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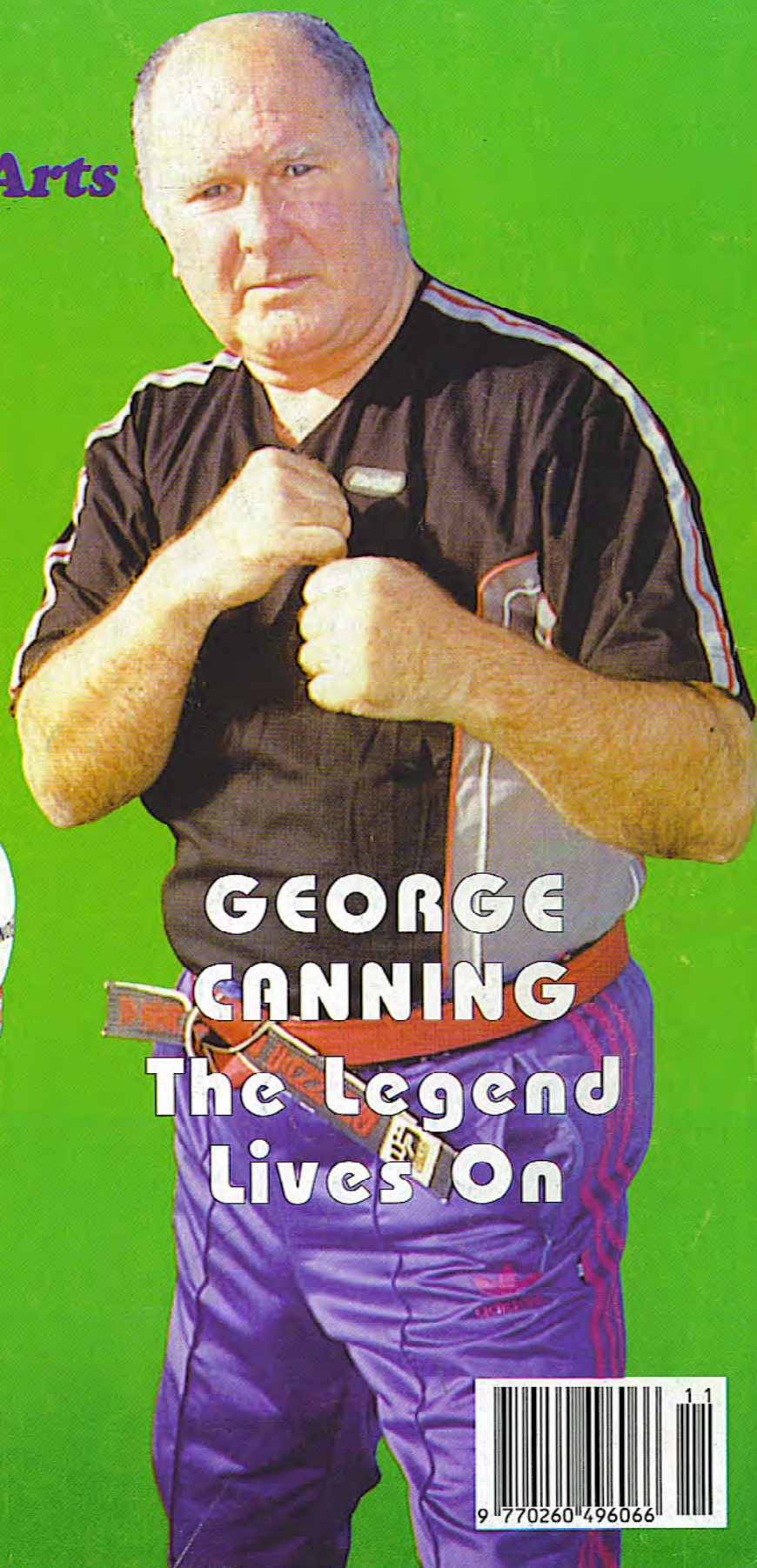
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**GEORGE
CANNING**
The Legend
Lives On



GEORGE CANNING

The Legend Lives on

Story & Pictures
Peter Lewis
PART ONE



Well over half a century ago, Sir Winston Churchill was asked to make a comment upon what Russia was going to do next, he commented that Russia was 'a riddle, wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma'. That one statement could probably epitomise the Dublin based martial arts icon, Professor George Canning of Mugendo International.

