

Beneath the karate symbol, Trias demonstrates a lightning-fast elbow blow to stop an assailant in his tracks

Karate--"Gentle" Art of Self-Defense

By Henry F. Unger

INSIDE A SMALL building in Phoenix, Ariz., students are taught to use one of the most potent of all weapons—the human hand.

Passers-by invariably are startled to hear loud shouts and pounding on walls. If they walked inside they would see enthusiastic students practicing the *kiai*, or yell, which is part of the science of karate (perhaps the most deadly of all forms of self-defense). This is the Arizona Institute of Karate Judo, operated by Bob Trias. It is the only karate school in the nation which is officially connected with the famed Japan Karate Association in Tokyo.

Trias, a lieutenant in the Arizona State Highway Patrol, has taught this unique art of self-defense to such diverse citizens as

a Supreme Court Justice, narcotics agents, a Treasury man, police officers, highway patrolmen, bankers, draftsmen and teachers.

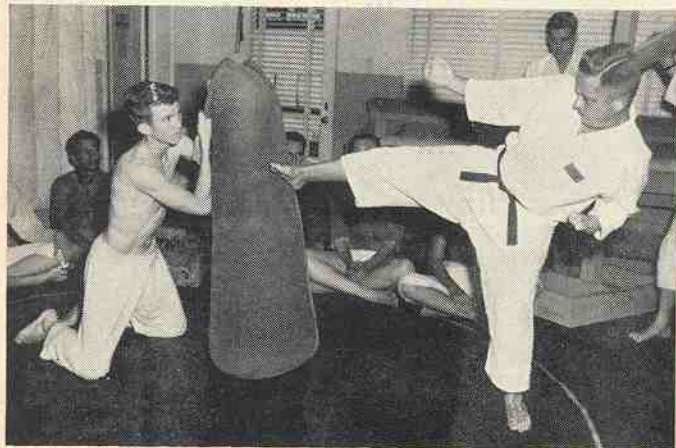
In his *dojo*, or exercise hall, Trias and his instructors put their students through an intensive two-month course (15 instruction periods) that prepares them for hand-to-hand combat with any aggressor.

Before Trias imparts any knowledge to a new batch of students, he emphasizes the lethal nature of karate.

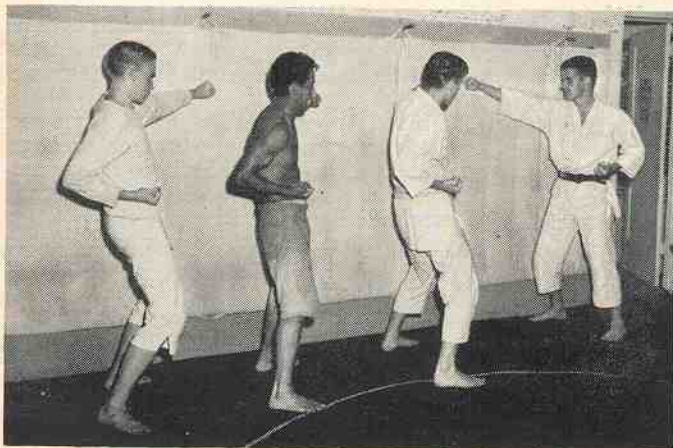
"I insist," he says, "that all karate students avoid fights. They should walk away, using any means available to sidestep a fight. Karate must be used only as a final self-defense measure. As such, it is a potent weapon indeed."



Two karate experts tangle. One tries a fast leg thrust which the other parries with a hand chop. Note position of hands, always ready for a blow



Feet are strengthened and hardened by practice blows against a 400-pound bag. Below, recruits spend long periods smashing hands against canvas, yelling at each blow. Yell is considered essential to karate blows



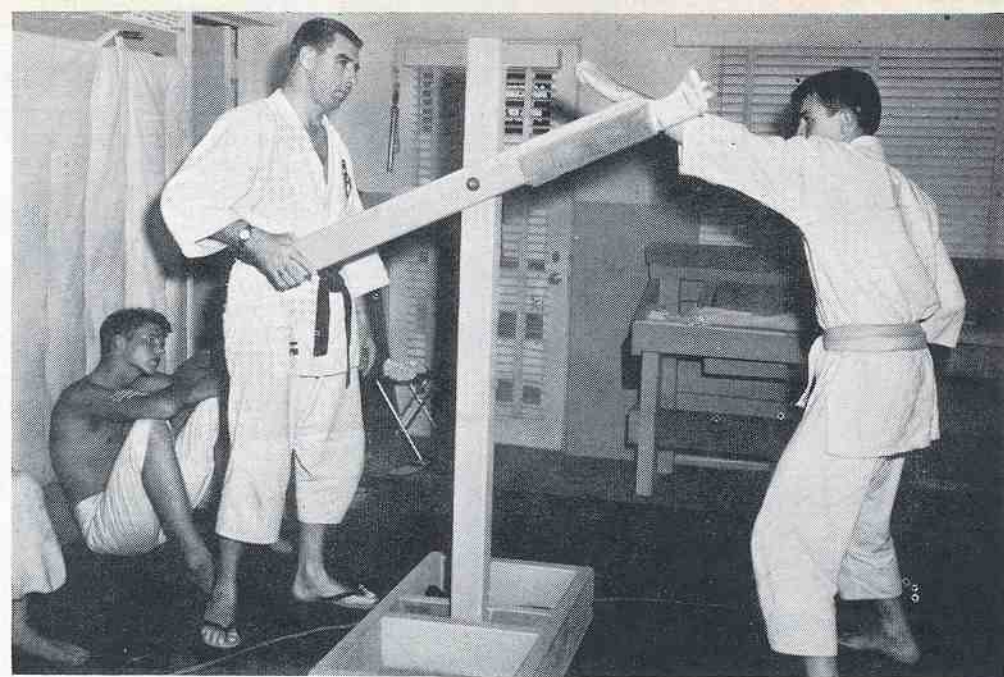
The science of karate, according to Trias, is about 5000 years old. It was originated by the great Prince Daruma, who, aware of the physical weakness of his tribesmen, sought a new means of developing their bodies. He introduced karate with its distinctive use of hands and feet to conquer an opponent. The system later was perfected in Okinawa. During the invasion of that island by the Japanese, in 1652, the Okinawans used their karate with such lethal efficiency that the Japanese adopted it, referring to it as the "hand sword." Today, karate has grown to mean "empty hand," referring to the use of only hands and feet as weapons.

