

# The Fairbairn Manual of Knife Fighting

## William Ewart Fairbairn's Lost Classic

William L. Cassidy

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### Introduction

In February 1977, Lieutenant Colonel William Ewart Fairbairn's son, Major John E. Fairbairn, OBE, presented me with an unpublished document on the subject of knife fighting. This document was written by his father in 1955. It takes the form of a typewritten manuscript, with numerous holographic notes in Lieutenant Colonel Fairbairn's own hand. It was never titled, nor was it ever completed.

In 1975, I had written a book entitled *Complete Book of Knife Fighting*, wherein I made mention of Lieutenant Colonel Fairbairn. Accordingly, his son requested that I edit, revise, and rewrite the manuscript for publication.

Revision and rewriting was to be accomplished on the basis of instruction in the form and style of knife fighting covered in the manuscript, together with such other material that I deemed useful. Major Fairbairn gave me such instruction in sessions at his home. Pronouncing himself satisfied with the result, he next presented me with his father's personal edged weapons, prototypes, and service revolver, as well as his father's personal papers.

I have delayed publishing this work for twenty-two years. The delay was at Major Fairbairn's request, made for reasons that must remain in confidence.

In the following, I have engaged in strict historical editing practice. I provide text exactly as encountered in the original manuscript. I make special note of the author's [excisions](#) and [additions](#). Material that I have added is so [identified](#).

This is a unique and historically significant document on the art of knife fighting. I have elected to make this electronic edition openly available, in order to preclude the material's exploitation by unscrupulous firms and individuals who seek to unfairly trade upon Lieutenant Colonel Fairbairn's name and the wide respect it engenders.

You are at liberty to read and study this material via the World Wide Web. I respectfully ask that no other use be made, inclusive of hyperlinks, downloading, adaptations, interpretations or unattributed quotations, absent prior permission.

This material is first posted 2 February 1999.

[William L. Cassidy](#)

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### **(Fly leaf)**

The Author has been an ardent student of Self Defense in all of its branches for a great number of years. In the course of these studies he received expert instruction in the art of Chinese "Boxing" from one of the retainers of the late Dowager Empress. He received special instruction in Foil and Dagger fighting from several of the finest Instructors in the Far East. Although a non-resident of Japan, he was admitted to Kodokan Jui-Jitsu University, where he was eventually awarded the Black Belt (NIDAN) = Second Degree.

During his career he has held appointments as Chief Instructor in Close Combat Fighting to the Shanghai Municipal Police, British Commandos and the Office of Strategic Services, U.S.A.

Combing all this knowledge, plus practical experience gained during over 2,000 Riot Calls in SHanghia, he is now publishing his latest book on Knife Fighting. This manual describes methods developed and practiced over a number of years and in spite of their un-orthodoxy, [they have](#) stood up to the practical test during World War II in the Far East and elsewhere, and becomes a "must" book for all men serving in the Armed Forces.

### Previous Books by the Author

Un-armed Combat - "Defendu," "Scientific Self Defense", "Get Tough", "Hands Off".

Pistol - "Shooting to Live" (Co-Author)

### **PREFACE.**

We believe that the time has arrived when the bayonet should be discarded as no longer effective and like the Pike placed amongst the weapons of the past.

There can be no doubt, once you have handled a scientifically designed Fighting Knife, that you would prefer it to a Bayonet, especially if the fighting was to take place under any of the following conditions - over roof tops, up or down stairs, climbing up ships sides, crossing streams up to your waist in water, in dense jungle, or through paddy fields. Under such conditions, a bayonet attached to a rifle would be a severe handicap.

