

# FMA Informative

Propagating the Filipino Martial Arts and the Culture of the Philippines

Informative Issue No. 124

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## American Maharlika Kuntaw Association



*Maha Guro Brian "Buzz" Smith*

**Kuntaw is a Filipino Martial Art  
Discovering Kuntaw  
Establishing American Maharlika Kuntaw Association**



**American Maharlika Kuntaw Association**

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Each issue features practitioners of martial arts and other internal arts, other features include historical, theoretical and technical articles; reflections, Filipino martial arts, healing arts, the culture of the Philippines and other related subjects.

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The FMA Informative was honored to be able to talk with Maha Guro Brian "Buzz" Smith of the American Maharlika Kuntaw Association.

Maha Guro Brian "Buzz" Smith has through this issue made a concerted effort to reflect his original path of Kuntaw to the soft dance like aspects associated with the Filipino sister arts. If you traveled to the many different Kuntaw schools in the United States, you would find differences in each. The way they teach and the way they portray the art. Mr. Smith has been an active competitor in the Michigan and Canadian Karate circuits for many years and has found that the soft catlike style of the art has some superior aspects. His large collection of awards lay testament to this fact. There are so many Korean and Japanese schools that don't touch on the weapon and flowing skills that Kuntaw has to offer. This is the uniqueness that has made this art so in demand for seminar and private training.

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**Thought From:** Maha Guro Brian "Buzz" Smith

"A good student takes in information, retains it, and spits it back out when asked. A great student takes what the instructor says, evaluates it, dissects it, and then incorporates the information into his life." I hope that my students are the latter and take what I give them and adapt the information, add to it, and become better than me.

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**From FMA Informative:**

*Maha Guro Smith as others was a part of Grandmaster Carlito Lanada's Kuntaw, but is no longer affiliated with Grandmaster Lanada's; Maharlika Kuntaw, Kuntaw ng Pilipinas, or the International Kuntaw Federation.*

*Like others who have gone on their way such as Grandmaster Cothorn (deceased) of Kuntaw Legacy, Grandmaster Bias of World Bais Tres Manos and other practitioners that have not formed a Kuntaw association, but still teach the art that they learned, have parted ways with Grandmaster Lanada's organization due to various reasons that should not be spoken of and is between the people involved.*

*Now as it is known and realized the internet often is an outlet that people use for their disgruntlements' and things are said that should be done through private communications. This is done in almost all styles, and is very unfortunate.*

*However - let it be known through research that all the practitioners that have been mentioned or continue to teach Kuntaw on their own have always given due respect to Grandmaster Lanada for his teachings, even though personally there may be a conflict. This is one reason that they continue to teach, promote and have promulgated the art of Kuntaw that they have personally learned. And do not wish to take advantage of or disgrade the art of Kuntaw or its Founder.*

**Mar Angeles  
Owner**

## Kuntaw is a Filipino Martial Art

Kuntaw is a Filipino martial art that was organized in the Philippines. Fighting skills were “borrowed” from the many cultures that arrived in the Philippines by migration, invasion, or by trade. These fighting skills were organized into a viable fighting system. This fighting system handles the three ranges of fighting largo (long), Medio (short), and Corto (close) as well as the three altitudes of fighting air, standing, and ground fighting.

These fighting skills come from many different areas of the Orient. However, the three main arts that form the nucleus of Kuntaw are from India (Kali), Indonesia / Indochina (Pentjak Silat), and China (Shaolin-SSU Kempo / Chuan Fa). From Kali, short

range destruction of the weapon... From Kempo, hard kicking and punching long range, high range attacks to the body and from Silat came the circular, flowing, snake-like movements that attacked the base or balance of an opponent up close. The three main Filipino arts in Kuntaw are Buno (Filipino wrestling), Sikaran (kicking / punching), and Bugtongan (sport stick fighting).

The Filipinos would strive to streamline the ability to teach and pass on fighting skills in the shortest time with the best results possible. Thus the formula of simple direct and effective was instituted. After all, if it took too long to learn, chances are you would be caught learning the technique.

