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OCTOBER

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KARATE

EXCLUSIVE:

Death In Chicago

Count Dante's Own Story
Of The Killing Of Jim Koncevic

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Techniques Of:**

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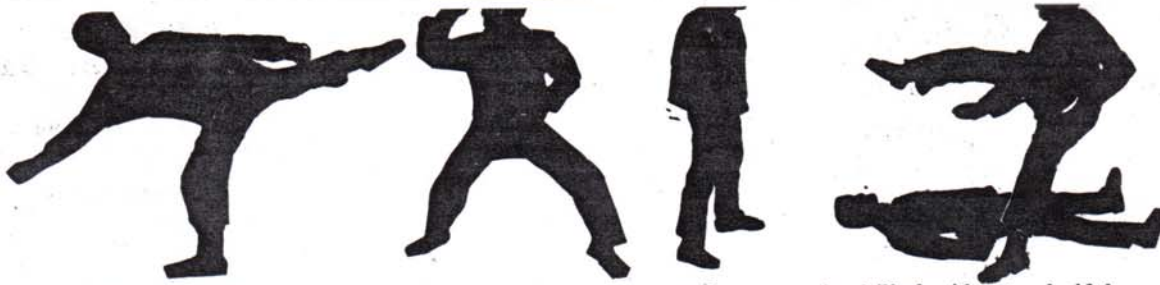


DEATH IN CHICAGO: COUNT DANTE'S OWN STORY OF THE KILLING OF JIM KONCEVIC

On Thursday morning, April 24, 1970, newspapers and TV news broadcasts across the United States carried a news item that shocked the nation and stunned the karate world: "KARATE GANG WAR KILLING — CHICAGO. WEDNESDAY EVENING A GROUP OF KARATEISTS, LED BY COUNT DANTE, CALLED THE DEADLIEST MAN ALIVE, INVADDED A RIVAL KARATE SCHOOL, THE BLACK COBRA HALL OF GUN-FU AND KENPO. IN THE FIGHT THAT ENSUED, A MAN WAS STABBED TO DEATH, ANOTHER BLINDED AND SEVERAL OTHERS SUFFERED INJURIES. . . ."

This is Count Dante's story of that terrible night. It is an account of bloodletting and brutality that is almost impossible to comprehend. It is a harrowing story, but one which must be told if for no other reason than to find ways to prevent such a nightmare from happening again. It is one man's story. . . one version of that horrible night. There may be other stories. We would like to hear them all. . . .





This event was particularly sad as the slain man was one of my best friends and also one of my best students. I thought I would never re-tell the story of the fight as I felt it would be in very poor taste. The reason for my finally deciding to give the complete story for publication is to again clarify the ineffectiveness and cowardice of karate and gung-fu practitioners which was quite evident in the actions of both sides in the fighting factions that evening. The cowardice of the opposing gung-fu and kenpo instructors made the use of weapons on their part necessary. The cowardice of some of the men I went to the Black Cobra hall with led to the death of my very good friend Jim Koncevic. The groundwork for the "dojo war" was laid years ago.

The Black Cobra hall is one of the three studios all under the direction of the Green Dragon Temple and Monastery - a Chinese fighting society. In my opinion, they are a fanatical group and any one entering one of their halls without permission was chased away at weapon point by the students. Due to their harassment I had often challenged their Chinese masters to no-holds barred (full contact) sparring sessions, and had knocked out two of them armed with weapons in one evening in the past. Although I had to catch them on the street to do it.

Earlier in April of 1970 a business associate of mine who runs a detective agency was visited by one of the instructors of the Green Dragon Society and threatened. He is a gung-fu student and was told only they were qualified to represent their art in Chicago. When I was told this I went with him to one of their studios which was closed. After visiting the second of the three halls and finding it closed also, I decided to call and express my annoyance to their threats against a friend of mine. They denied the threat and I told them if they gave my friend a hard time they would answer to me personally. I thought it would stop at that but my friend began receiving anonymous threats over the phone and so did I.

The evening of April 23 I went to my studio and was informed by one of my instructors that he had been threatened by the Green Dragon Society and told to quit my school or die. Later on that evening, while I was instructing a class, my secretary received a call for me and when she said I was busy the caller, who identified himself as a member of the Green Dragon Society, told her to tell

me I was to be killed. About a half hour later, I personally received a call stating I was to be killed on the streets. I offered my services at any time, but was told it was to happen when I was not aware. I then called their whole system a phoney group of sissies, etc.; the caller hung up. I called their headquarters and said I would come over later and level their entire instructor force. At this time I was told to be at their main hall. . . the Black Cobra Hall. . . at 11:00 PM and to bring many men with me as they would have all their instructors from their three schools waiting to kill me. Sounds Foolish! But I am a fool for a challenge.