We are aware that there are many who will disagree with this; also that some of them will come back with - "The bayonet has won more wars than any other weapon." [Be this as it may, we still contend](#) know that any advantage gained by having a bayonet attached to a rifle or other firearm, is cancelled-out threefold by the loss of balance [and illegible it causes to the](#) in the weapon to which it is attached. [Be this as it may, we still contend that it should be replaced by a well balanced fighting knife.](#)

~~To prove our point, let us trace the history of the bayonet (a) Korean War, (b) World War I, (c) World War II, (d) South African War.~~

~~During (a) and (b) no reports were received of the bayonet having been used to any great extent, but in (c) the bayonet was reported to have been very effective in Trench fighting, also during the South African War it was put to good use. Here Fairbairn plainly means to deprecate the bayonet in the Korean Conflict and World War II, but mis-writes himself.~~

~~This rather tends to show~~ We admit that the bayonet was a very effective combat weapon in the bygone days but with the advent of the Flame Thrower, Sub-Machine Gun and Hand Grenade, (all close-quarter weapons) what chances has a Bayonet Charge of being successful? The claim that the psychological value of the bayonet in building up the moral of the Troops is such that its retention is more than justified, does not make sense.

Paratroopers frequently need a knife to cut themselves free and there are numerous other occasions when a good knife would be invaluable. In addition, there are times when it would be inadvisable to fire a pistol, ~~[or other firearm]~~ on account of raising an alarm.

Those who carry an Auto-Pistol, ~~or~~ Revolver, or Tommy Gun are aware that they are restricted to a limited number of rounds and dread the thought of being caught with an empty gun. Yet it is an established fact that once contact is made and the firing starts, it is only a matter of seconds before the one hand gun is empty, ~~after which, it would not make a respectable club.~~ We contend that at such a time, it would be a very comfortable feeling to know that one had a well balanced fighting knife handy.

There are many who will regard this as rank heresy, or worse. I shall be content for the present if the reader will concede me at least a title to my views and I hope to fortify the title subsequently by statistics of actual results of shooting affrays with one-hand-guns over a number of years which took place in Shanghai.

When I joined the Special Training Centre of the British Commandos (1940), the Authorities did not recognize a fighting knife as part of the equipment of the Fighting Services. In fact, such a thing as a fighting knife could not be purchased anywhere in Great Britain.

To meet the many requests, I designed the "FAIRBAIRN" knife and managed to persuade the Wilkinson Sword Company to manufacture it privately from a number of old bayonets they had in stock, personally guaranteeing the sale of three hundred. The day they arrived there was a near riot in the rush to buy them. Shortly after this official recognition was given to the Fighting Knife. This same knife was just as popular with members of the Armed Forces of the U.S.A. and a number of Units were issued with it as part of their normal equipment.

~~There is something about a good [well balanced, razor sharp] fighting knife that appeals to the majority of fighting men, irrespective of nationality. I contend that this is on account of that feeling of confidence which such a knife gives its owner, which is apparently so much greater than that which one receives from any other weapon. Especially is this so when one is operating in the dark.~~

A recruit, trained in Knife Fighting and equipped with a well balanced, razor sharp knife, has a wonderful psychological advantage over an opponent who has not received such training. This is clearly demonstrated when operating in the dark, or on Forward Sentry duty. Many a man has testified that immediately he drew his knife, his confidence returned and he was no longer afraid. This confidence is apparently so much greater than one receives from any other weapon.

Certain individuals will never make Knife Fighters. They have an aversion to using a knife and no amount of instruction will make any difference. In this connection I had a V.I.P. student sent to me for private instruction in Close Combat Fighting (Pistol, Sub Machine Gun, Carbine, Unarmed Combat and Knife). He was six feet seven inches in his socks, over 300 lbs. in weight and had the largest pair of hands I have ever seen. At that time my weight was 160lbs. and I

was not looking forward to the Un-armed Combat session of the training.

The student duly qualified in the first three subjects and during a "break" period, I learned something of his "back-ground" (Professional All-In Wrestler). That decided me to cut the un-armed combat (Judo) and pass on to the Knife Fighting. Despite the student's colossal strength (he actually lifted me above his head with the greatest of ease), ~~I knew~~, Immediately I drew a concealed knife and ~~made a few passes near his face~~, that ~~I could, by means~~ of a knife, ~~bring~~ him down to my own weight and strength. [~~Immediately I drew a concealed knife, I knew that the fear of a knife brought him down to my own weight and strength~~]. One might say "you could hear his shoulder blades click" as he jerked himself backwards out of reach.

