Dangerous Delusion

True exponents of karate and the other martial arts fear that students of quickie courses are fantasizing invincibility and are headed for bruising nightmares.

by Richard W. Johnston / Sports Illustrated magazine

Post Office Box 81 in Center Rutland, VT is a mail drop for some people who have the solution to one of America's pressing problems. If you write to them at that address -- and of course, include the modest amount of cash they solicit -- they will send you "the final answer to violence in the streets".

The answer is Aicondo. So, at least, says their ad in a recent issue of a magazine The Deadly Hands of Kung Fu which goes on to explain that aicondo is "distilled from ancient fighting arts" -- judo, karate, aikido, and kung-fu.

The ad is further adorned with a cartoon that shows a shrieking almond-eyed killer shoving his knuckles right out of the page and into your teeth while with the other hand delivering a karate chop to a balding, grimacing villain. A big headline says Become A Registered Black Belt. The Deadliest Men Alive Are Aicondo Men.
To become an aicondo man, all you have to do is master the easy simply lessons in a booklet "packed with action photos! Sold nationally at $9.95. Now only $6.95." You may then join the Aicondo Martial Arts Federation with the rank of First Degree Black Belt.

Who would have guess that all this secret Oriental knowledge would be so easily available in the little village of Center Rutland (population 500) which not only doesn't have much violence but also has very few streets? For that matter, who would have expected the generally cheerful Mr. Universe Arnold Schwarzenegger glowering out of a 4-color ad in a magazine called Inside Kung Fu with a 3-piece Okinawan weapon called a nunchaku bent around his Olympian right arm? Read on and you find that Arnold promises to "increase by 5 times the knockout power of your punches and kicks in just a few short weeks!"

These come-ons are only examples (and not the most outrageous ones at that) of invitations issued monthly in a whole substratum of magazines devoted to the martial arts ranging from Deadly Hands to the semi-serious Black Belt to Official Karate, Karate Illustrated, Self Defense, etc.

If the interest in martial arts were only a fad appealing to adolescents like Fonz worship or candy pants, it would hardly be worth examining. But it is much more (and sometimes much less) at that. A glance at the Yellow Pages in any metropolitan telephone directory will indicate the extent of its proliferation. Greater Los Angeles alone has nearly 400 dojos (i.e., training halls) offering instruction in the 5 principal Asian martial arts (or one of their seemingly infinite variants) to flabby congressmen, anxious executives, nervous housewives, militants, and even children of kindergarten age. It is not the voice of the turtle that is heard in the land but the sharp cry of "Hai karate!"

The origins of America's fascination with the Oriental systems of "empty hand" combat can be dated to the end of the Korean war when a few veterans of Far Eastern military service returned to boast of skills that made boxing look both ineffective and uncouth. What the martial arts were said to offer was a quick way to become impregnable on defense and devastating on counterattack. They were easy to learn by just mastering a few tricks and they armed you against any imaginable situation. Knifers would wilt; gunmen would fall; and mobs would be dissipated as if by magic. You not only wouldn't get killed. But you also ran little chance of even getting your hair mussed.

Despite these attractions, the defense cult didn't become an industry until the 1960s when muggers and riots became facts of life. Then panic set in and it has yet to run its course. Today, the practice of Japanese karate and aikido, Korean tae kwon do, and Chinese kung-fu is being promoted as a spectator sport as well with "full-contact to knockout" tournaments. Such events have drawn well in New York, Atlanta, Dallas, Los Angeles, and Honolulu. But there also have been mixed-style exhibitions that have shaken the faith of a lot of true believers if the efficacy of the fabled chop and the soaring kick.

In Honolulu last year, Everett (Monster Man) Eddy -- billed as the "World Free-Form Martial Arts Champion" -- was knocked stiff in the second round by a Hawaiian street fighter named Victor Rapoza. This embarrassment was compounded in another tournament a month later when Teddy Limoz (a Honolulu preliminaries boxer) kayoed Ken Bell (heralded as the holder of 12 black belts in as many disciplines) in the first round of their match.

