



## - The Classic Strikes – From Dennis Martin's Combatives Community



Dennis Martin started training in Karate in 1965. In 1970 he started working with Terry O'Neill on the door of a Liverpool nightclub. In 1973 he went to Japan and Okinawa to train in Goju-ryu Karate for 6 months. On returning to England in October 73 he was asked to be a bodyguard at the Miss World Contest, specifically providing protection for Miss Israel. This led him to further training and work in the field of VIP Protection. He has worked as a team leader and operator on VIP protection tasks for several Royal families and Diplomatic entities. In 1985 he formed CQB Services, a training company, and offered the first ever commercial close-protection training course in the UK. Together with Lofty Wiseman, he trained bodyguards from Europe, Australia, USA and Africa.

Based on the methods taught to the bodyguards, he started teaching Close Quarter Battle [CQB] techniques to security, police and civilian personnel. For self-protection, rather than the traditional martial art of Karate, he developed an efficient, practical curriculum of Combatives based on his experience on Liverpool nightclub doors. According to Geoff Thompson "Dennis Martin is the most credible instructor of real self-defence in the world today"

His book "Working with Warriors" was published in 2008.

**Please note:** *The following information is taken directly from the pages of Dennis Martin's forum. Each technique is outlined with some minor yet pertinent questions and answers to assist in clarification. Other than formatting, no editing was done to the material presented here.*

### The Classic Strikes:

1. The Hammer-Fist
2. The Knee-Strike
3. The Web-Hand Blow
4. The Elbow-Strike
5. The Stab-Kick
6. The Slap
7. The Axe-Hand
8. The Tiger's Claw
9. The Chin Jab

## 1. The Hammer-Fist

### INTRODUCTION



We recommend using open hand strikes, but we know that in a confrontation you may clench your fists. We also know, that once clenched it is difficult, under stress, to open the hands again. So we have the Hammerfist as an option. Not just for that reason, though, it's a powerful weapon in our armoury. Ever since I saw Terry O'Neill drop a man with a Hammerfist to the top of the head I've been impressed with this technique.

### FORMING THE FIST

Tightly clench the fist, with thumb tightly pressing on side of index finger. Strike with entire bottom fist area.

### TARGETS

- ⇒ FACE
- ⇒ HEAD FROM ANY ANGLE
- ⇒ COLLARBONES
- ⇒ NECK/SHOULDER JUNCTION
- ⇒ BETWEEN SHOULDER BLADES  
(REAR APPROACH)

### ON A CROUCHING OPPONENT:

- ⇒ BACK OF NECK
- ⇒ KIDNEYS
- ⇒ SPINE



*[Giles cycling Hammerfists]*



*[Si Porter whaling in against two Padded assailants]*

### DELIVERY

Hit with full force, aiming to “stick” the target, so that full impact and weight is transferred. As the name suggests, think of a hammer... you wouldn't snap-strike a nail, you drive into the target. Can be used in a Cycling action. Can be combined with other strikes in a continuous onslaught until the man goes down.

## 2. The Knee-Strike

The Knee strike is the “big brother” of the elbow.

### **METHOD**

There are two main delivery options:-

**1] DEFENSIVE KNEE STRIKES.** These can be delivered DIRECT (with FRONT, or, REAR LEG), RISING, or, CIRCULAR.



*[John Brawn shows a powerful Kneestrike]*



*[Den showing Offensive Kneestrike in RSA]*

**2] OFFENSIVE KNEE STRIKES.** These are usually DIRECT, done moving in to the target from out-of-range. May be an intervention technique, in a third-party situation. Can be used if your arms are occupied (with firearms etc).

### **TARGETS**

**1] Lower body.** Thigh (especially nerve motor points COMMON PERONEAL and FEMORAL), TESTICLES, BLADDER, PUBIC BONE. We don't really worry about precise targeting here, we just blast his support platform. We are often unsighted in close-contact. Anywhere is viable, except his own kneecap.

This is our main target. We are trying for three effects here:-

**a] Pain,** to disrupt his attack focus. However, drugs/drink/adrenaline can reduce the effects of pain, so we have:-

**b] Motor dysfunction.** By attacking on, or, near a nerve motor point we interrupt the electro-chemical processes of nerve/ muscle interaction, and stop the limb working.

**c]** Allied to this is **Postural displacement**, a major loss of balance, robbing him of striking power and possibly dropping him to the deck.

Special thanks to author Dennis Martin and his excellent website <http://www.cqbservices.com>

**Reality Check!** If he can grab a wall, or, yourself for balance he will, so disrupting his support structure is not 100% certain. Also, although everything below the waist is a target, Murphy's Law will have you strike a crouching man's elbow!



*[Military personnel training on a course in Sweden]*



2] **Midline**, especially SOLAR PLEXUS, FLOATING RIBS.

3] **HEAD**, especially after pulling down

#### **KEY POINTS.**

1] **The knee should be delivered with a fast, penetrating action.** “Stick” the target briefly to transmit all force, then immediately foot down to balanced fighting stance.

2] **The knee can be used in other ways**, such as a knee-drop to a downed opponent. It can also be delivered in ground-grappling situations.



*[Den showing Kneestrike in Zurich]*

### **3. The Web-Hand Blow**

A classic WW-2 technique, taught in the V-5 program and other sources. Also known as *Yoke-hand*, or, *Cradle-blow*. We teach this as a two-phase concept:

#### **A) WEB STRIKE**

This is a strike to the throat with the hand formed into a yoke, thumb stretched, striking with the index finger/web/thumb.

Effects range from potentially lethal, like all throat attacks, to just putting the enemy down onto his back, gasping, in spasm.

#### **TRAINING**

Best done on a specific target, simulating the throat.



*Web Strike*



*Throat Grip and Rip*

#### **B) THROAT GRIP & RIP**

This is the action of using the fingers to grip the muscles of the throat, or, in extreme circumstances, the windpipe. Following the sharp grab, the fingers then rip back out, severely traumatising the enemy.

The “rip” can be accompanied by a strike with the other hand, or, knee, which multiplies the effect.

#### **TRAINING**

Again, best done on a specific target, although the partner’s forearm can be used too.

#### **QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**

Q- Dennis: Is there a trick in the way you throw this strike so you can be sure to hit the throat every time (or almost every time)? I could see my adrenaline screwing my accuracy up and the web of my hand hitting his chin

A-This is one of those techniques which I found almost instinctive. Until recently [when I developed a special target for it] it hardly trained it at all, just sometimes using a partner's vertical forearm to simulate the throat. It's very opportunistic.