During the occupation,



many forms of Kuntaw developed, some were mainly hands, some were mainly feet. The current style of Kuntaw being taught under the American Maharlika Kuntaw Association banner as flown by Maha Guro Brian “Buzz” Smith has its roots from several sources.

## Discovering Kuntaw

1973 Olongapo Philippines, a naval town next to the US Naval base of Subic, a young man had just finished up his last Kuntaw class at the Linda theater club. He was brought into the office of Grandmaster Carlito Lanada and was given an authority to teach and promulgate the art.



Brian “Buzz” Smith had come to the end of his last deployment aboard the USS San Jose AFS-7 and had told Grandmaster Lanada he would not be coming back to train. Grandmaster Lanada gave Buzz the charge of promoting and propagating the art of Kuntaw in the US. Buzz

had trained with Grandmaster Lanada’s group since the spring of 1971 at various locations and with various instructors seeking out the life blood of the Filipino martial arts. Some of his instructors were

Rey Basco for sparring/ kicking, Benji Ortiz for Sikaran / kicking and techniques, Antonio Villareal for the essence of Kuntaw and theory, and with Jamie Lanada, Rene Valasco, Philippe De Guzman, and many other visiting instructors. Each of these instructors had their own versions of fighting and of teaching. Some spoke little English, but most were unable to use English, they just taught by example.

Buzz began his martial arts training in 1968 when he stumbled onto a Green Beret, home on leave from the Viet Nam conflict, training on a beach near his home. Buzz became an active training partner, playing the aggressor and learning defensive tactics while being thrown to the sandy beach. In

1969 Buzz enlisted in the Navy and was stationed at the Great Lakes naval Training Center near Chicago. On base, he discovered, was a Tae Kwon Do class. All of his free



time was spent learning Tae Kwon Do. By the time he finished his Naval Training School, Buzz had attained the rank of Green Belt. His next duty station was a ship bound for the South China Sea (Viet Nam). His overseas homeport was Subic Bay, Philippines, where he continued his studies by joining the base Kyokushin Kai Karate Club and the Combat Judo Club. Within a year he had attained the rank of Green Belt in Karate and a Brown



*Kuntaw competition team in Manila for the Palarong Pilipino event*



*Grandmaster Lanada with Kuntaw group. Note Brian Smith with his main instructor in Kuntaw Antonio Cea Villareal*

Belt in Judo.

During one of his liberty jaunts to the city of Olongapo, visiting one of the many dives that attract sailors, Buzz was exposed to one of the Filipino martial arts in action. A waiter was being threatened by a large sailor for stealing money from a table. Buzz heard the sailor’s friend tell the waiter to take the money as payment for their order of beer. But before Buzz could come to the waiter’s aid the small Filipino boy had the sailor on the floor with very little effort. Without a fight the sailor had been beaten. When quizzed on

what style of art had been used, the waiter said it was “Filipino”, and that he was just a beginning student in the art. Buzz asked where to find the school and was told that it was for Filipino’s only. Intrigued, and not to lose this chance, Buzz continued to pester the Filipino to teach him or to take him to the school. Realizing that Buzz was not the typical arrogant American and was truly interested, the Filipino agreed. Buzz was taken to the Kuntaw Gym and introduced to the instructor, Carlito A. Lanada. After many questions, Buzz was allowed to train at this school, the training hall or Bothoan at 109 Fendler Street in Olongapo.

For the next three years Mr. Smith would make this his home whenever he was not out on the line replenishing US ships in his capacity as a Navy sailor. He was one of three Non-Filipino’s allowed to do so. Within three years Buzz had earned the rank of Black Belt, one of the first non-Filipinos to be awarded a Black Belt in the art. He had been exposed to many new ideas and concepts that were in direct contrast to his Tae Kwon do and Karate back ground.

Always looking for the essence he was found after class with many of the students playing sipa sipa (kacky sack) or takraw (sort of volley ball using your feet).