Later that same night, the crowd of 7,000 jammed into Blaisdell Arena saw Limoz come back to decision Joe Lewis (who is "recognized as the World Heavyweight Karate Champion") in 3 rounds. Limoz relied on such martial (if not arty) devices as the right cross, the left jab, and the roundhouse punch. Although these 2 victories netted Limoz less than $5,000, he reportedly said "I can't kick" (a fact clearly evident in both matches).
These disasters and others like them have provoked a number of questions. Has the public been bullied for 20-odd years? Is Aikido pidgin English for "I kid you"? Is even good old Judo suspect? If the martial arts don't clothe you in armor, put an equalizer in your hands and equip you for every emergency, would you be just as well signing up for ballroom-dancing lessons?

Since all the arts are not only competitive but also intensely nationalistic and since most knowledgeable witnesses are commercially involved, getting answers to such questions is like trying to get the whole story about Watergate. But there are a few "Deep Throats" in the field. And one of them is a burly 215-pound Honolulu real-estate broker named Mike McAndrews. He has been a student of Oriental systems for a dozen years and a first-Dan black belt karate, a degree achieved after 26 grueling months in an authentic *dojo*.

Recently, McAndrews was shown several martial arts magazine ads during a general discussion of the full-contact catastrophes. "This is the kind of stuff that makes you want to take up ballet," he said in disgust.

Asked what he thought a correspondence course pupil could do with his mail-order black belt, McAndrews replied: "Well, he probably could strangle a little old lady who happened to fall asleep in her rocking chair. Or maybe beat somebody to death with his certificate of rank" (which is available at no extra cost and is suitable for framing).

The discussion with McAndrews had taken place in a Honolulu restaurant (even dedicated black belts take time out to eat) and an acquaintance posed a hypothetical question:

"Since you're a real black belt, tell me this. What would you do if we suddenly found some guy with a knife slipping up behind us? Would you hit him with a karate chop?"

"If I could, I'd run like hell," McAndrews said. "If there was no place to run, I'd hit him with a chair."

 Appropriately, a woman asked the next question. "If a would-be rapist came up behind me and pinned my arms, could I defend myself with karate?"

McAndrews nodded. "Maybe. If you really knew it, were really good at it, and he wasn't very big. You might be able to snap a damaging kick into his shin. But if you were wearing those needle-pointed spike heels, you wouldn't even need to know karate."

"Nobody wears those anymore," the woman said.

"Too bad," McAndrews said. "All you'd have to do is lift one knee and jam the heel down into his instep. It's simple physics. If you concentrate all your weight and power into that tiny area, it's going to go through his shoe and right into through his instep. No woman ever got raped by a man with a spike in his foot. You can't even stand up with a crushed instep. On the other hand if you are wearing Earth Shoes, forget it."

"Okay," said the original interrogator. "If you really mean all these things, let me ask you a general question. What do you need to defend yourself in all street situations?"

"A 12-guage shotgun with No. 4 buckshot," McAndrews said bleakly.
McAndrews isn't the only debunker of the martial arts claims that have been asserted and assiduously promoted in the U.S. Tony Reyes (a San Francisco karate instructor) said in a *Karate Illustrated* article: "Too many people think they're bad news after studying Karate for a while. … If they ever get into some real street action, chances are they'll end up with a one-way ticket to the coroner's office.

Kwang Hyun -- a Korean who specializes in a self-defense system he calls Hapkido -- tells his Chicago students to pick up a rock, a brick, a 2-by-4, anything handy if they are attacked in the streets. He adds: "Run away. That's the first rule, of course."

Masatoshi Nakayama (chief instructor of the Japan Karate Association) says the secrets of self-defense can be summed up in these proverbs: "A wise man avoids danger" and "To run away is the best way to win".