#### EXTRACTS FROM SHANGHAI MUNICIPAL POLICE RECORDS (SHOOTING AFFRAYS)

The records of the shooting affrays referred to earlier show that there were no less than six hundred and sixty-six armed encounters in which Pistols were used by the Police and criminals. On several of these encounters as many as twenty Policemen and criminals were fighting from room to room, etc.

During these encounters, on no occasion did anyone RE-LOAD his PISTOL whilst he was BEING FIRED AT.

Members of the Force, when questioned as to why they had not immediately re-loaded, could not offer any reason for failing to do so. Could it be, that under such circumstances, it is a mental as well as a physical impossibility to do so?

The fact remains, that no one re-loaded.

Note - So that the reader will not think that the reason for failing to re-load was owing to the lack of proper training, let me here state that the Shanghai Municipal Police had the most up-to-date IN-door Pistol Range in the world. Their quarterly Pistol Practices were conducted under conditions as near as possible to those they had to contend with whilst on duty - firing up and down stairways, over roof tops, from and in to windows, sometimes in very poor light or with no light at all. Twelve shots in all, (~~which necessitated changing of magazines~~), with point deducted if caught with an empty pistol.

I have a very high opinion of the fighting value of the ~~Tommy and~~ one-hand-guns. This is based on my ~~40 years~~ experience of these weapons, which includes not only armed encounters with armed criminals but the responsibility for instructing large numbers of Police and Soldiers, etc., of many nationalities in various parts of the world. Despite this I still say - THAT A GOOD FIGHTING KNIFE IS AN ABSOLUTE ESSENTIAL FOR ALL MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES.

W.E. Fairbairn, Lt.-Col.

1955.

#### **No. 1 STANCE.**

"THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A CORRECT STANCE FOR KNIFE FIGHTING."

~~Having made this statement, we will justify it:-~~

The situations you are liable to have to contend with are very seldom of your selection and frequently they may vary with every step you take. You may be running; going up or down a slope or stairway; up to your ankles in a mud patch, or up to your waist in water. In fact, the situations are astronomical in number. ~~Under such circumstances all~~ the student can do is to remember that, ~~as far as possible~~, he should try to achieve a crouching stance, with knees and waist as flexible as possible. (Fig. 1.)

## **No. 2 THE GRIP.**

1. Hold the knife in the right hand, the thumb full length along the back of the hilt, the knife resting on the index finger, between the first and middle joint. (Fig. 2.)
2. Close the three remaining fingers over towards the fleshy part of the tumb. (Fig. 3.)

Note - The position of the thumb and fingers will vary according to their thickness and length. To find the most suitable grip for yourself, grip the hilt firmly, **and if necessary allow allowing** the tip of the thumb to go forward on the back of the blade. (See Fig. 3.)

**WARNING - When making a slashing cut to the RIGHT, ~~grip~~ hold the hilt of knife with as firm a grip as possible. At all other times, the grip should be mainly with the fingers and thumb.**

Students are warned that the hilt of the knife is **only** gripped with the full strength of all fingers and thumb **ONLY** when making a **LEFT** slashing Cut, ~~or Thrust~~. At all other times, the knife is mainly held by the fore-finger and thumb, **with the fingers only maintaining a loose grip.** (See CAUTION Page 8.) [**Refers to Exercise No. 8 of manuscript**].

Note - This closing an relaxing of the grip will become automatic after a very little practice.

