

Interview with Dr. Remy Presas Jr.

FMA Digest Publisher Steven Dowd

Living in Quiapo, Manila and before Grandmaster Presas left for the FMA Digest United States, promulgating Modern Arnis at the school when other instructors were not around Grandmaster Presas would work out with his son Remy Jr., certain things he would practice with Remy Jr. that he did not with others. Grandmaster Presas had thoughts that if he showed everything to others he would be challenged later on. So there were things that were kept to himself or were shared only with family.

Even though Remy Jr. was young he was in actuality the first student of Modern Arnis, often Grandmaster Presas would wake Remy Jr. from sleeping at night saying, "I want to try something."

When Remy Presas Jr was in the 5th grade, his father Grandmaster Remy Presas Sr. left the Philippines on the invitation of Grandmaster Max Pallen of Senkotiros. The school still open, Remy Jr. would train with Jerry Dela Cruz, and then once Jerry Dela Cruz moved away, Rosemary Presas the wife of Grandmaster Presas would have Remy Jr. work out with Rodel Dagooc. However during this time martial arts was secondary and academics in the family was primary, this, the rule of Rosemary Presas. But even though dedicated to his schooling Remy Jr. would continue to train.



Father of Modern Arnis

Remy Presas, considered the father of modern arnis, teaches son Remy Jr. the rudiments of the sport which he said is closest to his heart next to his family while the rest of his brood looks on. From left Mary Ann, 12, Demetrio Jose 2, Mrs. Rosemary Presas and Maria Teresa, 9. Not in photo is May Jane, 14.

It was in 2000 that Dr. Remy Presas Jr. finally fully dedicated himself to teaching the art of Modern Arnis. During his father's final days, he and his father spoke and Grandmaster Presas wanted his son to continue the leadership in promoting the family art of Modern Arnis

FMA Digest talks with Dr. Remy Presas Jr.

FMA Digest: *Do you know your uncles style of Kombatan?*

Dr. Presas: First of all people would think that I would know my uncles style of Kombatan, but this is untrue, in fact I will admit that I am more or less clueless because I have only studied Modern Arnis with my father and dedicated myself to Modern Arnis.

FMA Digest: *Who do you consider to be fully faithful to your Father and Modern Arnis from the beginning?*

Dr. Presas: Jerry Dela Cruz, Rodel Dagooc, Willie Albin (deceased), Vicente Sanchez, and of course Roland Dantes, though some have formed their own arts separate from Modern Arnis.



#1 Mary Ann Presas, #2 Rodel Dagooc, #3 Roland Dantes, #4 Grandmaster Remy Presas Sr., #5 Roberto Presas, and #6 young Dr. Remy Presas Jr.

FMA Digest: *What do you think about some practitioners that claim to be Senior Master or Master of Modern Arnis that have not really studied the art to its fullest and have not been fully dedicated to Modern Arnis?*

Dr. Presas: Dr. Remy Presas “laughs,” Some have left my uncle Grandmaster Ernesto Presas or other styles of Filipino martial arts and have asked me to join Modern Arnis and they have been welcomed, and now they call themselves Senior Masters or Masters. They are not really considered by the family as either, since the family has not granted the rank and them not being able to demonstrate the art to that degree. The family just will not promote anybody unless they can demonstrate the knowledge of the art. To really ensure the rank, the best thing to do is have the family verify and recognize the practitioners’ abilities in demonstrating and promoting Modern Arnis. Others; when the Founder of an art passes away some pass the art off as if they are long time practitioners and etc, to promote themselves and their businesses. The true art is always with the family and is recognized by the family. As was said by my father and I also echo these words, “let me give you a stick, swing it and let me tell you how good you are.”

Senior Masters from the Philippines promoted by my father to the rank of Lakan Walo (Lakan 8) these are the first generation instructors of modern arnis way back in the early 1970’s. In order of seniority they are masters are: Jerry Dela Cruz, Rodel Dagooc, Roland Dantes, and Vicente Sanchez. Roland Dantes and the senior masters were

instrumental in encouraging us to carry on the family art of Modern Arnis. I would like to point out, that other than these four Senior Masters, there were no other people promoted to Lakan 8, by my dad in modern arnis. However, three years after my dad's passing, there were two more promotions to Lakan 8 in 2004. One was Dr. Wilfredo Matias and the other was Kelly S Worden.

In the context of the family, we the children could not promote anyone to Lakan 8 because only my dad gave out Lakan 8. Ask the consent of the Co-Founder and co-inventor of Modern Arnis, our mother, Rosemary Pascual Presas. She signed and made into effect the promotion of Wilfredo Matias and Kelly S. Worden to Lakan 8. Other than the four Senior Masters promoted by my dad and the two endorsed by the family no other modern arnis practitioners in the world have been promoted to or above Lakan 8, in Modern Arnis.

FMA Digest: *What about the title of Datu?*

Remy Presas: The title of Datu refers to a chieftain or tribal leader. The rank of Datu was given by my dad to certain Modern Arnis practitioners to designate them as leaders in Modern Arnis in their respective geographical areas. The rank of Datu in Modern Arnis is equivalent to Lakan Anim (Lakan 6). The six Datu ranks awarded by my father are Shishir Inocalla, Kelly S. Worden, David Hoffman, Bong Jornales, Tim Hartman, and Dieter Knuttel.

FMA Digest: *Do you think someone else should or could be the Grandmaster of Modern Arnis?*

Dr. Presas: No I do not think so, first blood is priority (family), then one must be fully dedicated to the art, not letting other arts interfere, and also one must be dedicated enough that continuous practice and study of the art is dominate.

FMA Digest: *What would you say is the over all philosophy of Modern Arnis?*

Dr. Presas: Practice and perfect what you have learned. Modern Arnis is a progressive style, once a practitioner has the basics. Once given the 'A,' progress to the 'B', once given the 'B,' progress to the 'C'. Continue the progression, the name "Modern Arnis" is the theory behind the art. Always progressing to be modern, adding to the basics of the system. If a practitioner does not do this or cannot, then they are not really promoting the art correctly.

FMAdigest: *What can you say about the memory of your father as concerned to others?*

Dr. Presas: Show and give respect to Grandmaster Remy Presas Sr. the Founder of Modern Arnis, but also respect the family.

FMAdigest: *What would you like everyone to know in general, about Modern Arnis?*

Dr. Presas: Practice what you have learned, give proper recognition to the Founder and the art, and you will enhance and promote the art in the correct spirit. For those who only promote the art for themselves and their businesses, are recognized by the family and will be remembered for the type of person they truly are. The future will show their short comings. Support the wishes of the family.

Dr. Remy Presas has continued on as his father wished, adding and teaching the art so it will progress with the future. Some examples are introducing the palm stick/Dulo-Dulo into the art in the US, for it was not truly taught in the US. Grandmaster Presas was not a big admirer or did not really promote the using of the daga, and sometimes even discouraged it. But Dr. Presas is bring his fathers teaching of the daga out in his teachings and teaching it to the advance stages.

Dr. Remy has also been studying some of his fathers' videos which were not put out to the public, and shows how the art of Modern Arnis was going to progress. Using these teaching from his father has helped modify and update the art.

A final note: Rosemary Presas and Dr. Remy Presas are putting together a book on Modern Arnis that will show the art of Modern Arnis updated and at another stage in its development for the future.



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