Such cautious experts are put off even more by the variations in their disciplines that are being taught today. Charles Nelson -- an ex-Marine who runs the Charles Nelson School of Self-Defense in New York -- is one innovator.

"We don't give belts," Nelson once told a Japanese karate expert who mistakenly interpreted the statement as evidence of Oriental-style modesty. Nelson asserts: "We're off belts and onto the real spirit of martial arts."

He has a plaque on his school wall that identifies him as a 7th degree black belt in Jujitsu. But he says it was given to him by his students. "We don't waste time with situps and pushups like some schools," he says. "My course is different from anything else in the city. I don't need guarantees; I let my students tell me."

Indeed, Nelson has drawers full of testimonials to the usefulness of his 15-lesson, 7½ week course ($150). But none seem to reflect experience in actual combat. Joel Ross -- who teaches Karate at the City University of New York -- has written him.

"I believe that your teaching *coupled with traditional art forms* have made me a much better teacher and person." [Italics added.]

Chuck Weiss -- who says he holds a brown belt and his wife a purple belt in Moo Doo Kwan (a variation of Korean tae kwon do) -- wrote Nelson. "You were able to *build on our karate training* by confronting us with dozens of 'real life' situations and showing us what to do in each of them." [Italics added.]

Nelson makes a particular appeal to the aged and to women. His Manhattan Yellow Pages says in part: "Protect yourself against muggers. Special anti-rape techniques for women." He is proud of an article that appeared in a 1975 issue of *Modern Maturity* (a magazine for senior citizens) in which he is quoted as saying: "It isn't physical strength that counts for very much. It's in knowing what to do and doing it fast." Of Nelson's course, the anonymous writer says: "It's a modified karate to be sure without those fancy high kicks and athletic twists of the body that the younger set can handle. But a little karate is better than none."

Nelson's course may well improve a student's physical condition as well as his understanding of defense techniques. The question is whether 7½ weeks of training for anyone (even a natural athlete) would equip him-or-her to handle muggers or rapists. And it remains arguable whether it is preferable
to attempt to "handle" any such assaults rather than to try to run. Many authorities insist it is hardly possible to learn to defend oneself in 6 months (let alone 2) unless one has had previous Karate training.

McAndrews believes that people who are only interested in self-defense rarely stick with Karate long enough. He says: "It's just too difficult to make your body perform the contortions that are necessary and too boring to perfect and pattern them. A lot of people drop out. One thing most of these promoters don't tell you: You've got to be willing to be hurt in order to hurt somebody else." [Even the best professional boxers like Mohammed Ali take their share of blows.]

"I once heard a Japanese karate master who had learned from the founder (Gichin Funakoshi) say that you usually have 'to take one to give one'. And why not risk a cut on the arm in order to deliver a decisive technique. In his case, the technique would kill. The martial arts aren't that different from sword fighting. There's a finality. On the other hand, Chuzu Kotaka (McAndrews' teacher and an 8th-Dan black belt who operates the International Karate Federation dojos in Honolulu) is so clever that he might be able to disable the attacker with a flanking move and avoid the knife entirely. The point is, though, he wouldn't care if he was cut. But most people don't want to get hurt at all. Very unrealistic."

Moreover, Karate's reputation is such that whenever a student of the art is killed, there is a media implication that he-or-she should have done better. When Sandra SerVass (a former managing editor of Holiday magazine) was beaten to death in the California apartment of a relative, wire-service stories described her as a Karate black belt and quoted a friend as saying "She would have defended herself if she'd had a chance".

Very likely. But most of the high-pressure promoters of self-defense systems suggest their graduates always have a chance. Tell that to Major General Harry Brooks, the Koreaphile admirer of combat football (Sports Illustrated, July 21, 1975). Last year Brooks brought Kyo Woon Lee to Hawaii from Seoul to instruct the 25th Army Division in tae kwon do. Shortly after his arrival, Specialist Fifth Class Kyo was shot to death after an evening in a Honolulu nightclub of dubious reputation.

