

THE TIMELY ART OF SELF DEFENSE

Comic book heroes are equipped with strength, intelligence, the ability to fly and assorted other means to defend themselves as they seek truth, justice and the American way; but regular men and women do not generally fare as well as these pulp heroes in attack situations.

By Pat M. Stark

It is a disheartening fact that people are more apt to be victims of crime today than they were ten years ago. According to the 1980 Uniform Crime Reports compiled by the FBI, Florida was ranked tenth for rising crime rate by states; and the Tampa-St. Petersburg metropolitan areas stood at 19 out of the 30 highest cities for violent crime. Murder, non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery and aggravated assault are considered violent crimes.

The Tampa Police Department has indeed been busy. In 1982 there were 355 reported rapes and 60 attempted rapes for a total of 415. And in January and February of 1983: 37 reported rapes and 17 attempts. With escalating rape figures—as well as assaults—like these, it is understandable why men and women are putting on the self-defense gloves.

For about the last 10 weeks 34-year-old Randy Gonzalez, a sergeant in charge of the Crime Prevention Unit with the University of South Florida's Public Safety Division has been conducting a co-ed self defense program in the north Tampa area. With over 12 years of martial arts experience—instructing, studying and practicing—under his belt (a black belt, that is), Gonzalez has held numerous classes in self defense. He believes people should be aware of self-defense techniques, but advocates a passive approach to any situation.

"Deal with the assailant on a one-to-one basis. Use your wits and ingenuity. Fight only as a last resort," Gonzalez

states. He adds that several women students of his were approached by possible assailants and were successful in escaping.

Short and stocky, Gonzalez carries something with him to his training sessions other formal martial arts instructors may leave behind: a sense of humor. (Example: "Now try to kick toward me about belt-high—on anyone else this would be knee high," says Gonzalez.) During a typical workout Gonzalez instructs his students intensely, but always with an easy attitude. The martial art Gonzalez utilizes is a softened version of *Nijukai-Shido-Ryu*, which is a mixture of other martial art and self defense forms. The long meditation, the lack of talking, and the completely serious and stoic atmosphere that are prevalent in many karate classes are not entirely present in this personal safety and self-defense program. *Gi's*, the traditional karate uniforms, are optional. "I don't insist on uniforms since it's doubtful you'd be attacked on the street while wearing one," Gonzalez says with a smile. Students do, however, bow to the training area, called *dojo*, as they enter.

Each class begins with a 30 minute workout and a short meditation period. "Good for the tensions," Gonzalez says. Then students practice a combination of basic kicks, punches and moves. These are known as *katas*. Following this there is light sparring; Gonzalez does not allow full contact sparring.

Says Michael A. Eurich, Gonzalez's partner in Eurich-Gonzalez & Associates, Inc., a company offering programs and consulting in personal safety and

self defense: "It's a rigorous workout but we tell them (students) to do what they can; we don't pressure them beyond their limits."

In the two hours of class the students do work up a sweat. There are kicking exercises. "C'mon, a mouse could kick harder than that," Gonzalez says to his girlfriend Anita. She returns his sly statement with a solid kick to his protective gloves. She smiles and snaps another kick into his padded gloves. "Good," says Gonzalez. "That's more like it."

Anita Terino works for University Relations at USF. She practices with Gonzalez regularly and holds a brown belt in karate. "Randy's a great encouragement. I just really enjoy it. And, fortunately, I've never had to use it" in a real situation. Terino says she is pleased by the philosophy, the spiritual growth and the physical growth of the self-defense program. "It's good to know that statistics show that once you've learned self defense, you will use it." Being single and living alone, says Terino, can make an assault more likely, but self defense has built her confidence. "Women need to get into it...and now they are, that's good. I like the new attitudes about self defense... We have a nucleus that's growing."