Professor Canning has run the full gamut within his experience of martial arts. Just turned sixty years old, this man can drop into a full box splits at the blink of an eye. A feat few martial artists a third of his age could achieve. In his time he has been a traditional Karate instructor, and innovative along with others in crossing the bridge from traditionalism to eclecticism with the advent of Mugendo. A tournament promoter, full contact and kick boxing impresario, bodyguard, unarmed combat instructor, healer, in fact rather than carry on with this list, suffice to say, if it's out there in martial arts land, he's seen it, done it and not only got the t-shirt but probably had it printed as well. More than a decade ago, he had a professorship conferred upon him by a Croatian University and if that wasn't enough, today he is still teaching and training champions. On the healing side, he still holds clinics in Ireland twice a week and hosts three different radio shows about the art of healing.

More than a decade ago, George Canning, at the pinnacle of his success within the martial arts, suddenly turned his back on it all, moved into the country and set up a healing clinic based upon the theory of 'Bio-Energy' which he had learned whilst out in Yugoslavia. His success in treating people with illness caused such a stir, he was featured in almost every Southern Irish newspaper and magazine for the incredible results he was achieving. We at **Fighters Magazine** ran a series of articles relating to George Canning's prowess as a healer. When asked what made him turn to healing, and he replied, "To me the healing is just a natural extension of the study of martial arts, it takes the learning and knowledge of this art to another level, and another degree. In ancient times, in the East, many martial arts masters were also healers and bone setters. Why should we be any different in the West?"

Now once again Professor Canning is back at the helm of his martial arts ship. Only this time instead of running a club and organisation, he teaches strictly at



George with security and bodyguard personnel.

Left to right: Rob Smith, Prof Steve Hunt and Trevor Nell.

experienced that back in the UK many years ago teaching children because in one particular class I had a young boy, called Johnny who was terrible, he just couldn't do anything. I stopped the whole class and told everybody to sit down. I asked Johnny to stand up and show them how it's done, he looked at me in amazement thinking he's the worst one. I said 'right Johnny you're the only one who can do it properly so show them all' To my amazement he showed them how to do it because I'd told him that he was the only one who could do it and that's the art of George Canning".

"He tells people how good they are and they believe him. That is the power he has, making people feel good about themselves and confident because we are all programmed remember, we're programmed from our parents and our

leave the needles in and leave the patient and move on to another patient, but I work with them all the time for the full half hour, their feet, their hands, their head, their body and do a form of bio-energy because it's all the same, I'm actually a member of the National Federation of Spiritual Healers and Bio-energy. They're basically all the same and I believe that the root source of energy comes from our thoughts, because thought is energy, the body is just bundles of energy held together by our consciousness.

"Other forms of healing include radionics with the black box. The actual guy has said to me who's written books on radionics, that when he set the machine up which had nothing in it as far as he was concerned, he would send a radionic treatment to someone in say, Australia. After the treatment of half an hour where he would put a homeopathic preparation in one side of the box and a sample of blood in the other from the patient, he would feel tired after the treatment this works with my basic belief that we are all one in spirit. When you think a thought about a particular person, be it positive or negative, you actually radiate that and that is where true healing comes from. I believe that's why George is so successful because he does have this power of placing thoughts and feelings into one's subconscious and that's where it goes to the student, because he can create a better person just by his way of teaching, really by suggestion".

Peter Lewis, "That's the basis of Jungian psychology isn't it?"

Dave Hunt, "Well yes, that's it. It's basically telling someone how good they are even if they're not. I



Senior instructors at George's club.



Students are awarded their certificates by Professor Canning.

schools and we're usually given negative suggestions, don't do this and don't do that and it's all negative. You hear it all the time. Children grow up in this big world and they're scared to do anything, they're scared to start a profession, they're scared of breaking things, they're scared of mending things. If you say to someone fix that light, they'll say I don't know how to do that, I'm not an electrician, but it's like our father said to us, the man who did that had two arms, two legs and two eyes and if he could do it, you try it".

At this point in the interview, brother Steve Hunt interjected.

Steve Hunt, "It's like, we stop congratulating kids after a certain number of years of age, you know we don't say to adults, well done, you've done a good job, followed by a cuddle or a hug".

George Canning, "Yes that's right Steve, it's true, it's like I said before, I don't coach, I don't correct and I don't criticise. I just teach".