If you wrap your hand around your own throat you will see that it covers a wide arc. Classically, the actual "web" strikes the larynx, while the fingers/thumb impact the brachial plexus/carotid sinus. But, in reality, take what you can get. The neck has many vulnerable structures and you will likely hit some worthwhile target.

Hitting centrally to strike the larynx at a minimum should induce the gag reflex, and as seen in that scene in Spooks, put the man into a fugue state. Having been hit in the throat I can testify that it works.

Den

Q- I'm still concerned about the vulnerability of the thumb. How do you all cope with that? Do we have wimpy thumbs or something?

A- Since my last post on this topic I had to use the Cradle Strike. No problem with the thumb. I've never hurt my hand doing this, probably because hands are harder than throats.

If you are hitting training targets [such as SparPro] regularly it may be an idea to do some specific exercises for the hands. My favourite is Softball pushups, although there are other good exercises.

Den

Q- Maybe a stupid question, but I really have to ask it : with the web hand/cradle blow strike, do you put your piston action on, go with a drop step thru the thug throat ( sort of ) or do you recoil ( in the speedy karate way )?

Or do you consider that these two versions have two different goals; the first one, to terminate, to bring the KO if possible; the second one, to create a light " disabling " momentum, an overture to another action, being other strikes or a control action

A- Generally, if you are justified in striking, hit as hard as you can. The problem with a light strike is that you will get it too light, or too hard. It's very difficult to judge this.

A possible follow-up to the Webhand, logically, is the "Grip & Rip"....

Den

## 4. The Elbow Strike

The elbow is the premier arm strike of close combat.

### **METHODS**

The strike can be delivered FORWARDS, SIDEWAYS, RISING, DOWNWARDS, REARWARDS and CIRCULAR.

Precise form is not our object. We want to be able to impact the target in any direction. The striking area is about the size of a grape. **Note, padded clothing (eg Bomber jackets) rob the technique of impact.**

### **IMPACT FORCE.**

1] When striking the head targets; we are not thinking of destroying the target. We are trying to shake the brain, causing unconsciousness. Whether the head is moving or not we move it,

violently. The “porridge shakes in the bowl”. We may cause injury, fracturing, bruising, but that is a secondary effect of our rapid, violent impact.



*[Tony, from the Liverpool Gutterfighters, shows the strike]*

We avoid wind-up, it telegraphs the blow.  
We avoid over-travel, it wastes time. Strike squarely to the head, avoid glancing blows.  
The key is to accelerate quickly and continue accelerating right through the target. Convert speed into impact.

### **Secondary Target:**

If we miss the head, we may still get a good effect by hitting the neck. This area is rich in vulnerable structures, but again, we don't aim for precision. Anywhere in the junction of head/neck will do, as long as you strike hard.

2] When striking the body, chest/abdomen, we aim to crush, penetrate, injure. This is different. Body-shots are designed to drive the wind out, inflict distracting pain, cause injury to his ability to attack. Fluid shock wave is a concept to be employed.

### **KEY POINTS:**

- 1] The elbow is deceptive, it comes from nowhere. He may watch your hands, but the elbow comes in.
- 2] Remember, the elbow is a close-range weapon. You can shuffle in to make distance, but if you need to step, you should be using a different technique.
- 3] Use the off-hand as a guard, covering the side of your face.
- 4] Keep the arm bent tightly. Avoid hooking with the hand. Present the elbow like a sharp spear, striking cleanly.

## **5. The Stab Kick**

Q- Hi Dennis

In a previous thread, you mentioned that your favorite kick was the stab kick and you described it as a low stamping kick. Could you elaborate a bit on the mechanics of the strike? Is it more of a side kick or an oblique kick? Is it best used as an opener or as a follow up?

Thanks

A- The Stab-kick is the Edge-of-boot-kick, or Side-kick common to Combatives. A low side kick is found in Karate, but relies on a snapping action, with weight retained on the supporting foot

The Stab-kick commits body weight fully, smashing through the target. Can be used forward, sideways, rear-angle. Targets, knee, shin. Can be a first-strike, moving in on the threat. Or, can be used as a follow up, especially to head/neck area strikes.

All in all, a good tool in the armoury.

Note I don't teach/use the Savate-type oblique kick to the shin...a couple of years ago Si James and myself attended a training course where this technique was emphasised greatly. The instructor, who was trying to make a name for himself in the self protection field, told us how devastating it was, and quoted the fact that it took only eight pounds of force to break the shin bone.

He had a couple of shinguards and we formed lines and took it in turns to run up to the trainee wearing the guard and blast his shin. This continued OK and everyone was really getting in to it and developing impact. Then one guy ran up and kicked the target-guy on the wrong leg, the leg without the shinguard...and nothing happened. Although blasted full force the guy didn't go down, didn't go into shock, just stood there and told the trainee it was the wrong leg!

As for the "eight pounds of force" this is one of those statements we find a lot in our business, that may be factual but impractical. In some test with a bone, scientists may have established the force tolerance, but this doesn't apply to the real world.

You could argue that one failure doesn't prove anything, that all techniques can fail. Agreed. It's just that I've never used that kick anyway, and I won't teach a technique I haven't used...especially one I've seen fail so dismally.

Anyway, it's no problem, there are plenty of other techniques, and we should be looking to reduce techniques in the toolbox rather than add to them.

That training course was crap, but I did learn something, even if it was a negative. A while later I noticed an advert for another training program which sounded interesting and mentioned it to Simon. He gave me a reality check by saying "it's just another day training with some wanker with no experience". This is now the test I apply to any course!

Cheers,  
Den

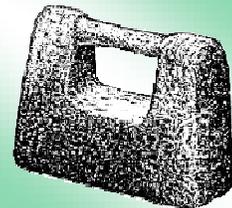


Here is a photo of me demonstrating the Stab-kick.

Please note, the picture is not fully accurate. Because the digital camera won't freeze action I had to pose the shot, and am retaining my balance on the supporting leg. Actually, my full weight would go into the strike.

As requested, an exercise for the Stab-kick, and all other low-line kicks.

I picked this up in Okinawa, when I was training in Goju-ryu Karate there.



You need a weight you can hook on your foot. In Okinawa they use the Ishi-sashi.