**The manner in which edged weapons are initially grasped by the wielder governs the manner in which they are carried and withdrawn, and influences both weapon design and the dynamics of initial maneuver. We therefore observe that the foundation of every knife fighting technique is grip.**

**The knife is controlled by the thumb and forefinger. The former provides power and the latter precision. The placement of thumb and forefinger is thus the foundation of grip. Precisely how the thumb and forefinger are placed is a function of weapon design, culturacy idiosyncrasy, personal preference, and a host of other factors.**

**The above factors hold true regardless of whether one employs a prison-made "shank," or a fencing foil; they are a function of the motility of the human hand, and reflect mind-body interaction norms.**

## **No. 3 EXERCISE "A".**

1. Holding the knife in the right hand, arm shoulder high, forearm bent, back of the hand up, knife over the left shoulder. (Fig. 4)
2. Whip the forearm out towards the right, to the full extent of the arm. (Fig. 5)
3. Arm shoulder high - reverse the hand - back of the hand down. (Fig. 6)
4. Whip towards the left, allowing the arm to bend to the original position, as in Para. 1. Now reverse the hand back to the original position. (See Fig. 4)

Note (a) Having mastered the shoulder high exercise, vary the height of the arm and occasionally reach down towards the ground.

Note (b) Remember that your opponent is liable to attach from your right, left, or even from behind. Practice changing your position quickly, to cope with this.

**Assuming you are fighting with a knife against a knife, it is wise to never lower the arms below the navel or raise them above the shoulders.**

## **No. 4 EXERCISE "B" - THE "WHIP"**

1. Holding the knife as in (Fig. 4), back of the hand UP, whip the knife sharply towards the right, in a like manner to "cracking a whip by a flick of the wrist.
2. Gradually increase the length of the "whip" from 12 inches to as far as you can reach. (Fig. 5)
3. Holding the knife as in (Fig. 7) back of the hand DOWN. Whip the knife to the left and then continue as in Para. 2

CAUTION - When making the "whip" to the LEFT, the grip on the hilt should be mainly by the index finger and the thumb. The other fingers should only be loosely on the hilt. Particular care must be paid to this otherwise the tendons of your wrist or arm may be strained.

NOTE - Even although you put all your strength into your grip and carry out ~~your~~ the RIGHT "whip" with the utmost speed, you will not strain the tendons of your wrist or arm. (Figs. 4 & 5).

### **No. 5 EXERCISE "C" - "FIGURE OF EIGHT".**

1. Holding the knife as in (Fig. 8), back of the hand UP, forearm parallel with ground, elbow close to body, point of knife at START (Fig. 9) slowly follow the arrow to "A".
2. Between "A" and "B" reverse the back of the hand to DOWN, then continue to "C".
3. Between "C" and "D" reverse the hand to its original position, (back of hand UP).
4. Having mastered the technique of turning the hand over, gradually increase to the fastest possible speed.
5. Now repeat the above, with the arm fully extended, occasionally changing to a bent arm or trying to touch the ground with the knife.

Note - An expert Knife Fighter keeps his knife always on the move - making it dart in and out like a snakes-fang and occasionally changing his position and the height of attack.

### **No. 6. EXERCISE "D" - THE SLASHING CUT.**

(Suspend a vegetable from a tree, etc., at about shoulder height.)

1. Hold the knife as in Fig. 10 - back of the hand DOWN. Stand slightly less than arms length and to the right of the object. Make a slashing cut to the left, by a circular inward motion of your arm and wrist, cutting the vegetable in half.

Note - Cutting the vegetable in half by this LEFT SLASH is considerably more difficult to perform than it is when slashing to the RIGHT, but the Student must first master the LEFT before attempting the RIGHT.

2. Hold the knife as Fig. 11 - back of the hand UP - stand slightly less than arms length and to the left of the object. Make a slashing cut to the right by a circular outward motion of your arm and wrist.

Note - During both the RIGHT and LEFT SLASH, the body must turn in the direction of attack. This permits you to carry out a "follow-through" motion of your arm.

3. Students having mastered both the LEFT and RIGHT SLASH are recommended to try the DOUBLE SLASH. Cutting the vegetable in half with the Left Slash and then cutting the falling piece by means of a Right Slash, before it reaches the ground.

Note - This calls for the utmost possible speed if you are going to catch the falling piece of vegetable before it reaches the ground.

