

AUTHOR INTERVIEW

MICHAEL D. JANICH

Author of Martial Cane Concepts

One of the most basic laws of survival is this: predators look for easy targets. If you've made the hard realization that your age or some other disability puts you in the "prey" category in the eyes of the common thug, be assured that you still have self-defense options. One excellent choice is a brand-new cane-fighting method developed by veteran martial artist Michael D. Janich.

The beauty of Janich's latest video, *Martial Cane Concepts*, is that it demonstrates a self-defense system that can be quickly learned by anyone, even if he or she has never practiced any sort of martial art or taken a self-defense class. It's simple, direct, effective, and can be used to great advantage by the able-bodied as well.

In the following interview, longtime Paladin author Michael Janich talks about his new video, his Martial Blade Concepts training program, his latest project as Knives Category Manager for BLACKHAWK, and his upcoming role as cohost of *The Best Defense*, a new series coming to The Outdoor Channel.

Paladin Press: There are many books and videos on the market that cover traditional stick- or cane-fighting methods, such as Hapkido cane fighting or La Canne. How is *Martial Cane Concepts* different?

Michael Janich: When I developed *Martial Cane Concepts*, my goal was to provide a simple, easily learned system of cane tactics that could be picked up by anyone in just a few hours and applied effectively with only minimal practice. While many martial arts have cane subsystems, they typically require a very high level of skill and some pretty significant physical attributes to make them work well. I wanted to offer a system that works well for people who might actually have to *use* a cane on a daily basis—people with physical limitations.

PP: This approach seems ideal for people who've never had any instruction in the martial arts. How did you come to realize that there was an audience for this kind of system?

MJ: One of the things I've always tried to do with my teaching is to make it logical and easy to understand. I've also worked hard at making it practical and flexible enough that people of different levels of physical skill could benefit from it. Over the years, this approach has resonated with many over-40 martial artists who realize that the traditional martial arts approach to self-defense often doesn't work well as you get older. They want something more practical.

At the same time, my approach has appealed to a lot of younger martial artists who still have great physical attributes but are disillusioned with the dogma and misinformation associated with many traditional arts. They want something that makes sense from the

start and has immediate application. Everything we do—including empty-hand, stick, knife, and gun—fits that mold. *Martial Cane Concepts* is really just a reflection of our overall approach to weapon tactics, tuned to the attributes of a cane.

PP: In your long career as a martial artist and instructor, have you ever had to adapt your training methods to allow a disabled student to learn some self-defense techniques?

MJ: Yes. Many of the students who come to me for Martial Blade Concepts chose the knife because they had limited physical abilities and needed a weapon that was very effective and easily carried. They also needed a system of using it that was versatile enough for them to apply it with their existing levels of strength, speed, and reaction time. In MBC—and in everything else I teach—I have a saying: “You don’t have to fight like me; you just have to fight well.” What that means is that—unlike traditional martial arts, where the goal is to have everyone performing a technique look exactly the same to preserve the tradition and form of the style—our approach is to achieve reliable combative function.

By teaching everyone universal principles of timing, leverage, and body alignment, we maximize each student’s ability to express his or her physical attributes. In the process, we tune the form or provide alternate techniques for students who have physical limitations. Those limitations can be anything from being overweight or very muscular (both of which can restrict one’s range of motion) to having a true physical handicap. I had one student with severe scoliosis, but through good communication and understanding of his limitations, we tuned the system to meet his needs. He trains very actively and is a very capable fighter because he adapts his training to match his abilities.

In the 11 years that I’ve been teaching MBC as a system, I’ve taught hundreds of students, many of whom were over 50 years old. One of my longest-practicing students is in his mid-60s. Tuning their training to meet their abilities—as well as the disparity of force and strength that they would face with a younger attacker—is a regular part of the way we train. Again, *Martial Cane Concepts* is a great reflection of that philosophy and my older students love training with the cane, but it’s not the only aspect of our training that we adapt to meet a student’s needs. That applies across the board.

PP: What advantages do you see in carrying a cane rather than or in addition to knives, batons, or other popular carry weapons?

MJ: The cane is an incredibly versatile and effective weapon. At the same time, it is also the ultimate “PC” tool. Even if you are able-bodied, you have a right to walk with a cane—as long as it is not so heavily weaponized that it becomes obvious as a purpose-designed weapon. The American Disabilities Act is also an incredibly powerful tool in defending your right to carry a cane. If anyone questions your use of it, just referencing this act will usually shut people up pretty quickly. I’m not suggesting that anyone fake a disability or take unfair advantage of anything that is specifically designed to protect the rights of disabled people, but at the same time, carrying a cane—even if in YOUR mind it is purely a self-defense weapon—is your right. We shouldn’t have to go overboard explaining that to anyone—especially the idiots who believe that peace and social order are best achieved by disarming law-abiding citizens.

PP: Does *Martial Cane Concepts* include any techniques for the more able-bodied student?