.....but a modern weight training Iron boot would be ideal



Another option would be the Kettlebell, which is regaining popularity in the gym.

With the weight on your right foot, you raise that leg, until your foot is at the height of the supporting knee. It's important to ensure your balance is good in this position, because you'll be returning to it frequently.

Now extend the leg to the side, in a slow-time Stab-kick, hold for a couple of seconds, then return to the foot-raised position. Then extend your leg to the opposite direction, making an inside stamping action....again slowly. Return, then extend to the front, return, then slowly kick

rearwards. Return, then make a round kick action, again keeping the kick low, about thigh height. If you need to, rest a few secs then repeat. After about ten sets, switch legs.

This very simple drill builds up terrific strength in the legs, and is especially beneficial in working all the ligaments, small muscles and internals involved in these lowline kicks.

Hope the written description makes sense....it's much easier to show on a class.

Q-Dennis

To elaborate a bit, is it a hard, stamping side kick to the legs? Do you need to be sideways on to the guy to deliver it? I imagine it's a follow up strike and not a pre-emptive?

A-The Stab-kick is quite versatile, you can deliver it frontally, sideways and obliquely. You can fire it from extreme close-range, or use it to close the gap [for example, in Third-party situations].

It's a good technique to have in the toolbox



*[Patrick Ryan shows the Stab-kick]*

## 6. The Slap

Slapping is a prime CQC technique. **Consider:**

- ⇒ It uses the open hand, avoiding problems associated with punching.
- ⇒ Using a whipping action, it is very fast.
- ⇒ The angle of attack is unexpected, thus it usually catches the opponent.

A complete knockout is frequent, due to **two physiological reasons:-**

**a]** Shaking the brain. The cranium is moved so quickly that the brain mass receives violent force, causing a shutdown.

**b]** Alternatively, shutdown may be caused by the Reticular Activating System. This system activates when sudden, intense pain is induced. The slap is directed against sensitive facial nerves, which culminate in the Gasserian Ganglion. Overwhelming stimulus causes immediate shutdown.

The slap can also be effective by striking the neck. So the attack area is from shoulder to head.

Even if KO is not achieved, disorientation, dizziness, vision blurring are likely. The opponent is vulnerable to immediate follow-up strikes.



### **TECHNIQUE NOTES**

**1]** Although some authorities suggest using the cupped hand, this may cause the wrist to tense, robbing speed. Also, fingertips may contact bone. Rather use the flat palm, thumb kept out of the way.

**2]** Keep the elbow slightly bent to avoid hyper-extension injuries.

### **QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**

**Q- Hi Dennis**

**What percent of your slaps would you say ended in KO's? Have you ever had anyone simply shrug a slap off and come forward?**

**A- I've no idea about percentages. I never paid much attention to details during the time I was busiest applying this stuff. Terry O'Neill kept notes every day, I never did, and I didn't dwell much on it at all.**

**I've never seen anyone shrug off a slap, although given the givens of human combat, it could certainly happen. A week or so ago, one of the lads was grabbed from behind and pulled round, he turned the motion into a slap and KO the guy...no aiming, no thinking, just a nice effect. I've seen a slap delivered with no intent, a gentle "behave yourself" tap, drop a guy!**

It's an interesting business...Back to your original question; all the attacks on our syllabus are the high-percentage strikes. Anything that tended to fail too much, or didn't work for me, was rejected, an example being the Front kick. It can be a good technique, but never worked well for me. It was OK as a stopper-kick, to keep a rushing attacker back, but never put guys down with regularity. That's me. The only really successful applications of front kick I saw were by Gary Spiers.

On the other hand, there are techniques I've done with repeated success that are not in the syllabus, because they don't work for the majority, or can't be taught in a reasonable time. I can only honestly offer techniques that I have full confidence in. Nothing is taught because "it's in the syllabus"

Den

Q- Dennis

On your version of the slap, do you keep your hand completely relaxed throughout, or do you tighten it up on impact?

A- The arm is relaxed, so that it whips. The hand is firm; not so relaxed that it's floppy, but also not rigidly tensed.

Cheers,

Den

Q- Dennis

Have you ever used slaps as follow up strikes and had success, or do you primarily use them for pre-emption?

A- Mainly as a pre-emptive, but also in the mix. I can recall turning and hitting a second guy with a slap as he moved in. Also, I've used a lot of slaps to a covered-up/crouching target.....A US police technique, taught widely at one stage, was the "Gerber Slap". If a subject resisted arrest, a hefty slap to the back of the head really scrambled the computer...The reason I said that the Gerber Slap "was taught...at one stage" is that I was taught it at only one event, and it was discussed as having been used, rather than currently used.

Most of the guys over there go for the neck-stun or the knee-to-thigh to achieve the required distraction. Remember, this is cop stuff, not Combatives! The standard Slap is a full-on KO strike, not a distraction.

Den

Q- I remember a good thread about the backhand slap. Some people were worried about hurting their hand.

After a few good strikes with the back of my hand against my heavy bag or the pads it is usually painful and red. After practicing Peter Consterdine's backhand slap, I naturally tried to turn my hand so my thumb points down. It's easier to push through on impact or maybe grab him.

I have another problem with the edge of hand blow. If I do the short version with the drop step, it goes relatively well but the longer version with the follow through hurt my fingers. I always make sure my hand is rigid and there is no space between my fingers but it still hurts. What do I do wrong?

A- The problem is that the impact targets have large, flat surfaces, whereas the human body is mainly curved. Strikes, which are designed to work best on the real body, may be problematic on pads or mitts.

Ensure that you are making contact with the edge of hand, not the fingers.

Cheers,  
Den

### BACKHAND SLAP:

Q- Hi Dennis,

I have been enjoying the Masterclass DVD and have a similar question to Nick regarding the backhand slap. I have also seen Peter Consterdine performing this in the Powerstrike video.

Clearly a great technique but I am aware of all those little bones on the back of the hand and how they can hurt like hell, for example when you drive a knuckle into them to release someone else's grip.

