locking joints, but a bit too much pressure can result in a fracture. The momentum and breaking force of the baton is also sufficiently great to break bones.

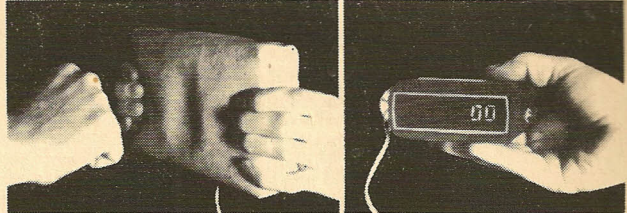
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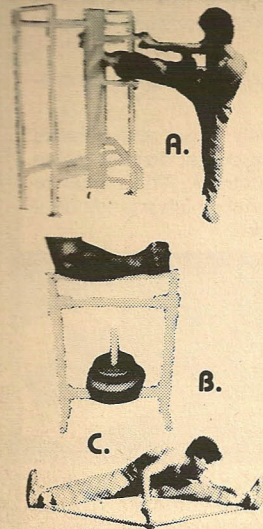
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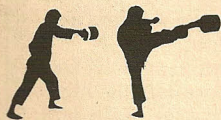
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The jutte deserves two additional warnings. Despite its deceptive appearance the jutte has a great deal of weight and momentum behind it, especially if a person is struck with the end of the tip from a circular motion. It can easily deliver enough force to break a collarbone or rib.

The jutte is also a tearing and ripping weapon. Even though the guard doesn't come to a point it can easily rip or tear skin and flesh, even through a double-weight judo gi. Unless properly held for training purposes the jutte can turn while it is being used thus turning the guard (hook) in towards the attacker's body. It is strongly recommended that areas where the jutte will come in contact with the attacker should be wrapped in athletic wrapping (adhesive) tape to prevent or reduce the chance of injury.

Conclusions

Jujitsu, the gentle art of self-defense, is a very flexible art that makes extensive use of empty-hand techniques. Such techniques are very valuable in the art because they provide for an effective integration of the attacker's and defender's ki. When combined with the circle theory, empty-hand techniques become an effective way for the defender to extend his ki to control the attacker and his motion.

Empty-hand techniques can be applied to weapons training, often giving the trainee insight into the theory behind the operation of the weapon. The application of empty-hand concepts to weapons training provides the learner with additional skills to develop techniques that are an extension of his own ki. The student's application of the defensive tool will be limited only by his flexibility in applying empty-hand techniques to the weapon as an extension of his body.

Jujitsu is an art. The use of weapons should also be taught as an art. To do so allows the student to see the similarity between empty-hand and weapon techniques, develop a better operating capability with the weapon, and realize that empty-hand training has many applications. With proper training and experience a jujitsu student can become an artist. Whether he chooses empty-hand or a weapon he's still practicing an art in which he is capable of extending himself and his knowledge, limited only by his flexibility and ability to apply learned techniques. ✕

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