Dave Hunt, "When I first met George I was training hard in traditional Karate. You would be stretching, have people jumping on you and you'd be pulling muscles. You would leave after a training session aching all over and in physical pain. I've done yoga, I'm trained in yoga now, but when I used to come out of the yoga class the feeling was much different. I felt relaxed and experienced a warm glow. When I met George years ago and I knew of George's ability in the martial arts, he wasn't fantastic at kicking or holding his leg up. But then later I met him in the Canary Islands and he could hold

his leg up like that of a gymnast. 'Wow what's happened, I thought'. Has he had an operation and had a couple of tendons cut?

"He then showed me techniques and instilled confidence in me and an ability into me. I then started to model myself on him and that's where I developed the flexibility to move around. And that's what George does. He doesn't actually teach; people look at him, and want to be an image of him. They want to be like him, they want to be supple and flexible. This is George's magic, they meet him, they see him, they train with him and they just get better! They improve, their techniques are more

polished. Their movements are more fluid. This is what George does".

Dave Hunt continues, "So the method he's got here then should be branded as unique in the literal translation of the word unique – only one of it's kind, because there's only George that could do it. You couldn't teach a student to do it because he'd need to have the same focus, the same energy levels, the same command of inspiring confidence"

Steve Hunt, "That's why I don't think we'd want George back training with two or three thousand students because you couldn't put that ability in. It only works on a one to one level".

Peter Lewis, "Thank you Steve and Dave Hunt for your valuable input into these two articles and for fostering an understanding of what makes George Canning tick, both as a martial artist and an instructor.

"Well George, as I said much earlier in this interview, you have almost come full circle. Any final comments upon what is next on your horizon?"

George Canning, "Put simply Peter, I have absolutely no idea. I am enjoying very much being back in the martial arts whilst at the same time continuing on with the healing. So for now, I don't think anyone knows what is around the corner. Suffice to say that as long as I am enjoying it, I will continue to do it. My life is still an open book, there you have it".

Peter Lewis, "Thank you very much George".



Centre: Prof Steve Hunt with two successful students of UK Protection Services, the UK branch of George Cannings Security Group. Left to right: Rob Smith, Trevor Nell.

a private level only. Nothing new about this I hear you cry. There is, when it's George Canning who's doing it. His method of instruction and teaching defies all the odds at producing results, but if George Canning is behind it, it will obviously spit in the eye of convention – big style. But contrary to all the beliefs, he is producing not just top rate fighters, but also ordinary people who are very capable of defending themselves on the street who not twelve months earlier would shy away from physical confrontation. How so? Once again, I found myself heading towards the Emerald Isle to discover what my friend, George Canning, the riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma was doing that was attracting so much attention in the martial arts world.

Rather than now launch into a story of about how I perceive what Professor Canning is doing I will let George make comments about the methods he is using. We all met at the hall where he teaches his private lessons in Dublin one wet Saturday morning. I say we, because apart from George and one young man who had just successfully passed his Black belt first Dan, also present were the Hunt brothers, Steven, David and Ronnie. Professor Steve Hunt was over from England along with brother Ronnie to visit George and also his third brother David who lives in Limerick where he runs a clinic.

What now follows is a condensed version of the lengthy interview I conducted with Professor Canning with help from the Hunt brothers.

Peter – “Last time we met George was more than a decade ago when you followed the path to healing. So now I am here to ascertain what moved you almost full circle if you like, back into the martial arts.

George – “I suppose the best way to put it Peter is, what can a sixty three year old do, that he couldn't do when he was younger? So I started in the martial arts first and then took what's called a sabbatical and moved into the healing and enjoyed it very much. I can only say now, that it is the best thing I did in my life. Although I have not given it up, I am just not doing as much as I once did. But now I'm back training again – I've returned so to speak”.

Peter – “But you did it for twelve years, the healing that is. What brought you back? What was the attraction? I know the last time we met and we talked about this route, this path you were going down on the healing you were quite disillusioned with training,

BODYGUARD TECHNIQUE





with teaching and you preferred this avenue. What's brought you back?"

George – "I think what's brought me back is that I was able to get rid of everybody from my organisation, I'd no hangers on. I'd worked on my own and I found by working on my own I learned more. So when I got back into the martial arts I started teaching private lessons with just one student. I created a system from all my years of understanding and interpreting what the martial arts are all about".

Peter – "Can I just interrupt. People have read in the past in articles that you're using this system and that system, like I said earlier you've been away for so long and now yet another system. So how does this differ from the previous ones?"