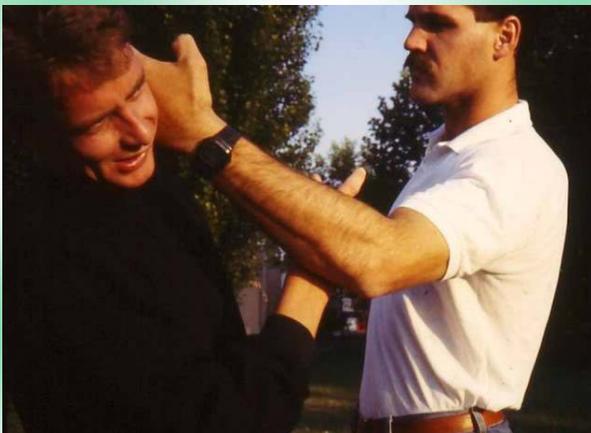


As I'm now a convert to the open hand stuff I just need to understand if the backhand slap is safer than a traditional closed fist or where the dangers are if any, have you any negative experiences with this technique?

A- I agree you can hurt your hand doing Backhand slaps to a SparPro. This is because the head of the dummy has very little give. Focus mitts are better for training slaps. Don't train your strikes on any equipment which hurts. This causes a mental hesitation, and the more you train the more you'll start holding back.

On a human, no problem, I've never injured my hand with the backhand slap [I have injured my knuckles when I used to punch]. I once caught the doorjamb on the way to the target and that did hurt!

Den



*[Nick Hughes showing the backhand slap]*

Q- How do you rate the two handed slap against both sides of the ears/neck/jaw?

I've seen it in a few combatives videos done with simultaneous cupped hands, and I remember reading it in one of Jamie Okeefe's books where he said he preferred doing it with two flat hands to both sides of the neck.

Any thoughts?

A- The two-handed slap is derived from the wartime "ThunderClap". Jamie O'Keefe teaches a variation by slapping to the neck, with good effect.

I'd say it's a good option, especially in a clinch type situation where space is limited. We generally teach it as an incidental strike when going for the Thai-clamp.

Cheers,  
Den

Q- Hi Dennis,

You demonstrated this on Sunday and I like the technique but as you know I am quite short, do you think I would get as much effect against a taller opponent?

A- Obviously, you must tailor any technique to your own circumstance. However, most aggressors tend to crouch somewhat, so that brings the target down a bit. The rule is it must work for you.

Den

## 7. The Axe-Hand Strike



*The most deadly blows without weapons are with the side of the hand. All the force is concentrated in one area.*

*The effect of these blows is obtained by the speed with which they are delivered, rather than the weight behind them.*

*E.A. Sykes, 1943*

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Striking with the edge of the hand was the prime attack method taught to wartime Special Duties personnel by W.E. Fairbairn.

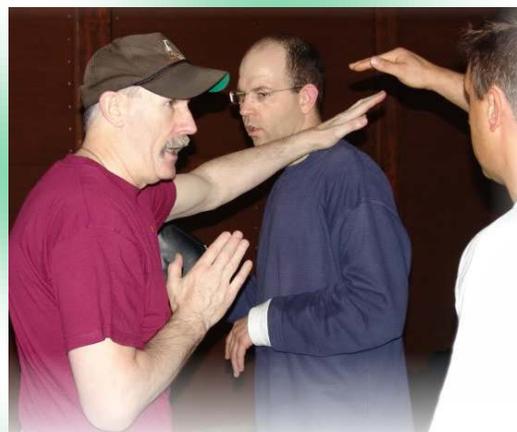
Widely found in Chinese Boxing, Japanese Ju-jutsu and modern Karate the hand-edge concentrates force in a small area, allowing tremendous impact and shock-transmission.

In this presentation, we will discuss how to use this strike in 21st Century self-protection.

### **TYPES OF STRIKE**



*[Short Axehand detail]*



*[Long Axehand]*

In Combatives, the edge-of-hand strike has become known as the Axe-hand, and there are two types:-

**SHORT AXE-HAND** is a direct, snapping-in strike, analogous to a chop.

**LONG AXE-HAND** is a chambered, slashing attack, analogous to a sword cut.

Note in Combatives Axe-hands are done palm-down, or, vertically downwards.

### **HAND FORMATION**

Various martial arts teach their own method of forming the Shuto, or Axe-hand. In Combatives, however, we emphasise:-

Thumb up and Fingers firmly together (to prevent percussive fracture).

One reason for this hand formation is that under spontaneous reaction, like when touching a hot stove, this is how the hand is formed. So, for fast Pre-emptive strikes, rather than tension the thumb back, this natural position is recommended.

### **QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**

Q- Hello Mika,

Hope this doesn't appear too stupid a question mate. In your experience with the Axhand does it take a lot of power to gain a KO? I mean could you achieve good results with short, snappy multiples, or do you need a big swing?

I have been following your advice from the seminar and have been going round ax handing stuff including my forearms and it hurts.

A- [from Mika] Short snaps to sensitive points work fine...especially great success has been reported when the side of the chin and the side of the neck has been hit...but as you said the short ones work best when thrown in violent hacking multiples...just hacking your way through his face, guard whatever comes in the way:-)

I have not seen the long swing to the side of the neck used more than a few times...the last one was a hefty guy around 280-300 lbs he dropped like a rock...got us worried for a while as he really was hard to wake up.

The guy who employed it is a regular guy with very limited training who weighs around 180 lbs...I was surprised in noticing him employing it.

Hope that helps brother!

/Mika

Q- Brill mate, another add on question if I may? Are there any supplementary exercises, like tricep kickbacks w/dumbbells you would recommend? Or just stick to compound lifts/general conditioning stuff and of course hitting things.

A- Hitting things has been the thing that has really brought out the blow for me. And working the short snaps on bean/shot and later bullet bags...[striking sequence]...Much easier to do this in person than trying to describe it in writing.

But here is the first and easy one. Right hand vertical hack( collarbone) followed by horizontal( side of neck) flow in with left and do vertical followed by horizontal...and just keep going,

combine this with forward driving movement (stomping) and tear the opponent down...pretty muck like a JKD straight blast.

Get a cheap iron palm bag (usually found in kung fu shops) fill it with gravel or aquarium rocks/sand...a bit more give than a board+ some of these bags come with eyelets so that you can hang em up on walls or suspend from the ceiling.

Works wonders in my experience.

/Mika -----

A- [from Den]....Regarding supplementary exercises for the AxeHand [or any strike], weight training is great for building up muscles if the trainee is lacking strength. Beyond that, the best type of weight training is explosive action.

I have talked about Terry O'Neill violently hurling a barbell into a stack of mats to generate this explosive power.