I then called Jim Koncevic, who had a school near the Black Cobra Hall and asked him to come along. I also called another friend, Mike Felcoff, at his school and asked him also. I figured the three of us could handle 10-15 of their instructors. And we might have if Jim had not called three of his students to assist us. Jim himself was one of the top judo heavy weights in the U. S. and also was one of the finest karateists in the world. Jim was an animal as a fighter with a killer instinct. He was one of my team members when we captured the national karate championship top team award in 1964, and was a member in several world karate championship top teams. In the East Coast vs. West Coast vs. Midwest tournament in Chicago in 1969, the original five man team was comprised of students of mine and they beat the combined East and West Coast champions, five out of six matches. Jim had won both of his. In the articles covering this event the Chicago team was denounced as dirty and vicious and Jim was especially chastised for throwing his opponents and using contact. As I said before, he had a winner attitude. In the 1967 World Karate Championship he was closely edged out by multi-champ Joe Lewis and even Lewis was admittedly hesitant about the match with Koncevic. Lewis kept away as much as possible.

I consider Lewis one of the world's best in the game, and Jim was probably his equal.

After talking to both Jim and Mike I left my school and went to Jim's studio. Upon entering I noticed three of Jim's old students. He told me they were going with us and I expressed my displeasure. Jim was a top fighter himself, but in the past he had been teaching the watered-down karate, similar to that taught everywhere else.



Karate is big business and his bosses did not want injuries, so Jim went along with the program. Two of his old students were only skinny kids who worked a whippy, snappy and ineffective karate, as far as I was concerned. The third one was a short, pudgy clod, who had a hard enough time walking, let alone fighting.

I checked to make sure no one was carrying anything that resembled a weapon. We then left for the Black Cobra Hall. Upon arriving we met Mike Felcoff, who was also not armed, and we proceeded to the entrance, myself in front with Jim behind me and the rest following. I knocked on the door but there was no answer. I knocked several times again and the door opened. I could see the instructors, about twelve in all, lined along both sides of the doorway in two rows. They were all armed with various Chinese weapons such as spears, swords, axes and mace (spiked ball and chain). I pushed my way in and asked for the headmaster and got no response. So I proceeded into the hall. An instructor to my left swung his mace over my head and I told him I would kill him if he hit me with it and I kept walking towards the office which was in the middle room. The police later told me I was crazy to have walked in, but to me the greater the odds the better the fight.

As Jim followed me in I heard him say the thing I had said to the man with the mace. One of the Black Cobra instructors then slammed the door shut and locked it. We were then surrounded by the Black Cobras. The man with the mace swung it at Jim and Jim hit him and dropped him with an osoto-gari (major outer reap). The whole place went up for grabs. Jim's three instructors ran for the door and tried to rip it open. They were falling all over each other trying to get out. Jim and Mike felt their rear quarters were safe as they had three men behind them. But all three had run to the door, leaving Jim and Mike and I surrounded by a circle of twelve armed men, hacking and stabbing away at us. Mike was hit on the back by an ax and as for Jim, he was hit from all sides. The infamous three admitted later in court under oath, at both the inquest and later at the grand jury, they didn't fight at all and only tore at the door to get out and that Jim, Mike and I did all the fighting. The whole fight was a bloody mess and I had all I could do to keep from getting killed, as when twelve men are

attacking three others in a tight circle with weapons, everything is a blur.

The fight lasted only seconds. As the door was ripped open I heard Jim say "let's get the hell out of here." He was mortally wounded and ran only a few feet before he died. He lost most of his blood in several seconds from multiple wounds. The next thing I remember was Mike calling to me, "let's get out of here, someone is dead." Then he left and I was alone in the hall with the remaining, still intact Black Cobras. Jim was dead on the sidewalk outside and everyone else had run out.

The remaining Cobra instructors attacked me and I dropped them. Now I was the only one standing when another of the Cobras, who had been in the back rooms, ran at me with a spear. Mike then returned and told me to get the hell out of there. He had not run out on me, as he had thought I was behind him and had gone back once he realized I wasn't. By now the police were in front and I knocked the man with the spear down and went outside, where I was arrested by the Chicago police department. I was the only one of our party apprehended there.

Jim and some of the Cobras were taken to the hospital and the rest of the Cobras and myself were arrested. The "Karate three" were long gone, safe and unharmed. Mike had multiple wounds; I was soaked with blood and my jacket, sweater, shirt and trousers cut to shreds from the weapons. I was charged with taking both of the eyes out of one of the Black Cobra instructors. Jim had been stabbed, knifed and speared twelve times, aside from being hit in the head with a spiked mace. His throat was cut (both jugular veins) his carotid arteries were cut on both sides of his neck and he was stabbed in the chest, back and sides. One of my closest comrades was dead and I was sick!

If the Cobras had not had weapons, no one would have died. If Jim's men had not run out he probably would have been alive today. The most I had expected to happen was to have fought free style with the Cobra instructors, and if I had my way that is all that would have happened. I blame myself to a great extent for being responsible for us going over to the Black Cobra Hall in the first place and have gone through living hell because of it. My days of fighting at the drop of a hat have come to an end and challenges I will accept no more unless first attacked.

If there is a lesson to be learned from this I can think of several and believe me, I have learned a very difficult lesson. Though I blame myself to a great extent I still look with disgust on the cowardly actions of the infamous three and the complete Green Dragon instruction force -- all fine examples of karate and gung-fu fighting men.