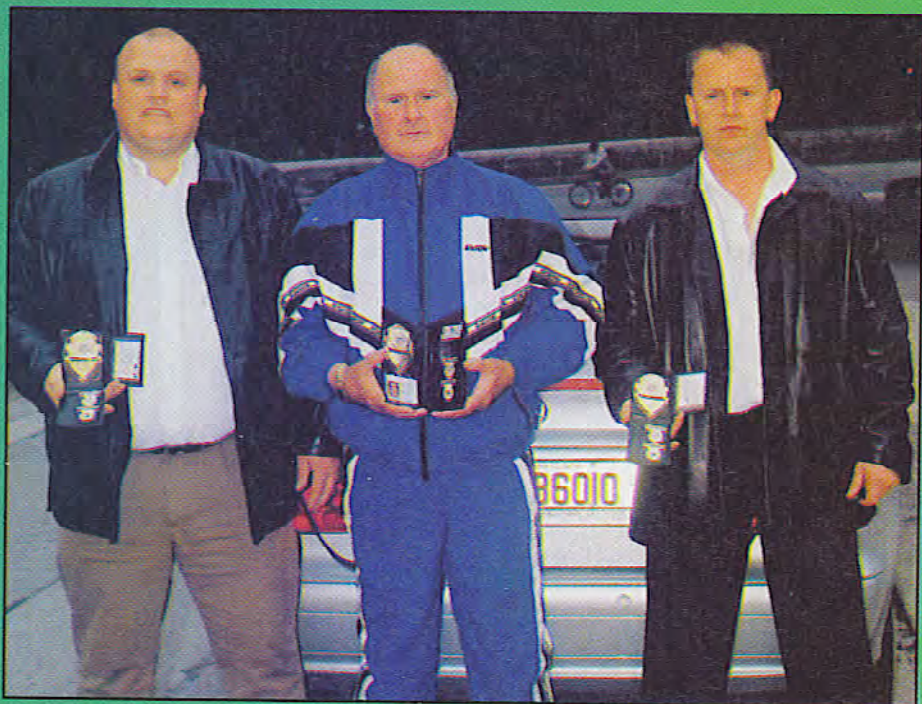
George – "The way it differs, it's still Mugendo because Mugendo means unlimited way which means you can open your mind to more things in your life not just stick to one area. So by opening up this new system, I opened up Mugendo again – I'm doing pure kickboxing, no katas, no forms nothing that detracts from the pure art of fighting. The old methods of where somebody faces somebody for ten minutes and practices something that doesn't work, I feel are gone. So I created a method that went straight into something that works".

Peter – "What did it evolve from though? Because in a similar way you'd done that with Mugendo already because Mugendo was unlimited to begin with. You were changing the face of training from the traditional roots way, way back two decades ago".

George – "I took away all the unnecessary evils of it and brought in something good, namely the person. Teach the person their way, not my way, like with any instructor that teaches you from the beginner view point, you always have to do it his way, so I teach the person their way. I don't correct, I don't coach and I don't criticise".

Peter – "Again let me interject then, if you don't criticise and you don't correct, an outright beginner walks through the door who's got no idea about the martial arts so they just play around doing what they want to do and you don't correct. So don't you focus upon such things as bad habits and consequently let them grow into bigger bad habits. Surely that must happen?"

George – "That's right, you're right. I have four systems that I show them. I explain those four systems and the



Left: Aidan Doyle; centre: George Canning; right: Michael Reagan.

method in which to use them. Beginning with your strongest position, then your next strongest position, then the next strongest position and the fourth position, I tell them it takes four years to learn that. Over the four years I show them many various aspects of combining strong positions and weak positions, and making them work for you and against the opponent or attacker. After the four years they are a competent fighter both in the street and in the ring".

Peter – "So, I'm not getting this, because you're saying you allow them to come in, you don't correct, so for instance, you show them a position, if they go into the wrong stance, what happens then?"

George – "Well when I explain a position, I show them the position, in other words I explain this is how you stand and I don't correct, criticise whatever. All the time I am aiming for their own natural body response to interpret what I am getting at. This way, they create for themselves a natural body movement in both defence and attack mode that is right for them. So rather than copy me they develop their own methods under my direction that has a right feeling for them. How many times have you been show a move or a technique by an instructor that looked good, but to you felt very awkward to execute. It's almost as if psychologically your mind and your own body mechanics were rejecting it. My method gets the message across without the awkwardness".

Peter – "What you're actually saying and even advocating is that they're not technically competent because they've been allowed to run their own thing or whatever and then you give them a Black belt for it".