As practiced in the Orient, the martial arts are neither sports nor mindless exercises in destruction. Nor do they exclude the stoic endurance of pain either in training or in actual practice. To indulge in a gross simplification, their objectives can be described as spiritual awareness of inner self coupled with serene confidence in one's ability to defend his outer self. A serenity devoid of the machismo that disfigures the "sweet science" of the West.

All of the martial arts are branches of the same tree. One that some scholars believe was planted in China 15 centuries before Christ but did not reach fruition until the 6th Century A.D. when the Buddhist monk Daruma Taishi modified them with the introduction of Zen techniques of deep breathing and physical exercise.

Although Daruma's goal supposedly was to toughen the monks for the rigors of spiritual training, his system also served a temporal purpose. It enabled peaceful people to protect themselves from bandits, swordsmen, freebooters, and other ruffians. Despite all changes in nomenclature and modifications in technique, the true martial arts never lost the original spiritual restraints that kept devotees from becoming "Karate or Kung-Fu killers" and laying waste to neighborhoods. Until they reached the West, that is. An advanced (e.g., 6th Dan up) Karate black belt probably can defend himself against almost anyone but press agents and fast-buck promoters.
The first of the Asian martial arts to make the trans-Pacific cross was Judo. It was based on a principle described as "the willow and the cherry tree". Judo never caught on much in the U.S. Probably because of the persistent frontier notion that it is better to attack than defend.

But Karate! Now there is a real all-American "go get 'em!" system. And so are Tae Kwon Do and Kung-Fu which came on a little later. Hard stuff all three. And best of all, you supposedly couldn't get hurt doing them.

This illusion of invincibility often was fostered by the greed of some early dojo proprietors -- many of them ex-GIs who knew little more about the techniques than their students -- by the emphasis on karate as a "killer" defense; by the vivid (albeit fictional) exploits of James Bond; by the sexy gymnastics of Diana Rigg as "Mrs. Peel" in the TV series The Avengers; and in the case of Kung-Fu by the cinematic derring-do of the late Bruce Lee.

Whenever public interest in one of the martial arts showed signs of waning, dojo operators took advantage of American confusion with Oriental names and as many "systems" of karate were advertised as there are sexual positions in the Kama Sutra. Anybody could call his version of the art anything. After a year (or less) of training, he could open his own dojo, coining a name or simply naming it after himself: "Karate! Introducing the deadly Caspar Milquetoast-do!" (In Japanese, "do" is one of several words that simply mean "the way"). When Kung-Fu entered the scene, many Karate studios became kung-fu dojos. All the owner had to do was repaint the sign.

Distressed by these corruptions, the Japanese sent a number of instructors to the U.S. and several legitimate schools were established. But some of the masters innocently contributed to the vulgarization of karate by TV demonstrations of board- and brick-breaking. These spectacular stunts (all quite authentic) inflamed Western minds. (It was such a display seen when he was only 7-years-old that first engaged Mike McAndrews' interest. Actually, they are not difficult for a serious student.) The board-breaker delivered with the side of the hand was promptly named "karate chop" by media commentators. It was an easy phrase to remember. Particularly if you pronounced it wrong as most Westerners do. "Kuh-rotty" instead of "kah-rah-tay" with equal emphasis on all syllables. The phrase rolls off the tongue in a way the move's real name (shuto, ridge or knife hand) never would.

The language barrier has caused other misconceptions. Wouldn't any thug quail if his intended victim suddenly crouched, raised his hands in knife-edge positions, and screamed "Hai karate!"?

If her were an amateur mugger who believed in the movies, he might. But not if he knew anything about Karate. In Mike McAndrews' phrase, the victim probably would "wind up in a field of flowers". Yell "high-kuh-rotty!" in Tokyo and one will think you are dangerous. Just crazy and possibly Swahili. "Hai" means "yes" in Japanese while "kuh-rotty" means nothing (the Japanese aren't very good at interpreting broken versions of their very precise language).