Polymeric exercises are also excellent [as you already know]

But the best training is hitting impact targets, some heavy, some light.....At Camp Get Tough in Sweden, James presented a module on "training with equipment" As a follow-on Mika discussed some of his equipment, including the gravel filled bean-bag discussed above.



I wandered over to try it out, and that bag was hard! I train on impact targets filled with rubber or foam, so striking that bag filled with stones was eye opening. I wouldn't advise starting out on gravel, a progression is best. However, for those serious about training, then I'd recommend getting a sturdy canvas bag and some gravel, and having fun.

Never strike a solid, non-resilient target.... that's just a recipe for physical injury in long-term training. There is just enough "give" in the gravel to avoid damage. Mika whacks that thing hard and he can still do embroidery.

Cheers,  
Den

Q- Hi Dennis

How do you rate the vertical axe hand thrown with the similar mechanics of a hammer fist?

A-Axehand, in general is quite under-rated by many practitioners. The vertical version is even more under-estimated. It is an enormously powerful strike. When thrown as a follow up, when you can use the full arc, the vertical strike delivers terrific impact.

Like the Hammerfist, it can be used to a crouching assailant, targeting the neck, spine, kidneys. I think some of the lads prefer Hammerfist, because on the flat pads we use, it's easier on your

hands. On a human target, [which as we've noted before, doesn't tend to have big flats] Axehand is fine.

Den -----

Q- I've found that while the Axe Hand is probably one of the most effective striking techniques in existence...I find that it's difficult for most beginning students to pick up initially, especially my female students. In my own personal experience, I find that it takes quite a bit of training in order to toughen the fleshy-padded area for striking. I find that it's much easier to learn and apply hammerfist strikes and forearm strikes. People just seem to pick them up easier. Is there any way to learn and apply the Axe Hand quickly and safely? Thanks

A- I'd suggest starting the AxeHand on the focus mitts initially. These are usually more resilient than a Thai pad for example.



At home I've made a specific target for Axehands, with a cylindrical section, which replicates human anatomy and takes pressure off the fingers.

Den



*[Den explaining the Axehand in Switzerland]*

Carlo, our man in Italy, trained a group of police officers in a one-day introductory program in Close-combat.

The next day one of the officers used the Axehand strike to drop an armed robber. Easy to learn, easy to use, effective.

## 8. The Tiger's Claw



Q- When going through the classics (Get Tough, etc,) once more, I noticed that the tiger claw wasn't mentioned. I can be wrong of course, but the only reference to the claw I could find was in the 'close combat files', where it was described as the most effective blow ever or something like that. But that was one passage only. Does this mean that the tiger claw was not taught seriously during ww2?

I know that several contemporary instructors are very fond of it, so I guess it is effective.

Another question that raised my mind concerned the knee-chin jab combination. Both Fairbairn and Applegate give a lot of credit to this combo, but from ww2 on it seems rather forgotten. Is it simply a little known sequence or is it not that great in reality?

Does someone have any thoughts?

A- Fairbairn introduced the Tiger's Claw during his service as instructor for the OSS. You are correct in that it didn't appear in the program before then.

It is an intriguing speculation as to where WEF developed the blow. We do know that he rated it highly. To me it's an indication that even at his age and status he was still open to ideas, still developing the program.

The chin jab/knee, or, knee/chin jab is still taught, by McCann, Kasper and ourselves.

Den

Q- A few months ago, I remember you posting something in regards to teaching the Chin Jab and Elbow if you only had a limited number of techniques to teach a novice.

I was curious, why did you pick the Chin Jab over the Tiger Claw. I would think that with the way the Tiger claw fits to any area of the head, that it had more versatility than the Chin Jab.

Any thoughts?

A- That's why questions about what to teach if limited to 1/2/7 techniques are difficult. There is always a good reason to include something else.

For me Elbow strike is a must. The Tiger's Claw is our long-range hand option, so it makes sense to include that in the package to cover more eventualities. Then AxeHand does a lot, and Hammerfist is totally aggressive.

Actually, I prefer to teach the whole syllabus and let the trainees decide what they prefer.

Den

Q- How important is it to strike with the actual heel of the palm when attacking the head for a KO? Can the strike still be effective (I'm talking about straight shots, not slaps) if contact was made with the ENTIRE flat of the hand assuming the delivery method was sound?

Also, have you found with your students that there is a tendency to "push" with palm strikes as opposed to striking with snap etc. because of the natural motion of shoving/pushing with an open hand that many people are familiar with since childhood?

A- The important thing is to lock the wrist, completely flex the wrist so that it is locked back. In training, contact is made with the heel of the palm, and the finger-tips. In application, you hardly ever get perfection, due to the shape of the target (head) and target movement. However, by training for overkill, we get enough to still do the job, ie generate massive impact, shake the brain, induce KO. To sum up, with a correctly locked hand, full/partial striking surface doesn't really matter.

Your second point, regarding pushing, is overcome by modeling the correct strike. The trainees never see a push, only fast, shock-impact strikes.

However, doing various pad drills we sometimes see the guys use pushes, to fend off an encroaching threat. We address this in debriefing. It's OK to push if that's the deliberate intent, as a "safe separation" technique, but not if the intent was to strike.

Hope that answers your question.

...James F contributed the following to the discussion.

"The most common injury occurs when you strike with the last two knuckles. The 5th metacarpal breaks (between the knuckles of the middle finger and pinkie), commonly referred to as a boxer's fracture," states James Prattas, MD of Metropolitan Hospital in NYC. Dr. Prattas, also a martial artist stated, "I can't think of any reason to strike with a fist over using a palm strike."

"A fracture will take 6-8 weeks to heal, while a sprain (tear in ligament) could take up to 6 months to heal. Rehabilitation could take 3-4 months, according to Faye Grant, a Registered Occupational Therapist, from the Hand Therapy Center, in Floral Park, NY.

Police officers who seriously injured their hands during a violent confrontation were asked if they thought they could get a solid grip on their firearms after the injury. The answer was sometimes, "I don't know," but most often just, "No."

"Grip strength comes from the ulnar side (pinky side) of the hand. A boxer's fracture would significantly affect your grip. Try to hold anything with a handle without using your fourth finger," says Stuart Kandel, Orthopedic Surgeon from Bay Shore, NY. "It would be much easier to disarm an officer who received this fracture."