Buzz came to this club as a Tae Kwon Do student looking for

the flowing art of Philippine Kung fu as it was called and joined the Philippine Kung fu Association. No mention of Kuntaw was made at the time. He figured that the many things being shown to him were indeed Philippine Kung Fu.

Shortly there, after the name Kuntaw was added as an identifier that the art was Kuntaw, a form of Philippine Kung Fu. In 1972 the club in the Philippines was changed to the Philippine Maharlika Kuntaw Association.



H- Forms and Sayaw An forms demonstrated by the step son of Brian "Buzz" Smith.



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with the Philippine Karate Association (PKA) and then have been modified per the Grandmaster again in 1996 to what is suppose to be taught in the IKF today.

The following video is a sample of what Maha Guro Brian "Buzz" Smith learned for the H- Forms and Sayaw. An forms You will notice that it is executed in the soft style of Kuntaw.

If you open your mind and eyes you will realize that they are the same forms that were taught by Grandmaster Lanada in the Maharlika Kuntaw, Kuntaw ng Pilipinas and the International Kuntaw Federation up to 1996 but where modified to hard and soft when Grandmaster Lanada turn towards affiliation

## Establishing American Maharlika Kuntaw Association (AMKA)

Brian "Buzz" Smith once getting back home in the United States and commencing to promote and promulgate the art of Kuntaw found what he had established was growing to other cities in the area; soon he was teaching the art to

several teens from his block. He expanded his teaching to the community center to allow for training during foul weather and to reach more youths. Soon the art was being offered as a community service class at the local high school.

In 1974 Mr. Smith gathered his growing student following under the American Maharlika Kuntaw Association.

The AMKA (American Maharlika Kuntaw Association) was formed to be the sister organization to the PMKA. This organization was one of the first Filipino Martial Arts Organizations in the US.

It was formed by members of the Kuntaw Martial Arts club Gaylord Michigan other small Kuntaw clubs from Grayling, Wolverine, and Vanderbilt Michigan.

The reason behind its forming was to unite the various clubs under one banner. These clubs were established by Brian "Buzz" Smith to pass on the Philippine art of Kuntaw. This non-profit organization began to sponsor tournaments to benefit Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Michigan.

Brian sent newspaper clippings, pictures of competitions, class workouts, and demonstrations that the club sponsored throughout the area promoting Kuntaw as a sport and effective martial art. There was no reply back from the PMKA. Knowing that the Philippines was under Martial law and

that he had to get in contact with his home organization he wrote many letters to the club and to the Philippine Karate Association to reconnect. The AMKA was growing rapidly because there were no other martial arts clubs in the local area. Soon they were a force to be reckoned with on the Michigan Karate Circuit., usually taking top positions in the different divisions.

The first students to participate in the art in Brian's back yard were Rick Bartlett, Allan Bartlett, Jack Gatewood, Steve Elmhirst, Dave Lampra, and Mike Carey.

Brian went on to become





held object such as a knife, stick, or sword. Movements in Kuntaw were developed from the use of these weapons and from the defense of these weapons.

Though Kuntaw is basically evasive, it is a dramatic evasiveness. The movements used are light and fast to avoid an attack, but they are designed to use this action to counter back to the opponent. These movements do not stop an attack or oppose the force delivered; instead they re-direct the force back to the source by gaining control of the force. In effect, using the opponent's force against them without wasting much of your own energy or using any additional force. These movements may direct attacking force to a safe area or position that allows the practitioner to get in and take the opponent's base or balance. This gives the Kuntawista the ability to lock, throw, or sweep the opponent to the ground.

the head instructor of Filipino martial arts at Northwestern Michigan College, becoming the first Filipino martial art being taught for credit ever at any College in the United States.