CAUTION - When this DOUBLE SLASH is being practised, all persons should be at least ten feet away. [This is a precautionary measure during the initial training of a recruit, in case he should loose his grip of the knife.](#)

### **NO. 7. EXERCISE "E" - THE THRUST or POINT.**

1. Hold the knife as in Fig. 12, with the FLAT SIDE UP. It should be noted that when the "COBRA" Fighting Knife is held in this manner that it is a prolongation of the arm and the point is in alignment with the tumb. (This permits the thrust to be made with accuracy, without having to worry if the back of the hand is UP or DOWN.)

Bring the left foot forward directly back of the right and make an instantaneous forward lunge - [by stepping off with](#) the right foot, accompanied by a gliding thrust forward with your forearm. (Fig. 13.) Danger of one's knife becoming entangled in the clothing or equipment of an adversary renders the thrust into the throat advisable.

Note - The position of the feet (STANCE) has an important bearing upon the successful application of the Thrust.

CAUTION - When you have more than one opponent to deal with, it is inadvisable to attempt a thrust at one of them. The reason for this is obvious. When making a "Thrust" you are in a lunging position, with your arm extended forward to its full length, leaving you "wide open" to attack by one or more of your other opponents.

### **No. 8. THE CIRCULAR-BACKWARD SLASH.**

1. The Circular-Backward slash is a continuation of the slash to the Right and is usually made from shoulder height. Knife held as in (Fig. 4) (Back of hand UP - knife over the left shoulder - See No. 3 Exercise "A" Page 6.) [[Refers to Page Six of manuscript](#)]

2. On the command GO, make a right slash, the full length of the arm, simultaneously jump and twist the body as far around as possible, aiming to strike your opponent's face.

Note - Providing this slash is made with the utmost possible speed and strength, the momentum of the right arm will considerably help in twisting the body around.

CAUTION - Only one student must be exercised at a time during this exercise. The remainder including the Instructor, must be at least 20 yards in the rear. This is a precautionary measure and should be strictly adhered to, until such time as the students have shown that they can retain their grip upon their knives.

ADVICE - Students should be encouraged to practice this exercise at every available opportunity. In the event of insufficient room, Tap Dancing is a good loosing-up exercise.

### **No. 9 EXERCISE - SHADOW-FIGHTING**

It has frequently been said that our methods of instruction, because they are unorthodox, are not practical. Our answer to that is:- He who attacks in an unorthodox manner, has the element of surprise in his favour. Further, we have had students of many nationalities pass through our hands, a number of whom have, on their return from active services, stated -

THEY WERE ALIVE, ONLY BECAUSE OF THE TYPE OF TRAINING THEY HAD RECEIVED.

This, we contend, is full justification for the soundness of our unorthodox methods.

Note: Fairbairn's professional reticence prevented him from fully disclosing the precise character of his most celebrated students: the men and women of the Special Operations Executive and the Office of Strategic Services. These individuals and their exploits were the ultimate test of Fairbairn's methods and the greatest testament to his success.

#### Part "A". Shadow-Fighting. (In open country)

Warning - For obvious reasons, only one student should be exercised at a time. The remainder should remain in the rear "at ease" and told to provide "off stage noises".

1. The student should be briefed, somewhat as follows -
  - a. You are making your way in the dark through the ENemy's Lines and are liable to be attacked from all sides.
  - b. On the command GO you will draw your knife and advance at the run in the direction indicated. You will be given the direction from which the attack is coming and will immediately counter-attack with a slashing-cut or thrust as the imaginary enemy. In the event of being tripped or falling down, you must continue fighting, getting up as quickly as possible and advance until ordered to stop.
2. The Instructor will keep approximately ten yards in the rear during the advance, calling out the direction the student is being attacked from, somewhat as follows -

BEHIND YOU - RIGHT - LOW LEFT - HIGH RIGHT, etc.

Note: - These commands should be given in quick succession and the student constantly urged to put more weight in to his slashes with the knife.

Instructors Note:- This "Shadow-Fighting" is a very strenuous exercise and the distance covered in the attack, in the initial stages of the training, should not exceed 50 yards. Each student should be given a ten minutes "Rest" after completing the course.

