



WILD GEESE MARTIAL ARTS



Doce Pares | A Brief History

When the Spanish returned and took control of the Philippines, they discouraged the practice of the arts and the carrying of weapons. During this time the use of a stick of Rattan or the harder Kamagong came into prominence. Much of the training was disguised and performed as Morro-Morro dance, or in plays.

In the 1920's, the Americans took control of the Philippines. In Cebu the first eskrima club was formed by the Saavedra family, called the Labangon Fencing Club, this group popularized the term "eskrima" until it dissolved in 1931.

The Doce Pares society was founded in Cebu in 1932 by the Canete brothers and the Saavedras. The original group was twelve strong and named themselves after the twelve famous bodyguards of the French Emperor Charlemagne, all master swordsmen. The name was also a reference to the twelve masters to found the group. By the end of the year the membership was twenty four, so the name Doce Pares, or in English twelve pairs was even more fitting.

Most of the Doce Pares masters joined the resistance movement against the Japanese occupation of World War II. It was during this time that Teodoro Saavedra, one of the founders and vice president of Doce Pares, was captured and executed by the Japanese.

After the war Doce Pares regrouped and resumed its promotion of Eskrima. However by the 1950's rivalries and jealousies arose resulting in arguments, fights and the near fatal shooting of Delfin Lopez by Vincente Carin. Throughout all this club president Eulogio Canete and the other elders tried to mediate but were unable to contain the various feuds.

1952 saw Venancio Bacon break away with Lopez and others to form the Balintawak Self Defence club, named after Balintawak Street where the original Doce Pares HQ was situated.

Around the same time Ciriacao Canete broke away, taking Carin amongst others to form the Cebu Mutual Security Association or CEMUSA. Ciriacao kept close ties to his two older brothers, Eulogio and Felimon, the presidents of the Doce Pares Association.

The following decade has become known as a golden age for eskrima as the rival factions competed to develop ever higher skill levels, bring in new techniques and developments in the art. Many "Juego Todo" challenge matches were fought, although none of the masters ever faced each other, they would take challenges from each others students.

By the 1970's the tension had relaxed significantly enough that Eulogio's youngest son Dionisio "Diony" Canete could bring all the various groups in Cebu together under the umbrella of the Cebu Eskrima Association (CEA).



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In 1975 NARAPHIL (the National Arnis Association of the Philippines) was created, this further untied escrima throughout the Philippines, as most of the groups including Doce Pares and the CEA affiliated to it.

Soon after Diony Canete proposed a tournament format designed to promote escrima in the same way tournaments had popularised other arts such as Karate and Judo. He then took on the task of creating the rules, protective head gear, body armour and gloves. The rules and equipment has changed very little since and are still used in all WEKAF world championships.

Over the following years Doce Pares dominated the competition scene winning everything on offer. The era of Juego Todo or Death Match had come to an end. With one notable exception. Ciriaco Canete and Crispulo Atillo arranged to fight on September 17, 1983.

This was to be Juego Todo, except all punching, kicking, throws and grappling were banned. The referee had to intervene when seconds into the fight both combatants were clinching, not a single clean strike had landed. Naturally both claimed victory. A rematch was subsequently banned as Attilo was determined medically unfit to fight.

There have been no “Official” death matches since.

Diony Canete then revitalised the training syllabus and came up with the “multi Style” method in use today. Because each of the founding masters had differing styles, some preferring long range others close, some espada y daga to mention a few. Each student would learn from each of the masters to comprehensively learn the Doce Pares “Multi Style” System.

Since the deaths of Eulogio and Felimon Canete in 1988 and 95 respectively, the presidency was unanimously given to Eulogio Jr., while his younger brother Diony was entitled Grandmaster given Filemon’s seat as Chairman.

The organisation continues to expand under the leadership of Diony and the other masters of the system, both in the Philippines and around the world.