Kuntaw was primarily developed as a defensive art, but it can be used as an offensive art given the right circumstances. Weapons are a major part of Kuntaw techniques, these weapons may be a fist, elbow, knee, foot, or hand

Martial arts are no different than other arts. What makes them special is the medium that they use. A sculptor uses stone, a painter uses oils and acrylics, a dancer uses music and movement, a martial artist uses his mind and body as a weapon. No art can claim superiority over another. Which is better a painting or a statue? A song or a poem? It all depends on the mood or story the artist wants to present. Which is

better Tai Chi or Karate? It depends on the amount of effort you wish to expend and the results you expect...

Doing battle over the ages has changed and the strategies have changed. Some martial arts are still taught as they were in the 19th century. Desert Storm could not have been fought using civil war techniques, strategies, and weapons. You have to adjust, adapt, and be realistic. Kuntaw has its roots in change and adaptation. The concepts remain - the techniques and weapons are endless. Kuntaw too has changed, as each person touches the art they add to it those things that make it right for them. Many techniques come and go from instructor to instructor. Many different instructors taught at the Olongapo club or were affiliated to the Club, some were Karateka, some were from Kuntaw, Sikaran, Dumog and other Filipino arts. Grandmaster Lanada was trying to promote Filipino martial arts in general and he brought many schools and instructors under his banner.

Brian sought out the soft and flowing aspects that were available at the club and went out of his way to find more answers. Not that it is the same as such and such. More like - it is different than such and such. The uniqueness of the art is why he started training in the art and this is why he continues to seek out the soft / flowing aspects of the Filipino arts.



1st Place Buzz, 3rd place far right - Goju ryu , notice his uniform white top red pants- goju ryu trademark since the early 80's [two of the goju guys went on to be stuntmen for the movie 300]

**To Quote:** Grandmaster Carlito A. Lanada-*"The addition of application to the original art by each succeeding Master, so that the art can evolve, has become a tradition. I chose to expand and modernize the art and added hard techniques to the style. It lives and continues to evolve. May this continue to be the case."* Thus the art promoted by Great Grandmaster Carlito Lanada is more in tune to Shorin Ryu and Shotokan Karate that it is to Kali and Sikaran.

## Karate tourney Feb. 27 at Gaylord

GAYLORD — Upwards of 200 Karate practitioners are expected for the second Mid-Michigan Open Karate Tournament at Gaylord High School on Saturday, Feb. 27. The tournament, sponsored by Big Brothers - Big Sisters of Otsego County and the American Maharlika Kuntaw Association, will start at 12:30 p.m. at the high school gym and continue until completion. Karate clubs from throughout northern Michigan, plus other parts of the state and Canada are expected for the competition. Colored belt fighting, black belt fighting, forms competition, weapons competition, team demonstrations, and team free sparring will be among the tourney event. Tickets will be sold at the door to spectators at adult and student prices. Children under 5 will be admitted free. More information may be obtained by calling Big Brothers - Big Sisters of Otsego County, 732-7780; Smith, 732-3968; or Bartlett, 732-5083.



## Two win medals at karate meet

GAYLORD — Two karate students from Gaylord achieved honors at an open tournament held recently at Cadillac Junior High School.

The delegation was led by Brian "Buzz" Smith, head instructor at the American Maharlika Kuntaw Association School of Oriental Fighting Arts in Gaylord.

Several students compete in both forms and sparring divisions at the March 28 tournament.

Smith, who holds a second degree black belt, placed third in a field of 14 in forms for his level. Mike Seuschek, second degree green belt, was third in yellow belt forms in a field of over 20 contestants. Both earned medals.

Other students who competed but did not place: Linda Seuschek and Lanny Bartlett, yellow belt forms; Ray Bartley, yellow belt forms and sparring; and Steve Elshorst, who ran up an impressive score in his first attempt at sparring in the yellow belt class.

Smith considered the showings good, considering the fact that this was the first meet the students had attended. The meet was directed by R.C. Yu, karate master from Korea.

Karate schools from all over Michigan and Canada competed for trophies and medals.

The Gaylord school meets above Guggenberg of Gaylord on Main Street.