George – "That's right. As you've seen today. You've seen a Black belt grading here today. That guy didn't know what he was trying to do, hadn't a clue. That was due to me issuing direct commands to do this, and to do that. You see, his reaction was not a natural response. He was basically obeying technique orders. Now if I replace the orders with say, a direct confrontational attack, his response would have been so different. You would see the clumsiness of some of his techniques suddenly switch to short, sharp, direct action. That would have been his natural reflex

action to cope with the situation".

Peter – "George, it's almost like a Zen riddle".

George – (Laughs)

Peter – "I mean I've got to say it doesn't make sense".

George – "I know it doesn't make sense and I'm glad, that means no one can copy the way I teach. Because the one thing I found out when I did Karate back in the seventies is that traditional Karate produces more than its fair share of clones. Being a clone just tells me how good your instructor was, not how good you are. I did Wado ryu. We all did the same thing, nobody was an individual".

George – "You have seen my students today, not one of them has a tooth loose, not one of them has a black eye. You have seen nothing but warriors here today, fine fit people, nice gentle people, no posers, no unnecessary evils attached to them. Pure martial arts and every one of them an individual in their own right".

Peter – "So where does the system come from then?"

George – "The system comes from the student themselves. I'm just the teacher, no not a teacher, more of a conduit. I focus and channel their ideas and their own capabilities and redirect it back at them so it comes out as a fighting format".

George – "Well I might suggest to you if you had spoken today to the guy who did his black belt he would have told you, what he did today, he wasn't capable of doing a year ago".

George – "In the street he can protect himself. He's already had altercations in the street and whereas a year ago before he came to me he wouldn't have been able to protect himself at least now





Left to right: George Canning — David Canning and the Hunt brothers — Professor Steve Hunt, Ronnie Hunt, and David Hunt.

he has something to work on".

George — "Now you can see why spending years with me makes the difference. When I did Karate they kept me at one kick until I got it right and I never got it right. The one thing I would say about Karate is that it's the best system in the world for fitness, but it's not the best system in the world for fighting. Fitness yes, you're going up and down, you're punching, whatever the outcome of it is, it's very good for fitness because you're reproducing the same thing all the time. But my people don't waste an hour because as you've been told, I change it every time they come in, I don't do the same thing twice.

Peter — "The people that you take on as private students, have they had any previous experience of martial arts?"

George — "No, very few of them. Most have never done it before".

Peter — "So where does the technique come from? I mean what I'm struggling with here is, they walk through these portals to learn kickboxing as you advertise it or word of mouth or however it gets to them".

George — "It's basically kickboxing training, but my interpretation of it. My methods, along with every single aspect of martial arts theory I have absorbed over the past forty or more years".

George — "I put them on the bag with boxing gloves and watch them and I study them and when I see what they're capable of doing then I show them the part of the system which I believe they can use. I only show them, I don't tell them what to do, they may make

mistakes with it. I tell them that's their problem, they expect to be corrected, but I don't correct them. When I did Karate, I spent forty minutes on a course with my hands like that (gesticulates hand movement) and a Japanese man came over to me and did that (gesticulates hand movement of less than an eighth of an inch) what was that all about?"

Peter - (laughs)

George — "I'm not going round taking money off people and keeping them there forty minutes like I did, for what? I learned nothing. But thankfully those days are long gone. We cannot be coned that easy in this day and age".

Peter — "Whatever it is, the hidden ingredient or subliminal message even, it works or seems to work".

Peter — "Okay, moving quickly across, we'll leave readers with that enigma to work out, the body guarding aspect, how did that come about?"

George — "That comes from my colleague, Professor Steven Hunt from Esher in Surrey. His company is called UK Protection Services. Mine is called Mugendo Security Organisation. I still retain the word Mugendo".

Peter — "Right so let's elucidate more on the bodyguard stuff and Steve Hunt's connection".

George — "I train bodyguards for three to four years and then they graduate from me into whatever element that they feel necessary with regard to their work. I don't get them jobs. Some of them that you've met have high profile jobs which they won't naturally talk about. One thing about

bodyguards is they keep very much to themselves and they're very well disciplined. They're pure martial artists".

Peter — "This is of course where Michael Reagan and Aidan Doyle come in whom I believe are two of your top people?"

George — "Yes, Michael and Aidan are two of my top boys in this field. Very professional, smart, and really know what they are doing".

Peter — "So what is the connection with Steve Hunt?"

George — "Steve and I came up with the idea".

At this point in the interview, Professor Steven Hunt joins in the conversation.

Steve — "If I can just say at this point before we talk about the bodyguarding, I think with the martial arts I'm probably George's first student in England. He is a unique person and he has got charisma, and power. I'm not sure if any other instructor could produce the students that he does if it wasn't him".

