

WEAPONS INSTRUCTOR of the YEAR

by Jason William McNeil

PHOTO BY RICK HUSTEAD

ANTHONY DE LONGIS

For the past 20 years, Anthony De Longis has been the best-kept secret in the martial arts. It's not because of shyness, for he makes his living in front of the camera; it's just that he's never really moved in *gi*-wearing circles. However, among the martial arts elite, De Longis has long been a name spoken with respect, and the best of the best often make a point of training with him to get better.

Even among martial arts masters—a group that includes more than its fair share of rugged individualists—De Longis manages to defy the norm. He doesn't own a chain of schools. He doesn't even have his own *dojo*, preferring to train and teach outdoors at his Southern California ranch. To the public, he's best-known as the actor with the villainous smile that's menaced everyone from Othello to Jet Li.

To top-tier martial artists, however, the other side of Anthony De Longis is far more exciting than any movie character. A constantly training, constantly evolving practitioner of the warrior arts, he spends most of his free time in his passionate pursuit of all things martial. The best part is, if you have the stamina to keep up, he's willing to bring you along for the ride.

Although he's an enthusiastic student of a variety of styles, De Longis is primarily known—and sought out—for his skill with the sword and whip. Freely flowing between the moves of combative sword fencing and various Philippine fighting styles, he presses his students to seek out what he calls “the ribbons of truth that flow through and connect the different martial arts.”

“When we proceed from combative truth, we find that the arts are much more alike than different,” he explains. “Different cultures have different ways of expressing that truth, but the truth is the truth no matter what language it's spoken in.”

As a swordsman, De Longis ranks among the best. With a bullwhip, it's safe to say he's without equal. Run down the very short list of modern whip masters, and you'll find that most of them have learned from him. When Harrison Ford agreed to bring Indiana Jones back to the silver screen, his first stop may have been at the haberdasher's, but his second was with De Longis for six weeks of intensive bullwhip training.

Counting students as disparate as Cold Steel CEO Lynn Thompson and actress Michelle Pfeiffer (whose turn as Catwoman in *Batman Returns* debuted the unique De Longis bullwhip style), he's taught fighters and martial artists as well as movie stars and stuntmen. In recent years, he's appeared at training camps like Radford, Virginia's Karate College, in instructional videos and in the pages of this magazine, but the majority of his students still learn from him one-on-one, sometimes traveling thousands of miles to reach his mountaintop home. To De Longis, that personal interaction is the heart of the teacher-student relationship.

“I was blessed with two great teachers: Ralph Faulkner, my fencing master, and Dan Inosanto,” he says. “Both [were] extraordinarily generous instructors. I know what a huge effect great teachers have had on my life, sharing their skills and experiences and reminding me that most of my limitations are the ones I impose on myself, so it is by their example that I pride myself on my determination to always be a better teacher.”

Black Belt is proud to make Anthony De Longis its 2008 Weapons Instructor of the Year. ✘

About the author:

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