The loud cries heard in Karate -- which some tone-deaf translator rendered as "hai karate" but which to an attuned ear sound like "toe-ay!" -- are not intended to frighten an opponent but to provide the ultimate focus for the fusion of inner energy (the ki) with exterior force whether it is to be delivered by foot or first.

All the Asian martial arts insist that the vital center of that internal energy (hear, spirit, call it what you will) is located about 2 inches below the navel and can be directed outward only from there. Sound silly? Well, we often say a brave man has endured "but guts alone", don't we? And how about that prim old euphemism "intestinal fortitude"? The twain may be closer than we think.
The martial artists believe that _ki_ not only unites all one's forces but also actually can be projected both offensively and defensively. The most effective blows in Karate (and in Kung-Fu and Tae Kwon Do as well) are piston-like punches or kicks delivered from a flat-footed stance and retracted a split second after impact (no follow-through as some critics of Karate have said in disparagement). There are attested instances of men struck in the abdomen by blows that barely marked the skin who died later of ruptured spleens or kidneys, destroyed by the shock wave of energy dispatched by fist or foot.

Do not, however, assume that learning the physical side of Karate, Kung-Fu, or Tae Kwon Do is any easier than the mental struggle required. The body must be forced into unnatural positions. In one karate kick, the foot is twisted at a right angle to present its outer "knife edge" to the opponent. Even the basic stances are hip-wrenchers for Westerners.

A book could be written about the wonders of the martial arts (and many have been). But the principal point to be made here is that **thousands-of-hours of agonizing effort** are necessary to create a "peaceful warrior". And even then, situations will arise in the streets or in bars that cannot be solved by "empty hands". A favorite aphorism of the arts is that a black belt should have "a mind like water" -- calm and unruffled in meeting unavoidable attack but quite satisfied to flow downhill (or across the street) if that will avert violence.

"When I first started learning Karate in my senior year in high school, I used to get into fights all the time," Mike McAndrews says. "I thought I had to prove myself. The better I got, the fewer fights I had. Not because I was getting a reputation as a martial artist. Most people didn't even know that. I just learned I didn't have to."

The grandson of a former territorial governor of Hawaii (Samuel Wilder King) and the nephew of a Federal judge, McAndrews attended Punahou (a private college preparatory school. The "Puns" were natural targets for less privileged youngsters. And the fact that McAndrews has a trace of Hawaiian blood did not exempt him from challenges.

In 1964 he enrolled in Carlton Shimomi's dojo. For 2 years, he spent 4 hours-a-week in classes and another hour every day in practice punching the straw-covered _makiwara_ (fencepost) or the heavy bag to strengthen his hands. "When I had a rating exam coming up," he recalls, "I'd practice 3-or-4 hours every day in addition to the dojo classes."

He moved up through the ranks. White belt to green to purple through 4 brown-belt stages and finally 1st Dan black (which is the lowest rung on a 10-step ladder). Although he was interested in the self-defense aspects of karate, McAndrews had an almost religious feeling about the art.

"I think I began to get a little disillusioned when my first _sensei_ (teach, mentor, maestro -- the word cannot be translated literally) phased out his dojo to go into another business," he recalls. "I hadn't realized then that even a karate sensei had to make a living. To me it was simply high art. An art that enabled one to transcend mediocrity."

At Shimomi's, McAndrews had polished both his _kata_ (the formalized routines that correspond roughly to a boxer's training in blocking, punching, feinting, and footwork) and his _kumite_ (the free sparring that puts the _kata_ to work. At his new dojo (Chuzo Kotaka's), the _kumite_ became considerably more violent.

"Kotaka was one rough character when he came here from Japan," McAndrews says. "He didn't believe in sparring in which the punches and kicks stopped short of actually striking an opponent. He thought _contact was necessary_ to sharpen the focus you would need in actual self-defense."
Like Shimomi's, some very reputable dojos train their students to stop all blows an inch from the opponent's body. It is an esthetic practice that has led critics to claims karatekas can't fight because they're conditioned to pull their punches. But McAndrews did not experience this problem during either of the 2 street situations that followed his training.