Peter — "I'd endorse that".

Steve — "So when George says, I don't discipline them, I don't lecture them, I don't do certain things (referring to his students), this is probably true in his type of training.



George with one of his lady students Michelle Brohan who foiled a robbery using her martial art skills.



Left to right: George Canning, Gerry Kidd, David Canning (George's son).



George with martial arts personality Terry Kinsella.



Left to right: Aidan Doyle, George Canning, Michael Reagan.

He's able to produce somebody to get the best out of them and that's just what seems to happen. What I found was that my big thing was prevention of injuries because I'm a therapist. Many years ago I think we did an article and one of the criticisms was that martial arts was injuring people which they were. Simply because of the type of training".

Steve – "George has always been ahead of the time as far as I'm concerned with the type of training he does. And when something new comes on the scene, even to someone like yourself it might seem like, 'Jesus what's this all about'? It's so different, it's so unique that you can't get around it. But if you look at the students after a very short time, they're very good kick boxers. You wonder how they've got to the standard they've got to by the way he teaches. It's unique".

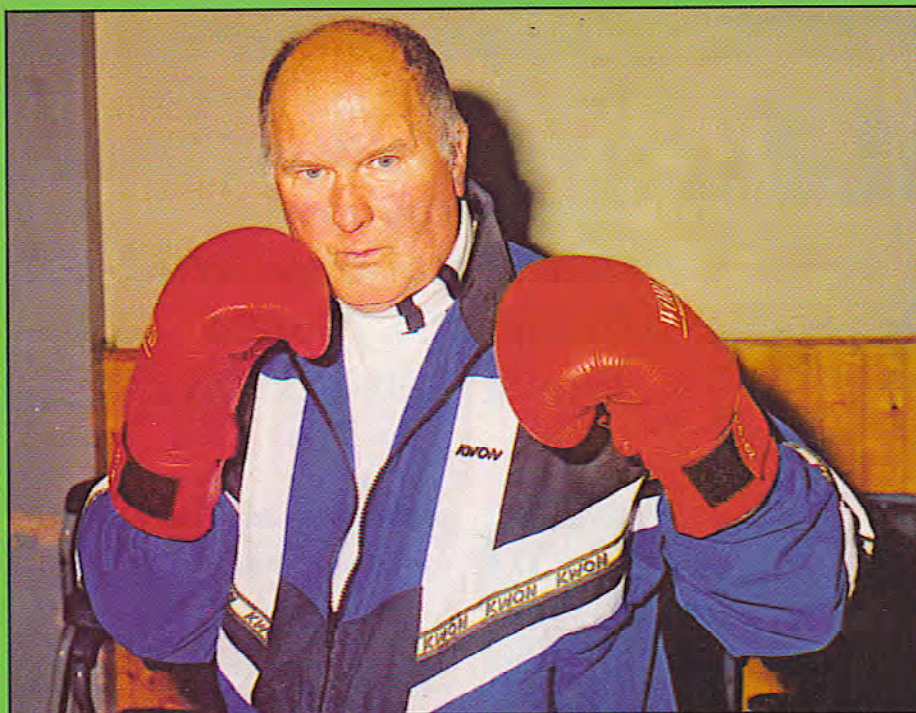
Steve – "I just think the system works. Looking at the students who've been with him for a number of years, you know they all seem to be successful; they all seem to be able to hold themselves. I've brought students across here to fight and they have a hard job. As hard as what it would have been twenty years ago when you came across and went back with a broken nose or less teeth".

Peter – "Tell me about the bodyguard training George".

George – "After four years of training here, you're a fully trained bodyguard. You can go anywhere, you can defend yourself, you can work for anybody because you've all the education that's needed for you to do that job, in other words like you've seen here today. These people can sit around for hours, they don't need a cup of tea, you can put them in a position and say stay there and they'll do it, plus they have the awareness, they have the knowledge, they have the understanding of how to take care of themselves. They don't drink, they don't smoke, they don't gamble, plus they can step back rather than step into a situation and therefore the person who employs them is very happy".

Peter – "But what about security awareness? I mean are we talking bodyguards right up to the highest level or just basic minder type stuff?".

George – "No, pure bodyguard, they do the job properly, whatever they have to do, whether it's to drive, take care of a client, work with a client – it's entirely up to the client, what the client wants and whatever the client wants, they provide for the client. And that's



Professor George Canning.

how it comes out in the end with the client telling me, "Hey where did you get this guy from, I can't believe it, the type of person he is". I think a woman is the best judge of a bodyguard, not a man because if a woman is not comfortable with you it won't work, but most of my guys end up working for women as well as men".