#### Part "B". Shadow-Fighting. (Down a wooded slope.)

Note - Where possible select a slope with second-growth trees. Where they permit, these trees should be grasped with the disengaged hand, permitting you to make a leap downward of several feet.

1. Students not taking part in the exercise will be "At Ease" on the top of the slope and instructed to provide the "Off stage noises".
  - a. The Student should be briefed as follows:- On the command - GO - you will jump down the slope (drawing your knife) and continue as fast as possible, in the direction indicated. You will be given the direction from which the attack is coming and will immediately counter-attack with a slashing-cuts, etc. at the imaginary attackers.
2. The Instructor will direct the attack from the top of the slope - using a megaphone if necessary and insisting that the attacks swiftly and with full strength.

Note - The commands should be given somewhat as in the previous exercise.

In 1955, the above was considered unorthodox and, unkindly, a trifle foolish. Today we know a good deal more about the power of pre-visualization exercises. We have also relearned what we once (in an era gone by) knew about physical conditioning for edged weapons. Any exercise that tends to lend strength and agility to the Latissimus Dorsi, Fascia Infraspinata, Infraspinatus, Teres Minor, Teres Major, and Serratus Anterior muscles of the back and arm is



to be desired as it is these muscles which serve the fighter best in the darting thrust and slash attacks.

### **No. 10 THE "RETREAT"**

"A" An opponent, armed with a knife, should never be allowed to approach within five feet. At that distance, or less, he is a very dangerous man. (This is not so difficult to understand when you realize that the length of a man's arm, plus the knife, is approximately three feet, thus leaving only two feet to be covered to make contact with the knife on your person.) There are two ways of dealing with such a situation -

1st. IF YOU ARE ARMED - shoot him before he is within five feet distance.

2nd. IF YOU ARE UN-ARMED - turn and run.

Note - Fear will most likely give you that additional speed to out-distance your opponent.

An individual of average (5'8") stature, throws a snap-type strike extending approximately 2' 7". The strike terminates before the arm is fully extended, thus exploiting maximum speed and guarding against the possibility of a "locked joint," in this case, the elbow.

### **THE ATTACK**

"B" Now let us reverse the above situation. You are the one who is attacking with a knife. Approach to within the required distance, right hand on the hilt of your knife (not drawn), your left forearm covering your right hand. (Fig. ...)

Note - By covering your right hand with your forearm, your opponent is not receiving advance "information" of your intention to attack.

Having decided to attack - spring forward, simultaneously drawing your knife and make a LEFT slash at your opponent's face. In the event of a near-miss, your opponent will be back on his heels, off balance and wide open for the return RIGHT slash.

Note - A near-miss at an opponents face, with any weapon, always produces the same results. He instinctively throws his head back, which sets him back on his heels and off balance.

### **No. 11. ATTACK POINTS.**

In close-quarter fighting there comes a time when weapons have to be re-loaded. This is the time when a well balanced fighting knife, in the hands of a man trained to use it scientifically, becomes the most deadly weapon it is possible to have.

In the accompanying diagram (Fig. 14.), the approximate position of the arteries are given. They vary in size from the thickness of one's thumb to that of an ordinary pencil. Naturally, the speed at which loss of consciousness or death takes place will depend upon the size of the artery cut.,

Certain arteries are more vulnerable to attack than others, because of their being nearer the surface of the skin. Don't bother about their names so long as you can remember where they are situated.

The psychological effect of even a slight wound in the stomach is such that it is likely to throw your opponent into confusion.

### **POSITION OF CARRYING THE "COBRA" FIGHTING KNIFE.**

The COBRA Fighting Knife was designed to be carried on the left side of the belt. The sheath has been fitted with a canting loop, which brings the hilt of the knife within comfortable reach of the right hand and permits you to run or sit down in a car, etc., without having to push the knife around to the back of the body (Fig. ...), where it would be impossible to make a "quick draw".

There are other positions in which the knife can be carried but it is essential that the position selected brings the hilt of the knife within easy reach of the drawing hand.