In one, he was attacked by a hulking drunk while attempting to play good Samaritan to victims of an automobile accident. McAndrews used a straight shot to the throat -- a karate maneuver called "tiger's mouth" in which the hand is not retracted by grips the Adam's apple (and could extract it).

In the other, he was cornered by 5 young thugs at Makapuu beach. A front kick to the groin and a knuckle punch to the face had enough focus to disable one of them and put three to flight. But the fifth pulled a gun.

"I was 10 feet away," McAndrews recalls, "and a small short pistol isn't very accurate at that distance. So I followed another sound principle. I ran. And his pistol misfired 3 times."

McAndrews came to Kotaka at about the time that legitimate instructors alarmed by Karate's continuing popular image as a killer system began sponsoring inter-dojo and open tournaments. Their purpose was to establish that Karate was at least as much of a sport as boxing. And in many ways superior to the latter as a conditioner and, yes, for self-defense.

"When we started in sports tournaments," McAndrews says, "we competed with people we could respect for their technique, for their spirit, for their high standard of excellence. But then sponsors began inviting less proficient schools and we got terrible mismatches. In Japan, tournaments are all right because the general level of instruction is high. But not in Hawaii or on the Mainland. One contestant may not make contact at all and another may half kill you because he hasn't learned to focus his blows." (In sport karate, blows are supposed to hit but not wound.)

McAndrews kept his interest nonetheless through graduation from the University of Hawaii (in political science) and his entry into business. But the "full-contact" to knockout" exhibitions he has seen have transformed what had once been mere disillusionment into disgust.

Sport karate contests are still held. But McAndrews sees the sensationalized bull-contact to kayo bouts as a regressions to the "gladiator syndrome". he says: "The promoters are promising circuses. Not sport or art."

The man who claimed to have devised the full-contact format -- the late John Keehan who called himself "Counte Dante" -- sneered at the concept of ki. He was one of several latecomers who proclaimed the "Americanization" of the martial arts.

"I'd say Count Dante did for karate about what the Boston Strangler did for door-to-door salesmanship," McAndrews says. "This 'Americanization' of Karate is wrecking it. Learning the katas bores people so they're skipping it. But you need some ki and you need the ability to focus. Without either, it not only isn't Karate but it's also as much of a danger to you as to others."

Whether the combination of full-contact exhibitions and fly-by-night martial-arts schools will drive legitimate teachers out of business remains to be seen. But they are making the distinction of the real from the counterfeit all the more difficult.
While a random sampling of about 100 dojos in 14 major American cities by Sports Illustrated correspondents produced only one that actually would guarantee a "black belt", some 25 promised self-defense capability in 4-to-6 months. (McAndrews says: "After 1 year of instruction in Karate, you might be less able to defend yourself than before. At that point because of the tournament orientation, many students haven't even learned to guard the face."

The prices for the courses ranged from $20 to a shocking $100-a-month (McAndrews' sensi Kotaka charges $15) and a majority implied that a woman who attained 1st Dan black belt would be the equal of a man of the same rank.

"Maybe I'm a chauvinist," McAndrews says. "But there's no way a 110-pound woman can disable a strong 200-pound man with Karate or anything else except by total surprise or years-and-years of training."

He recalls working out with a 95-pound woman who was an instructor for the Japan Karate Association and was "double tough". But McAndrews rates her as exceptional. "For a while, there was another woman karetska from Japan at Chuzo's," he recalls. "I could have kicked her into the 21st Century if I'd gone all out." He feels that senior citizens, the handicapped, and that durable advertising cliché the "97-pound weakling" suffer the same limitations.