The Medical Doctors, Physical Therapists and Occupational Therapists the author interviewed all agreed that with the palm strike done correctly the chances of injuring the hand are slim. "The position of Maximum Boney stability in the hand is the close-pack position which is full extension of the hand. Full extension of the hand is the palm strike position," according to Bill Partridge, Physical Therapist of Nassau/Suffolk Physical Therapy in Syosset, NY.

Taking shooting and/or firearm retention into consideration, the palm strike seems to be the logical choice of strikes.

Another serious health related problem we have to consider is cutting the knuckles on the perpetrator's teeth. Punches are usually directed to the head area including the face. The mouth is something you definitely want to avoid. However the teeth may be struck inadvertently.

Everyone you encounter violently has AIDS, until proven otherwise, humans have the most infectious mouths, once you break skin you are introducing all those germs to your body", says Dr. Prattas. "The heel of the palm making impact with the mouth distributes contact area equally making it difficult to break skin if the teeth are struck. With a punch, one knuckle may hit the teeth, breaking skin easily." "The skin on the Dorsal side (top of the hand) is easily cut because it is very thin. The opposite is true of the skin on the palm," says O.T.R. Faye Grant.

According to Dr. Kandel, "When you open your hand from a fist tendons pull back. If the knuckles are cut when a full taut fist strikes teeth the act of opening the hand pulls bacteria in. Serious infection can set in 24-48 hours later".

Germs do not fester as easily in the fleshy palm of the hand as they do in the knuckles. There have been cases where cuts caused by human teeth on knuckles resulted in the hand being surgically removed to stop the spread of Gangrene.

Den

Q-I have one more follow up question for the tiger claw pretty please Dennis.

When punching, I was always told to have good snap in my punches in order to get a KO. This was achieved by punching through the target and bringing the punching hand back as quick as possible.

Does the same hold true for the palm strike? From the combatives videos I've seen the tiger claw/palm strike looks like more of a very fast push on the target with tons of follow through. Is this correct? Are the delivery mechanics behind a punch and a tiger claw/palm different?

Thanks again.

A-I suppose you could use the TC as a jab, with speedy retraction, but this seems to me to be more applicable for a fight , where you may be trying to create an opening, set the guy up, get him on the back foot.

Our concept is more where you are trying to overwhelm him, no interchange, just an all out onslaught . For this reason we use momentum and weight-transfer behind the blow.It shouldn't be a push, it's a jolt.

Does this make sense?

Den

Q-Thanks Dennis. Yes, I think it makes sense. I'm just trying to get the mechanics down as best I can.

I guess the question I was trying to ask is how similar the mechanics for a tiger claw to a punch were. As I said previously, it looked as though the chin jab/claw/palm had excessive follow through as though you were trying knock his head off his shoulders. I used the phrase "fast push" because I would discern a "jolt" to be a quick smash into the face with a quick retraction, like a short uppercut.

To further elaborate, I'll use an analogy to maybe better explain my question. Let's say there is a large pumpkin sitting on a table. The table is high enough so that the pumpkin is the same height as your head. If you were throwing the strike at the pumpkin, would you snap the strike in, hoping to split the pumpkin open, or would you look to thrust through the pumpkin and send it



flying it into the opposite wall? Are we imagining that we are trying to get a rebound/shockwave effect with the blow when we hit the head, or are we imagining we are striking through to the extent that we hope we decapitate the assailant?

Am I making sense, or are you scratching your head?

A- [Scratching my head]...The object is to shake the brain. Both speed and mass are important to achieving this.

There are several possible strikes, snapping, cutting and sinking. A snap-strike to the head can be effective. However, I tend to just go for sinking the strike in, transmitting all weight, trying for that fast jolt which gets the head moving from zero to maximum in the shortest time.

Is this any clearer?

You are making sense, by the way; it's just that I haven't gone into so much detail on this. It actually makes this clearer for myself too.

Den

Q-trying for that fast jolt which gets the head moving from zero to maximum in the shortest time.

Now, I get it. That little bit about the head moving from zero to maximum in a short time said it best.

Thanks again Dennis.

A- Last night in work I saw a pretty good example of what might be termed a natural Tiger's Claw. A woman stormed out of the departing crowd and clocked a guy good style. She actually struck with a slightly curving action, something between a Tiger and a Slap, but it hit hard. She aimed for his face and he turned his head slightly. She put everything in to it, and although the guy didn't drop he was stunned. She was going to follow up but the lads caught her and separated them.

Cheers,

Den

Q-Hi Dennis

When you throw your Tiger claw/palm strike, do you target any specific area, or just the head in general?

Thanks

A-The target is the head, from any angle. If we hit the side or back of the head it's all about impact. Hitting the face has a bonus of a possible eye hit, but it's still based on KO by impact.

Cheers,

Den



*[An excellent shot of the Tiger's Claw in spontaneous action]*

Q- Den,

I've been working the T.C in training recently and wanted to get some clarity on the reason for the hand contortion.

During "Combatives II" you made some points about the benefits of striking with the hand oriented slightly back and fingers tucked in tight. You also said that some time ago you trained it like more of a face smash with the hand open in a natural position but then discovered that "Fairbairn was right" and that more power is generated with the correct hand position. This is my query then. Is it the rigidity of the hand that helps to increase power on impact (like the axe hand to prevent cupping) or is it because the surface area is smaller?

Please clear that one up for me. Also, is Grover's face smash an authentic WW2 strike or something he has devised, like your slap?

Thanks for your time!

A- Regarding the hand formation, it's not so much a question of power, as wrist pressure. Holding the fingers in a claw, as taught by Fairbairn and his colleagues, seems to reduce strain on the wrist joint.

Not sure about the "Jim Grover" technique. I understand he has changed some techniques since his first tape, binning some methods.

Cheers,

Den

Q- What's your opinion/experience with the lead hand Tiger Claw? I imagine it's a good technique to attack the eyes. Any suggested/preferred follow up strikes?

A- Lead hand Tiger's Claw is a very worthwhile technique. We emphasise shock-impact, so use it primarily for KO.. the eyes being a secondary target.

Follow-ups? Well my view is that follow-ups and combinations are situational. I know there are people who teach the concept of "predictable reaction" and thus have set follow-ups. We play "what-ifs". What if he's rocked back... what if he's doubled up... what if you only get a glancing blow and he's still piling in? We can work a variety of successive strikes to deal with each possibility.