To an outsider, karate combines some strange elements. No student can become proficient, says Trias, unless he masters the art of breathing from deep in his lower stomach. The combination of the *kiai*, or releasing of air from the lungs, with the lashing out of an arm or leg makes a perfect rhythm with the heart-beat and produces maximum efficiency. The loud shout is considered very important to karate.

Before the student can acquire top karate skill, Trias feels, he must have three assets: speed, know-how and endurance. These elements, together with surprise, can slow down, disable or fell an aggressor every time.

Deep Breathing

Beginners at the school are first taught the art of deep breathing. This is followed by basic instruction in blocking, chopping and kicking. The remaining instruction consists of variations on this quartet of basic skills.



Wooden blocking arm is used to teach a student how to ward off assailant's blows with speed and accuracy

For 15 minutes at each practice session, students toughen their hands by thrusting them into boxes of rice. After four sessions they switch to boxes of beans. As their hands become tougher, students advance to boxes of sand, then gravel.

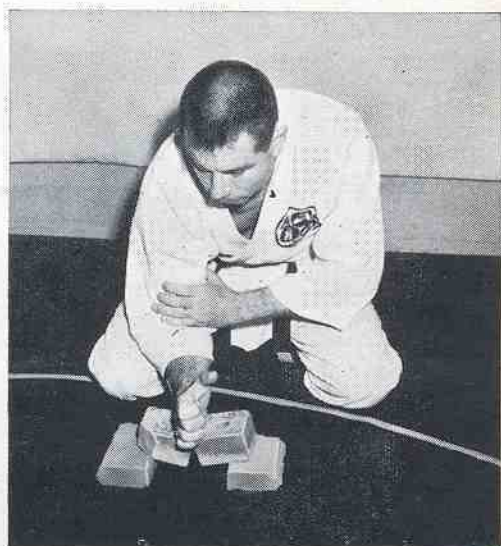
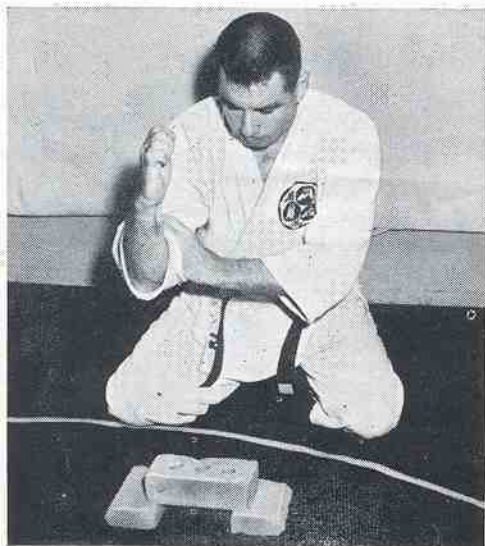
During this period the students also practice the chop by striking at canvas-covered pockets of rice, beans, sand and

gravel. Then, in the comparatively small exercise hall with its oriental karate symbols on the wall, students further toughen their hands and feet by chopping at a 400-pound bag, shouting loudly at each blow.

Students learn the vulnerable parts of the body—the top and front of the skull, the larynx, solar plexus, groin, spinal

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Trias is one of few Americans who can break a full-size building brick with one stroke of his hardened hand



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column, kidneys, nasal bone, tail bone. A well-directed karate blow to any of these points will stop an opponent in his tracks.

A good karate student, says Trias, must be prepared to lash out in any direction with hands or feet. He must strike swiftly and then back away.

In the karate chop, there's a minimum of motion. When the arm or leg lashes out, the motion is direct and definite. The fingers, which are kept folded, might be compared to brass knuckles. When the feet are used, the kick is made with the ball of the foot.

Trias screens applicants thoroughly to sift out undesirable characters. "We don't want irresponsible persons walking the streets armed with a deadly weapon of defense which could be turned into offense."

Belts Awarded for Skills

Students progress in karate skills in a series of belts—the white belt upon entering, the green belt after facing one opponent at the Institute, the purple belt with two degrees for facing two opponents, brown for facing five opponents and black for more than five.

Trias learned karate while serving with the Navy in the Orient. He holds the third-degree black belt, one of only three persons in the United States with this degree.

Only the karate expert can split a building brick with his hand. Trias is one of the few men able to do this to a brick two inches thick. Concentration and proper breathing are part of the technique. According to Trias, a Japanese expert holds the world's record by breaking two bricks with one stroke.

To the trained karate man, a bully causes little worry. He has complete confidence in himself, and uses his karate skills only when threatened with loss of life or limb.

Trias tells the story of what happened to one karate man after he joined the Army. Another soldier, on several occasions, insisted on a fight, but the karate expert simply turned his back. A showdown was inevitable, however. When the time came, the karate expert, to the amazement of his opponent, removed his shoes. A moment later he let go a wild *kiai* yell, leaped at his opponent and unleashed a minimum blow to the pit of the stomach.

In a split second there was a vast change in the man, in both his posture and his attitude.

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