New York writer Carola Dibbell investigated karate after she was mugged. She shares some (but not all) of McAndrews' misgivings. Writing in The Village Voice, she cited the added confidence that martial skills may give a woman but noted "the fear of hurting someone else may be more inhibiting than the fear of getting hurt."

McAndrews believes that many male karate students share the same fear. He says: "Most of us aren't conditioned to kill. And several karate tactics unless controlled by focus will accomplish just that." Of course, some people are conditioned to kill (or want to be) and may turn to the "hand arts" to further that purpose.

A particularly distasteful ad in a magazine called Oriental Combat and Self Defense offers "the deadly art of Kung-Fu" and says these "secrets" have been hidden for centuries "lest they fall into the wrong hands such as revolutionaries, oppressed people, criminals, and unsavory types. While the Oriental Devil Fighting Society's mail-order course is no threat to any other society, the Americanization talk suggests that some ghetto residents may be interested in something beyond Moving Zen ; a Way to Gentleness to cite the title of C.W. Niccol's book on his 2-year progress to black belt status.

"To quote an old Oriental maxim: 'The ki may follow an evil path'," McAndrews says. "And even in the most respectable dojos, a committed student who hopes to emerge as a man of peace goes through a precarious transitions -- usually at the brown belt stage -- when he wants to test his ki and his focus in a real-life situation." That is when the Oriental spiritual restraints demonstrate their full value.

Is there any point then in a person's taking up one of the "hand arts" solely for purposes of self-defense? No, says McAndrews, unless he-or-she is prepared to give it at least 2 years of heavy effort under expert supervision and at the same time recognize its physical boundaries as well as its psychic rewards. "After all my years in Karate," McAndrews says, "I find myself thinking more-and-more about weapons."
"Some of my friends in the art will say I'm selling out when I suggest weapons may be needed for self-defense. But I know the limitations; I've been there. Karate won't stop a bullet or deflect a knife unless you get better at it than I am. And that puts you in the dojo forever. Unless, of course, you're a real *budo* -- a warrior prepared to put your life on the line at any time and to hell with the job, the wife, the kids, let's go for broke!"

What if McAndrews' pretty Linda proposed a pub-crawl through Honolulu's shadier saloons? Could he defend her and himself if any trouble developed?

"Sure," said Mike McAndrews. "At least Karate has given me confidence enough to handle that kind of proposition. We just wouldn't go."

So in the short run at least, "avoidism" -- a philosophy proposed in a Manhattan saloon years ago by comedian Roger Price -- may be the best defense. But in the meantime, hundreds (perhaps thousands) of Americans will walk into dangerous situations certain that they have been prepared to cope with their assailants through the aid of U.S. Postal Service and a bargain-price booklet.

In the words of Ray Sons (the sports editor of the Chicago Daily News): "I get the impression that this martial-arts boom is the modern-day equivalent of the old Fred Astaire and Arthur Murray dance studios where they'd hook you into a year-or-two of lessons under contract. In a happier day, the lure was popularity with the opposite sex. Here, the lure is a yearning for safety in a perilous society. You can make a buck off it either way."

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The Burning Platform. Three Dangerous Delusions About Korea. Authored by James George Jatras via The Strategic Culture Foundation, They say that most of the world’s real dangers arise not because of what people don’t know but because of what they do ‘know’ that just ain’t so. As a case in point, consider three things about Korea that the bipartisan Washington establishment seems quite sure of but are far removed from reality Dangerous delusion. Chapter 1. The morning after the night Tony spent out of the house with his study group, he awoke with a big thumping headache. It wasn’t the first time this night he woke up. He had snuck home at five a.m. in a desolate condition. Now it was almost 7.30 and he felt a cruel hangover in his head and body. Thank god, nobody had noticed that he had overslept. The LoA is delusional. It is dangerous because it misleads people into believing that imagery alone will work without action. To succeed in life you need things like talent, diligence, persistence, skills, hard-work and maybe a little luck. You can achieve great things but in order to do so you have to do a lot more than just think about them.