A training drill using focus mitts is the partner flashes the mitts for the initial strike, then presents a different target-angle for the follow up(s). This produces a highly reactive training experience..... think you should experiment with all the mechanics of applying body dynamics for power.

In padwork we will often do several reps with each type, then finish with your own favourite.

For me, the drop-step does the job

Check six

Den

## 9. The Chin Jab

### INTRODUCTION

The Chin jab was a primary technique taught by Fairbairn and Sykes. For close-in confrontations it is an excellent fight stopper.



### EXECUTION

- 1] Flex the wrist so that the hand forms a “shelf”, holding the cricket ball. Fingers are hooked into claws. This shelf fits exactly under the target chin.
- 2] Deliver the blow with a bent arm, travelling vertically upwards. Keep your forearm near to his chest (almost an elbow contact)
- 3] As you hit, spring upwards from the knees, adding body to the blow.
- 4] Continue through the target, driving his jaw up and his head back.

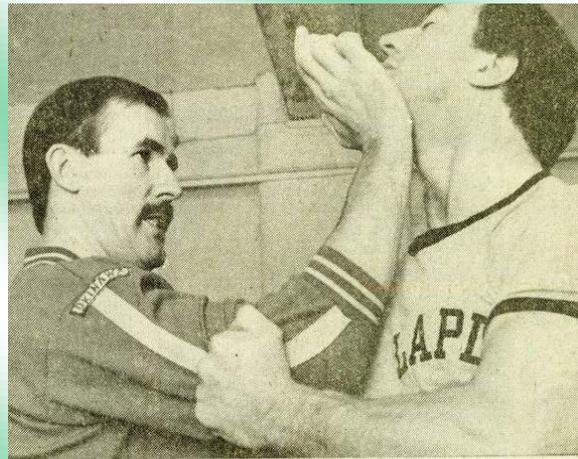
Q- Hi Dennis

I just read your story about Terry O'Neil using the Chin Jab as a pre-emptive strike and I was curious if you could answer a few questions.

I've practiced the Chin Jab quite a bit on my Spar-Pro, and I've seen enough and read enough to be somewhat sure as to how to throw it correctly. However, I've always felt that in order to really blast somebody with it, you couldn't be square-on with the person, but slightly off to the side. When I'm squared up and throw the chin jab it tends to hit the side of the jaw as opposed to directly under and in front. Obviously I could compensate by taking a step to the side before delivering, but for pre-emptive purposes I feel this is telegraphic.

Assuming you are squared up with someone, using a proper fence with your lead left hand, and you have say, 2 feet between you, do you have any favored ways in which to launch the strike in order to prevent telegraphing, yet doing it properly? I feel like I have to be REALLY close and almost completely to his side in order to do it correctly, and like I said, I feel this is telegraphing.

Oh, and one last question. Do you drive the chin jab all the way through like a shot put, or do you want to snap it in and out somewhat like a punch? And do you feel the chin jab is more effective at producing a KO over the punch?



Dennis (left) and Terry demonstrate a technique in their self defence course

*This was in the Liverpool Echo in 1982, during a self-protection course we taught together. This was the sort of thing I was teaching to the bodyguards.*

A- Hey, no problem about a long question... that's what the forum is about.

Using the chin jab as a pre-emptive can be really effective. Some thoughts;-

Firstly, hitting at an angle isn't a problem... it still works, and in fact was taught widely.

2] I teach to drive through the target. The strike itself may travel only 6" before contact, so the follow through is desirable. In wartime application they tried for a rapid rotation of the head, with potential spinal injury.

Using the principle of "moving your body in the strike" (one of Bob Kasper's notable SWAMP concepts) uncoil from the legs as you accelerate through the target.

3] To apply the chin jab pre-emptively I am partial to adapting Geoff's "listening fence" which puts you offset and neatly lines up the strike.

Using your Spar-Pro, you could train doing this, with concurrent verbalisation "Sorry mate, can't hear you...smack!"

I feel that the chin jab can be more effective than the punch, because it requires less accuracy. Anyway, I don't teach punching for a variety of reasons.

Let me know if this helps

Den

Q- Thanks for your reply Dennis.

For some reason, I find the chin jab awkward to perform. Maybe it's because I come from such a strong punching background that the mechanics in performing a chin jab are different than performing, say, a right cross. In fact, when I practice Palm strikes, I find myself throwing them like you would a right cross, but with an open hand which results in my upper part of my palm hitting the target first and making it less effective. In order to try and keep the strike as close to the chin jab as possible, I'll launch the strike from waist level so that it takes an upward path towards the jaw as supposed to straight in, but it still doesn't resemble a textbook chin jab with the arm bent at 90 degrees and the hand flexed backwards.

How do you rate (assuming you've seen it) Jim Grover's combatives videos (his first series) demonstration of the chin jab? Although I felt the tapes were excellent, when he performed the chin jab on the Spar Pro, it looked as though he was performing a fast push on the chin while trapping the right arm which made me question its KO potential. I had no doubt in its ability to damage the neck, but it didn't appear to have a snap to it like a punch needs for the KO. Have you seen the videos?

A- I'm a big believer in doing what works for you. Maybe the chin jab isn't for you. This stuff isn't carved in stone.... just because the chin jab is in our syllabus doesn't mean you have to do it.

If you don't feel you have the technique down on your SparPro, an ideal device for Chin jab, than perhaps go with another technique.

One good technique, that you have really acquired and feel confident about, is worth ten questionable techniques.

From what I hear, Kelly McCann doesn't teach that big "shoveling" chin jab any more... but perhaps others can confirm this.

The way I teach chin jab is a very short direct technique, which comes from his lower peripheral vision and within his reactionary gap. It usually lifts both heels clear off the ground, from a short 6" strike.

Q- Den, you know I'm a big palm-heel advocate and we've discussed this topic in the past. I was wondering if you could delineate your reasons for not teaching punching for all to see and learn from (along with anything else you'd like to add in). :- Hey, I'm all eyes and I'm sure everyone else who reads your viewpoints are (or will be) too. :-)

A- Punching is very natural and easy to learn, however for combatives we don't teach it:

1] Punching the head is hitting a spherical bony mass with a spherical bony mass.... technique has to be quite precise to transmit shock without glancing off.(Most punching is head punching, as body shots are low percentage)

2] Very easy to damage your hand... and in the short term you might need that hand for weapon manipulation (Bodyguard/police role)

3] Long term, you can cut your hand on his teeth, human bite is worse than animal bite... I've seen a hand swell to the size of a boxing glove within hours. A guy I worked with damaged his bone marrow punching the head and lost the top joint of his thumb.