Peter – "Okay, moving on to Stevie Hunt. How long have you been involved in this company you've set up for bodyguarding?"

Steve – "It's been established now for four years, but the thing is of course remembering that these guys don't just do a form of training. George has said from day one is that they need other knowledge which would include anatomy, first aid, fire procedures etc. They have to have certain qualifications certified by one of their lecturers who are ex-police officers, ex-fire officers and senior nurses. These guys do have that structure behind them and of course the awareness thing doesn't mean you're going to be a good bodyguard, it's down to personality, but the form of training seems to produce a nice enough sort of guy. You know a lot of guys that are on doors

today are arrogant people and there is still trouble".

Steve – "I train the bodyguards. I'm out of the martial arts to be honest from the dojo side. I take people on contracts to become bodyguards. What we've established is that there are bodyguards who will take a client out and look after that client. What we've trained these guys to do is learn about the body, teach them to be fitness instructors, because it's a boring job. Most bodyguards who look after people are just sitting in a car waiting around".

Peter – "You're right, it's not as glamorous as people think".

Steve – "It can be ten or twelve hours just sitting in a car. It's the most boring job in the world. We don't train people in the use of guns because I think George's philosophy of, if somebody wants to take somebody out, they'll do it. If they can take out the likes of Reagan and the Pope, they can take out anyone. So we just say take care of yourself and use your head".

Peter – "Thanks Steve".

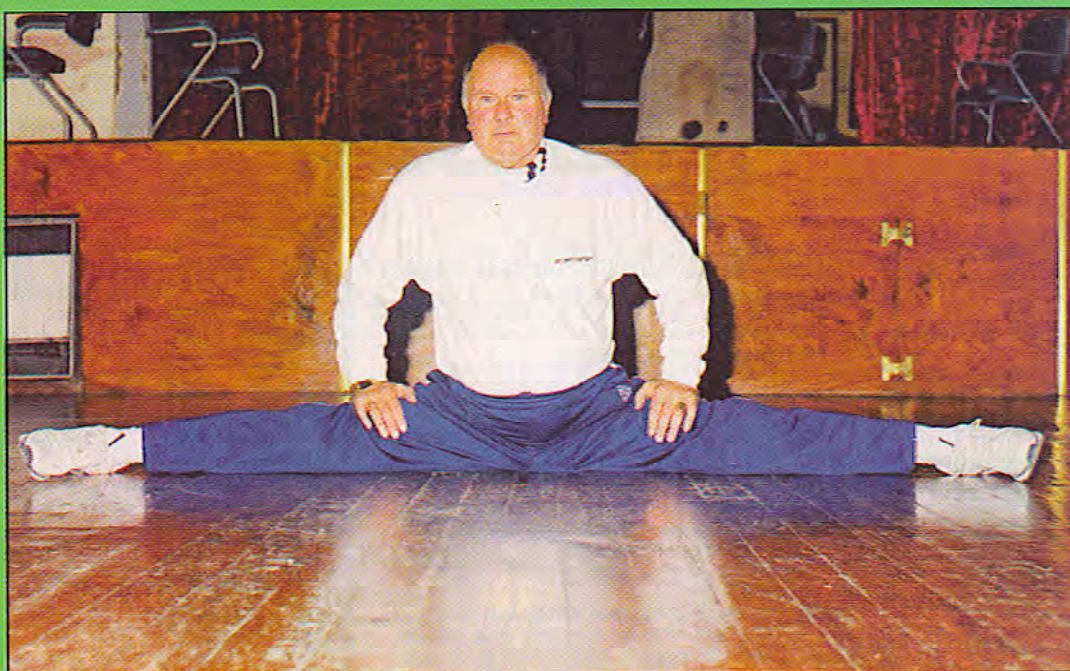
Peter – "Okay George, I've seen your operation, now you're back as it were. Already you've got a good run of students?"

George – "Forty students who are all private and the other arm of the business which is the bodyguarding. I still do the healing as well".

Peter – "So where do you get the time for that?"

George – "I go up to Derry where I work, one Friday in every month. I also have three radio shows in Derry and Colerain and I'm also on the Internet where I give out information on health and healing. They are programs where the presenters telephone me, they give me the questions and I give them the answers and it's very, very successful. If people want me these days, they have to come to me, as my time is very restricted".