MAHARLIKA KUNTAW karate style is displayed in kick by Brian "Buzz" Smith, head instructor at the Gaylord school of oriental fighting arts. Smith and Mike Seuschek (l) won medals at a recent meet in Cadillac. At right is Brian Wobrock.



The NMC Kuntaw team, along with Grand Champion and team instructor, Brian Smith (front row), proudly display their trophies received in the recent Can-Am Classic tournament held in Sault Ste. Marie.

## Kuntaw team kicks out 15 trophies in Can-Am Classic tournament

BY STEVE ROWE

The NMC kuntaw club turned in a victorious performance recently at the Can-Am Classic in Sault St. Marie Canada by bringing home 15 trophies from the meet.

Individual performances ranged from two third places in the white belt competition by Pat Farley and Todd Pickett to the Grand Champion of the tournament Brian "Buzz" Smith, team instructor. Smith also turned in first place performances in black belt forms, weapons, and self-defense.

Craig Podleski finished first in green belt fighting, forms, and weapons, and

Gaylene Cole finished first in Women's green belt forms, second in intermediate fighting, and third in under-black belt self-defense.

Two of the newer members of the team, Todd Donhaiser and Jeff Jacobs, earned first place in men's yellow belt fighting and white belt forms, respectively.

The tournament which was not entirely devoted to kuntaw, included several forms of karate, including tai kwon do.

The NMC team had a few competitors in this class as well.

Jason Correll placed third

in black belt weapons, and forms. Bob Peck finished first in black belt ginsao fighting. Andy Kamowski placed second in Senior black belt fighting, and Mark Goleky earned a first place in brown belt fighting.

"The fact that we are consistently pulling in victories will help our status on campus, but the main setback is that no one knows of our art" said Smith.

Kuntaw as an art was brought to America by Smith from the Philippines in 1974. As of today there are only four schools in the entire nation that teach kuntaw.

### AMKA Charters

- Northern Martial Arts Academy 6403 cedar Run Rd. Traverse City
- Northwestern Michigan College Filipino Martial Arts Club 1701 E. Front St. Traverse City
- Gaylord Kuntaw Club
- Aquinas University Kamao Kuntaw Club
- Poro Kuntaw Club
- Malipot Kuntaw Club
- Tabaco Kuntaw Club
- Secs Kuntaw Club Pampanga
- Angeles Kuntaw Club



American Maharlika Kuntaw Association  
[www.kuntaw.org](http://www.kuntaw.org)  
 Email: [kuntawguro@gmail.com](mailto:kuntawguro@gmail.com)



Maha Guro Brian "Buzz" Smith

### ***School Submission***

The schools listed teach Filipino martial arts, either as the main curriculum or an added curriculum.

If you have a school that teaches Filipino martial arts, or you are an instructor that teaches, but does not have a school, list the school or style so individuals who wish to experience, learn and gain knowledge have the opportunity.

Be Professional; keep your contact information current. - [Click Here](#)



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Submit your event whether - Seminar, Workshop, Training Camp, tournament, or Gathering - [Click Here](#)



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Finished manuscripts should be accompanied by color or black and white photographs. Though we take care of materials, we can not be responsible for manuscripts/photographs and accept no liability for same. Every photograph or graphic must be accompanied by a caption Carefully key photos to caption information with a letter or number.

We reserve the right to use any photo(s) as cover material or additional compensation. We also reserve the right to edit material and to crop photographs.

We reserve the right to use articles or parts of articles that are given and approved from time to time as needed to promote the Filipino martial arts and the Culture of the Philippines.

Physical manuscripts should be typed in black, double spaced, and set to 1-1/2 margins (right and left).

Emailed manuscripts should be typed in Ariel or Times Roman, on programs such as Notepad, Wordpad, Microsoft Word, Word Perfect and can be sent as an attachment. Photo(s) can be sent as a .jpg, .gif, .bmp, or .tiff - to submit material for either the FMA Informative Newspaper or an Issue [Click Here](#)

We welcome your article, ideas and suggestions, and look forward to working with you in the future.