Paratroopers find, owing to the nature of their calling and the additional equipment they have to carry, that the knife is best carried in the top of the boot or strapped to the leg or thigh. When carried in these positions, it is essential that the sheath is firmly secured, so that it will not "ride" in any direction. Also, the hilt MUST BE perpendicular so as not to catch up in the branches in the event of a "tree landing".

### **DIS-ARMING A KNIFE FIGHTING OPPONENT??**

We are frequently being told of Judo Experts who claim that they can dis-arm a man attacking them with a knife without the aid of any weapon - in other words - with their bare hands. Also we have a copy of a Military Training Bulletin, in which the author lays down how the recruit should be instructed to do the same thing.

It is apparent that neither the Judo Expert nor the writer of the Bulletin have ever seen an expert knife fighter in action or even at practice, otherwise, they would know that had they attempted to dis-arm him, they would, in a matter of a split second, be minus a few fingers or an ear - that is, if they were so fortunate as to be still alive.

We have no objection to the Judo Expert making this statement or to him continuing to teach his STAGE DIS-ARM but we get "very hot under the collar" when those responsible for the training of our young men for Combat duty, publish Training Manuals in which they state and show photographs of a man being dis-armed by an Instructor with his bare hands.

NOTE - The Author again wishes to go on record - IF YOU ARE UN-ARMED - "THERE IS NO DEFENCE AGAINST AN OPPONENT ATTACKING WITH A KNIFE".

Scientific studies have shown that the recorded speed of a forward snap-type strike originating from waist-level is 5.7 to 9.8 meters per second, or approximately 19 to 32 feet per second. The hand reaches maximum speed shortly before the arm is fully extended, and travels faster on the return stroke than on the forward stroke.

Based on the above, it can be estimated that it takes one-sixth of a second or less to execute a snap-type knife strike. This assumes an average speed of 32 feet per second and a total distance of 62 inches.

Stress reaction time to any stimulus is approximately one-fifth of a second.

It is for the above reasons, among others, that we state **there is no means by which an unarmed man can defend against a knife fighter.**

Still, it must be acknowledged that there may come unfortunate circumstances in which one has no other choice but to make an attempt. In such unpleasant cases, usually played out at the end of an alley or in confinement, the following guidelines may be of some small value if there is no place to run and no place to hide:

1. Obtain the advantage of distance. Stay as far away from the blade as circumstances permit.
2. Move continually. Stay in motion, especially with multiple attackers. Move at least three feet

in each second.

3. Concentrate on the knife. Do not be fooled by watching the attacker's eyes, hands, or any other part of his or her body. Pay attention to the knife.

4. Pay attention to timing. Semi-skilled and crude attackers manipulate knives according to an individual rhythm, usually of a very rapid nature. Be aware of this.

5. Do not close with your attacker. If you have no means of escape, allow him to close with you.

6. Evade the weapon before you counterattack. First get out of the way of the blade. If you must absorb cuts, try to avoid absorbing them with your arms and hands by using your feet. Note - this is "last ditch" advice!

7. Attack the forearm and the wrist simultaneously. Do not attack the hand. Attempt to immobilize the hand that holds the knife as rapidly as possible, then break the hand, wrist, elbow or arm. Strike the bridge of your attacker's nose with your head.

8. Never go to the ground with an attacker. Try to stay on your feet at all costs.

9. Do not "protect" wounds. If you are attacked by surprise and stabbed, and you cannot run, do not shrink back or "cover" your wounds as this will render your arms and hands vulnerable. At this stage, your arms and hands are your only means of defense. IMMEDIATELY counterattack the attacker's knife arm, or, in the alternative, "climb" your attacker using the remaining power in your legs. Be advised that most wounds result in a weakness in the legs, arising from the body's natural response to loss of blood.

10. Do not wrap a coat around your arm. Do try to find an expedient weapon, such as a belt or a stick.

Note: I have studied this issue for more than twenty-five years and have experienced the attentions of the finest instructors in the world. Please be assured that **no martial arts school or technique can offer a predictable method of defense against a knife**, and most of the techniques and methods one sees are suicidal against a knife fighter.