End of part one – part two of this article can be read in next months *Fighters* magazine.



Full splits!



Story &
Pictures by
Peter Lewis

The Legend Lives On Part Two

Continuing on from last month's article on George Canning, we now present the second and final part of this very in depth interview upon George Canning's unique teaching methods. George informed us last month that he was back into teaching martial arts, specifically Kickboxing. Although, he hastened to add, the healing side of his life still takes up a very predominant role in his day to day activities. George now takes up the story.

"Yes Peter, I'm still kept very busy these days running my operation. As I told you, I run a bodyguard agency, teaching Kickboxing, although only private lessons, and of course the healing which I do using the healing power/forces of bio-energy (bio-energetics). I have to say that the healing side still takes precedence simply because that is the first love

of my life. I think it was the Chinese Kung-fu masters who first quoted, 'that which can kill, can also cure'. By this, they very obviously meant that within the martial arts, there is room for both fighting and healing. The quote incidentally comes from their use of Chi energy which they used as a healing art and also as a killing one via the format of Dim Mak. This was a method of utilising Chi energy in a negative aspect to harm people. So you see, healing and martial arts go hand in hand. They are a very pertinent factor of learning the 'whole' art rather than just the combat side of it.

"My use of bio-energy for healing purposes here in Ireland, as I stated last month is just a natural extension of my martial skills. I have had a lot of success and a lot of my former patients are living healthier lives thanks to the energy I use when healing them. A very good friend of mine, Dr Eileen O'Broin, a German lady who married an Irishman and now lives in Cork, came to me not long after she had qualified as an MD. She watched me work, noted my results and consequently requested that I teach her. Eight years later she is very successful as a doctor and we have

worked together many times. She has a wonderful open mind, but I always say to her, she is a doctor first and a healer second. Some of her colleagues who were at first a little sceptical at what I did healing wise and what I was teaching Dr O'Broin, now realise that there are areas beyond what is classed or thought of as 'normal medicine' and that also has the power to heal.

"I know the term used today is 'alternative medicine', but I think more than ever before people are much more open minded to it than they once were. Here in Ireland it is very popular and looked upon and used in quite a big way. My friends Dave and Steve Hunt from England are both involved in the healing. I met Dave Hunt in the days when I was a referee in the UKKW, refereeing fights at Crystal Palace in London. We bumped into each other again out in the Canary Islands and he asked me if he could train with me".

At this point in the story, Dave Hunt takes over.

Dave Hunt, "Yeah at that particular time George invited me back to Ireland. He was running national courses here in Ireland every year and he invited me



George Canning and son David training on the pads.

over as a senior instructor on those courses, and I used to bring a team over from England. Then 11 years ago I came over to Ireland. I'd retired from the martial arts, left all my Black belts with their clubs, the British Schools of Karate that I was chief instructor to at that time. Steven (Dave's brother) then expanded his martial arts from when I left there, and then continued with George in that aspect. I came over to Ireland, opened up the Wexford Natural Healing Centre and became more busy in my studies into healing and progressed from there. So now I run a very successful healing centre in the South East and I'm known throughout the whole of Ireland and I get people coming from all over Ireland".

Peter Lewis, "Obviously you're English, so what made you pick Ireland as a base?"

Dave Hunt, "Well the reason is, I always had roots here, my mother was born in Wexford and when I came back to Wexford, I came back to the Wexford town where my mother was born and because I knew the martial arts boys back there. This was the reason I retired from the martial arts at that time, because there were people I knew teaching there who had established clubs and I was more qualified than them, so I came out of the martial arts and moved into the healing full time and developed from there and basically that's it".

Peter Lewis, "The healing that you run through the clinic, is it the bio-energy that George did or is it something different?"

Dave Hunt, "No it's not bio-energy. It's an ancient Japanese system which

goes back before Reiki and it's called Gin shin jyutsu and it's got 26 energy locks in it. I was trained in this by an American-Japanese teacher that developed it from an ancient Japanese system, created three thousand years ago.

"It means the art of the creator Gin shin jyutsu, that's the particular system I use, but I'm also trained in Chinese medicine and acupuncture and reflexology, hypnosis and psychotherapy so I do the whole range of treatments in my clinic, so most people who come to me, if they know a bit about Reiki or a bit about reflexology or acupuncture, they say to me, is this a unique type of system that you use because you seem to use a variation of techniques", and I do.

Dave continues, "My treatments last half an hour and they're basically healing, acupressure, I don't use the needles because if you do you have to



George and son David on the pads.