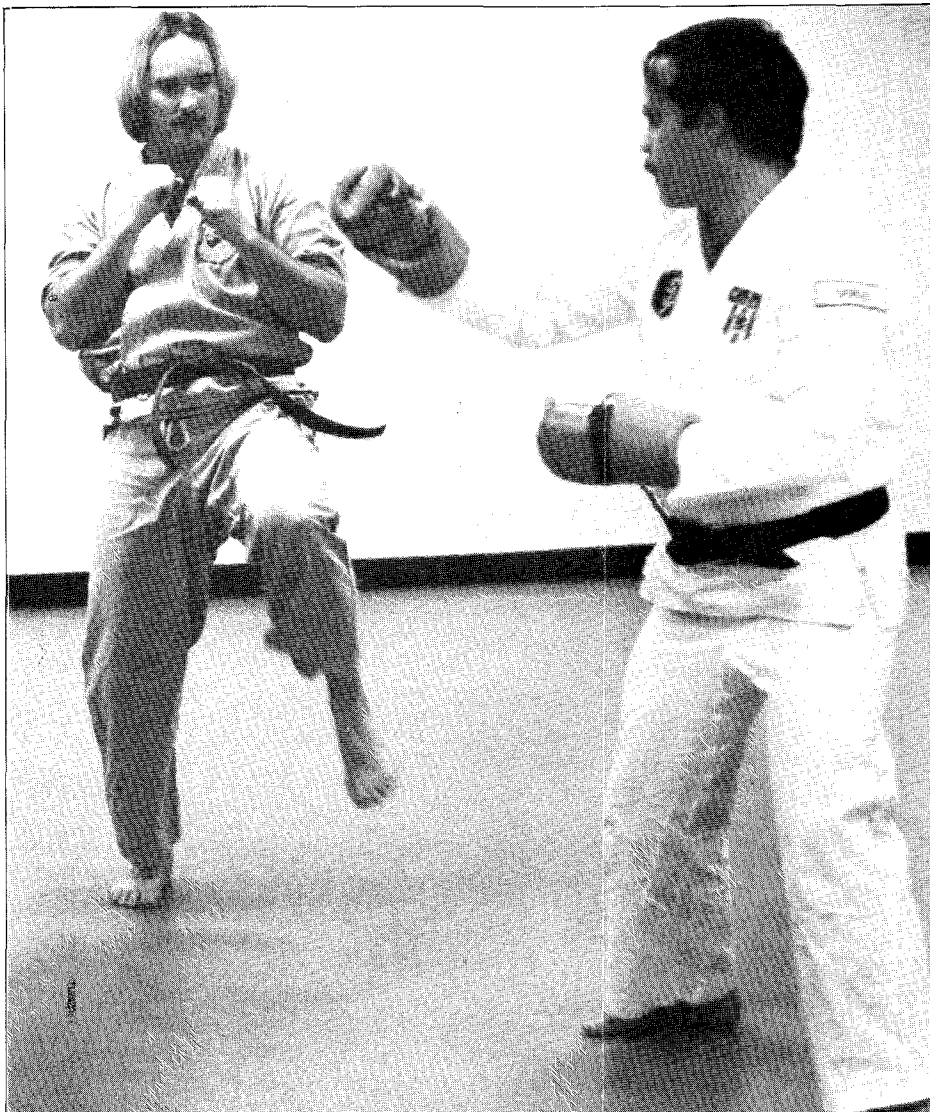
Gonzalez switches sparring partners around. Big on small. Woman on man. Man on woman. Carol Swanson, a compact, cheery USF student spars off with Bob Kupke, who stands over her by about seven inches. They practice an arm-locking, twisting technique. Swanson has Kupke wincing in a few seconds. She lets him go and he practices

on her. They both smile—seemingly surprised at how easy and effective the maneuver is. Swanson has been with the course 16 weeks and says she feels more aware of potential dangers. And though she may go through a sweaty workout, she enjoys it. “I’ve always been the one who felt like I had to strike out, but this class shows you how to use defense to get away. I feel right at home here.” Gonzalez points out that men gain a better respect for women after taking his or any other self-defense course. “Men don’t really know what a woman goes through when assaulted; after this course, there is an appreciation, a respect” from the men.

For over forty years Yung Ho Jun has been practicing the Korean art of self defense called *Tae Kwon Do*. He is Grand Master Eighth Degree Black Belt—few men or women have this title. Master Jun has been learning *Tae Kwon Do* since he was six and says he “will always be learning, training, until I leave this world.” *Tae Kwon Do* is a form of self defense using kicks, punches, dodges, and hand, arm, and foot interceptions to bring “rapid destruction of the opponent.” As it sounds, it is competitive self defense, unlike Gonzalez’s course (although Gonzalez says he will compete if someone wishes).

Jun’s views may seem in contrast to what takes place in *Tae Kwon Do*, but Jun is clear-headed about it. “Not everyone should own guns. Yes, police, detectives should have guns, but when children see violence—including Kung Fu violence with *nunchaku* (fighting sticks)—this is wrong. This is not self defense.” *Tae Kwon Do* can heighten the mind and bring about what Jun calls a natural feeling. “If you are sick,” he says feigning a sickly-looking person—mouth agape, slumped shoulders, “then you feel sick. But what happens if you get a good message, receive some good news?” He straightens his shoulders, a glow appears in his thin cheeks, and a smile stretches across his young-looking face. “Ahh, now you feel better...” He points to his head, “So where was the sickness?” Jun is proud. He agrees that self defense is a worthwhile study, but he says that attaining a solid ground, a measure of self defense with which one would feel confident both physically and mentally, takes patience. Few people have this patience.

In the large training area of the *Tae Kwon Do* building on E. Busch Blvd., on the second floor, the students are



Randy Gonzalez and Ralph Brigham demonstrate some deft maneuvering in the art of self defense.

lined up in rank file—all wearing the karate uniform. There are white, yellow, green and black belts. The students work hard. They look hard. As Master Jun walks barefooted into the training area, they bow. He walks around and through the ranks as they practice kicks and punches. He may perfect a kick or adjust an arm of a student, but otherwise he is soft-spoken, serious and intent. Outside the training room trophies some that would tower over the slight build of Jun—align the wall. There are pictures, plaques, medals and ribbons adorning the small room; all boasting of wins which Jun’s school have brought home.

For 14 months 23-year-old Tracy Corbitt has been training with Master Jun’s class. She is employed at the *Tae Kwon Do* building and works out with people in the Nautilus room that is available. According to assistant

instructor Skip Barrett, Corbitt has collected quite a few trophies from *Tae Kwon Do* tournaments. “I’m mentally more confident in myself since participating in *Tae Kwon Do*,” she says. “Frankly, if I had to I could defend myself, but that’s not all of it. I feel more mentally prepared if any such situation occurs.” Barrett, who is a USF religious studies major, a black belt holder and an assistant instructor, chimes in: “Primarily it’s a mental awareness. Everybody needs to be aware of dangers, to be alert, but this shouldn’t turn into a paranoia...When I go to exhibitions or tournaments I hear people whisper ‘Hey, he’s a black belt’ and they step back as if I were evil. It’s just not like that.” Barrett adds: “It’s holistic health. It keeps your body healthy. It gives you a good sense of longing. It lets you look at yourself—like a mirror—and see who you really are.”