MJ: EVERY technique in the *Martial Cane Concepts* system will work for able-bodied students. The more physical attributes you can put behind a tactic, the more effective it will be. Many of the concepts that form the foundation of *Martial Cane Concepts* were distilled from the Filipino arts, specifically my background in *Serrada* Eskrima and its parent art, *De Cuerdas* Eskrima. If you practice the Filipino arts or any other stickfighting art, or carry an ASP or baton as an armed professional, there is a lot that you can learn from *Martial Cane Concepts*. In the video I also demonstrate some higher-level skills that illustrate what I believe constitute “advanced” cane techniques for more experienced, able-bodied folks. These are not only designed to illustrate some examples of more advanced cane technique, but also to suggest other applications, such as the use of the cane in executive protection applications. They also show my approach to hard-core cane use by a physically capable individual—a very viable option for anyone who has to travel frequently or operate in nonpermissive environments where purpose-designed weapons are not allowed.

PP: What are the core principles of *Martial Blade Concepts*?

MJ: First, I believe in having a plan and working that plan—regardless of what your attacker is doing. With that in mind, I developed two basic movement patterns that form the core of *Martial Cane Concepts*. Both of them provide a variety of both offensive and defensive functions that allow you to respond to many different types of attacks and threats with the same exact pattern of movement. The less you have to think about, the easier it is to learn and apply the tactics. Conceptually, this approach also teaches you how to focus on core physical principles rather than rote technique. Compared to systems that focus primarily on rote technique, or more accurately, *dozens* of rote techniques, *Martial Cane Concepts* is very easy to learn and apply.

Another defining aspect of *Martial Cane Concepts* is its focus on mobility kills—destroying an attacker’s ability to stand and move. Since the ultimate goal of self-defense is for you to escape safely, I think it’s ridiculous that many cane systems focus on strikes, locks, and throws that don’t reliably provide the opportunity for escape. If a young, strong attacker goes after an older person with a cane, the best response is to cheat. Hit him in the areas that are hardest for him to defend, fight on your terms, and destroy his ability to chase after you. When he’s lying on the pavement with a broken tibia, you—the one who actually may need to walk with a cane—can still escape safely. Complicated arm locks, throws, and other martial-arts techniques don’t provide that option.

Finally, *Martial Cane Concepts*—like everything I teach—takes into account the fact that you will probably be attacked in a real environment with real obstacles around you, not in the middle of a dojo floor. Many—if not most—of the techniques of traditional cane systems simply cannot be done in confined quarters. If your reflexive response is to automatically apply a technique that requires half a basketball court to perform, you’re screwed by design.

PP: Since *Martial Cane Concepts* seems pretty complete, is there any chance of a follow-up piece?

MJ: Yes. I'm already planning on it. It will not only show how the concepts presented in the first volume can be applied to other situations, it will also focus on solo training for folks who have difficulty finding training partners.

PP: Do you offer seminars in *Martial Cane Concepts*?

MJ: Yes. I typically teach the basic system as either a four-hour crash course or an eight-hour expanded course. Since I only teach part-time, I rely on motivated seminar sponsors to coordinate training events. I have also recently certified a number of instructors who are beginning to teach under the MBC banner at various locations around the United States. Complete details on training opportunities and seminar sponsorship are available on my website, www.martialbladeconcepts.com.

PP: What other projects are you working on these days?

MJ: The most exciting project is a new cable TV show called *The Best Defense*. It will begin airing in January 2009 on The Outdoor Channel and will be hosted by Michael Bane, who is also the host of *Shooting Gallery*. My friend Rob Pincus, founder of Combat Focus shooting and head of I.C.E. Training (www.icetraining.com) and I will cohost the show and serve as subject-matter experts in all aspects of personal protection. The weekly show will focus on different themes such as home defense, carjacking, etc., and will feature both hard-core instructional segments and dramatic scenarios to illustrate common threats and the best tactics to defend against them. The show is being produced by an Emmy Award-winning producer and is sure to set a new standard in personal-defense instruction.

I also recently completed an independent video project titled *Forever Armed* that focuses on the tactics of using improvised weapons. It is designed to dovetail with the *Martial Cane Concepts* video to provide a complete system of improvised-weapon tactics based on recognizing and understanding weapon attributes. It also dispels many of the long-held myths concerning practical improvised-weapon use and separates the James Bond bullshit from what really works. Again, information on this title can be found on my website www.martialbladeconcepts.com.

Finally, I have been very busy developing new knife designs for my full-time job with BLACKHAWK, including the successor to my now-classic Spyderco Yojimbo. The Yojimbo really popularized the concept of the Wharncliffe blade style for tactical knives. Now discontinued, they have been selling for two to three times their original retail price on eBay. My new Wharncliffe design, called the Be-Wharned, is a significant improvement on the Yojimbo and will be available from BLACKHAWK (www.blackhawk.com) around February 2009.