4] Blood born pathogens are a concern. There are a lot of intravenous drug users infected with various loathsome diseases and they form a significant percentage of the population that you're likely to be punching. You could end up at best with six months of worry, at worst with a fatal disease.

5] The argument is academic, since open hand strikes are easy to learn, don't damage your hand, and transmit impact very well.

There are a lot of superb punchers out there. I've worked with many, with extensive street KO records. Most have severely damaged hands.

Only my opinion. Hope this makes sense.

Regarding the KO potential of the chin jab, or any technique, I'm a believer in the empirical approach.

I tend to think that the chin jab delivers a KO, by violently shaking the brain. In fact if you analyze the action it may swish the brain in a spiral. Like a boxing punc, it targets the jaw, the mechanically efficient lever to move the cranium. Very effective.

However, this is just speculation. What matters is that the chin jab works. In our "field applications" it does what Fairbain, Apllegate and others claimed. That 6" KO is not theory.

J, I'm an enthusiastic proponent of specificity in support exercises for strikes. A great one for chin jab is pushups with Softballs. I incorporate these into a circuit training drill, claw pushups on softballs, alternating with chin jabs on the head target.

Cheers,

Den



*[Chin jab during a high-stress scenario, at the 6th International Seminar]*

Q- Hi Dennis,

I was talking to slackbladder last night and we were discussing certain techniques and their effectiveness.

The chin jab looks such a powerful technique. When you work the doors and hit someone with it do you have to "hold back" somewhat on the power? It just seems like a full blooded shot would snap someone's neck in two?

A- Because it is delivered from very close, and only travels 6"-8" there is no need to hold back.

Actually, I insist on full power, full comittment with every strike.

If you are not justified in using 100%, then use something else.

There has been speculation of causing spinal dislocation with the Chin jab. Never heard of it actually happening in the street. Colonel Applegate has stated that training accidents were rare during WW-2 but those that happened were usually with the Chin jab.....so take care when working with your partner. Remember, "power on the pads, placement on the person"

Den

Q- Another Chin-Jab question for you if you don't mind.

I was just reading some of Fairbairn's stuff, and he mentioned that power was not as crucial in the blow as hand positioning was. He said that if the hand was flexed back far enough then it would resemble a rock and that power was not really important. Any truth to this? Is power not that important in getting a KO with the Chin-Jab as long as your hand is positioned properly?

A- My take on this:

1] Hand formation is critical, wrist locked BEFORE impact.

2] What Fairbairn may have meant about power, is don't try for a long, telegraphed action to generate power. A good Chin jab travels 6"-8" and the impact generated is sufficient.... it hits "from nowhere". Done correctly, in my experience, it's a KO.

Den

A friend who works in a local swimming centre told me that a few days ago a young boy, who had recently seemingly started Martial Arts lessons, hit a young girl, with a Chin jab under the nose. Both kids aged 11. As the girl lay injured and stunned the boy thought it was very funny.

Injuries to the victim.... severe whiplash, a hyper-extension injury to the back of her neck, swelling to her spinal cord between C1 - 4, a fractured nose and severe bruising!!!!

Shows both the dangers of training kids in MA, and of this strike.

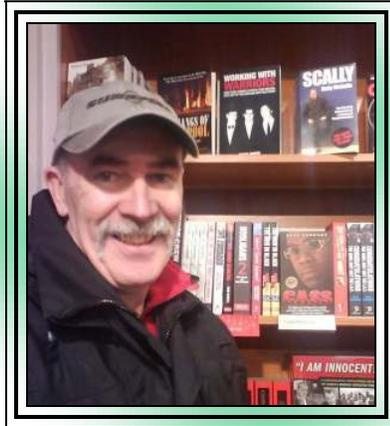
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Den

Special thanks to author Dennis Martin and his excellent website <http://www.cqbservices.com>

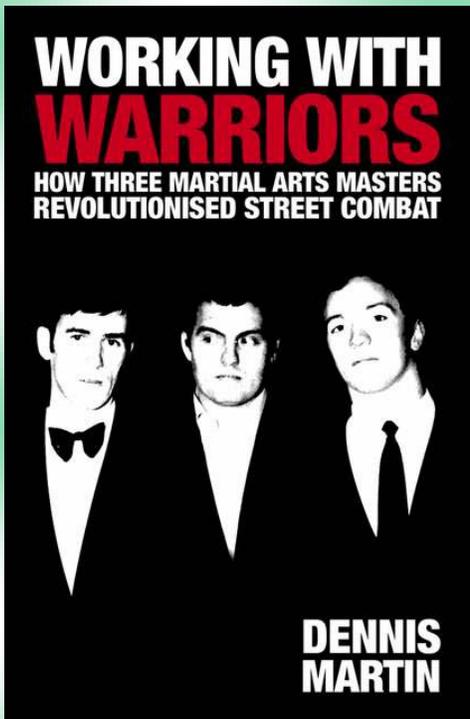
You are strongly encouraged to visit Den's site, C.Q.B. Services <http://www.cqbservices.com>

And his forum Dennis Martin's Combatives Community <http://combatives.forumotion.com/>



## “Working with Warriors” book by Dennis

Readers may be interested in the book which has been in the works for some time. Working with Warriors covers Dennis Martin's training in Karate, then Close-quarter Combatives, as well as working on nightclub doors with Terry O'Neill and Gary Spiers.



Terry O'Neill captained the World Championship winning British Karate Team, and was rated by Black Belt Magazine as “The toughest man on Planet Earth”.

Gary Spiers worked on nightclubs in Australia before spending several years training in Karate in Japan. He then settled in Great Britain where he became a legend in front-line security. The book then goes on to discuss his work in VIP Close-protection, then training bodyguards in Europe, RSA and USA.

There are several interviews in the book, including one specially done with Terry, and another with Tommy Mac, who was the guy who started Terry on the door of the famous Cavern Club, and who trained with him in grappling.

Working with Warriors has an introduction by Geoff Thompson

The book is now in major UK bookstores such as Waterstones, WH Smith and Borders.

Overseas customers can order via Amazon

For wholesale orders and any enquiries contact the publishers Milo Books