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SCARS STORE

HOME

48 HOURS OF SCARS

*An Exclusive Look at the World's
Most Expensive Self-Defense Training*
by Herb Borkland

Want to learn how to fight like

The Special Combat Reactionary System (SCARS) is the first official hand-to-weapon U.S. Navy SEAL teams. SCARS is now available on videotape. It's also been taught to the creator, Jerry Peterson, to a limited extent on a once-in-a-blue-moon basis.

I am proud to be the first journalist to undergo SCARS training. Going into the training a little curious about a contemporary martial art that uses no blocks whatsoever and no defensive moves - a system that Navy SEALs use to be unbeatable. Just how tough is SCARS? Our camp had already lost two guys by the first day. One man broke his ribs from being thrown, especially by someone not used to throwing. But the second day, despite having paid \$5,000 to be there, I felt the brutality.

Welcome to the world's most expensive self-defense training.



SCARS teaches participants the proper way to use close kicks. Blake Peterson uses his shin to strike his opponent's throat.

Phoenix, Arizona was still hot and dry last October at our 40-hour SpecOps/ SEAL Platoon Work-Up Camp. Those in attendance were paying bargain rates to study with millionaire shadow-ops guru Jerry Peterson,

a.k.a. "The Deadliest Man Alive." Five thousand dollars plus traveling expenses is a bargain? Yes since Peterson earns up to \$1,700 an hour.

Thirty-two men from 20 to 60 converged on Phoenix's SCARS Institute of Combat Sciences. They were not SEAL wannabes in camo pants who talked only about their knives. On the contrary, our group of campers consisted of average Joe's: skinny and large, short and tall, white, yellow, black and brown. Among us were a retired Fortune 500 CEO, a distinguished veteran of the Army Delta Force and the Marines, a plain-spoken young dude from Kansas who claimed to "just own some trucks," a polite Indian businessman who confessed to feeling so out of character that he had to tell his office staff white lies about the subject of this Phoenix "seminar," and a sawed-off monosyllabic Arizona SWAT-team leader with sniper's eyes and memorably hard fists.

Aside from an enviable amount of disposable income, all the campers shared one crucial distinction: Each had been exposed to one of the most successful video self-defense courses in history, Jerry Peterson's SCARS tapes. Those 1993 training tapes came out of that covert "nowhere" in which spies always seem to work. They were advertised in only four limited circulation national magazines. Yet Peterson's course went on to gross \$1 million in only its first nine months on the market. Business analysts were dazzled.

There's one excellent reason why the original SCARS tapes made so much money worldwide: They were breathtakingly pricey, the single most expensive set of self-defense videos ever put out. Yet they undoubtedly rank among the least expensive to produce. They were made in one take, virtually overnight, for next to nothing using shortcuts which video pros promised would never succeed.



Blake Peterson demonstrates the dynamic ground fighting taught in System. The hold shown above sim attacks the opponent's neck and sh

We campers were bedded down in motels and picked up at 6:45 each for a mini-van drive to the Institute. Since the 20,000 square-foot SCARS Institute is a contemporary Western architectural West adobe monastery. A Shaolin cowboy?



After training in the SCARS System, a smaller person truly can defend himself against a larger, stronger opponent.

Located in Phoenix, Arizona, the SCARS Institute of Combat Sciences is a 20,000 square-foot facility that includes a two-story "environment room", a weight room, a matted grappling room and various classrooms and offices.

The Institute is a spec-ops bou deals with armed forces, military professionals, the security staff c corporations and even South Am their bodyguards.

Off the Institute's private parki entrance to a two-story arranger kitchenette and two bathrooms. 7 functionally anonymous; only th and lions suggests that this firm strenuous than tweak software.

However, along the far wall le assault rifles and faux 9mm sem realistic training, these industrial exactly duplicate the original mc

A banner spread across anothe SCARS escutcheon: a naked swc haloed by the legend "SCARS Ir Sciences - Proven in Combat."

Part of what this motto means president and Vietnam veteran J killed the enemy. More than a fe his bare hands, including, most t "because there wasn't room to sh



On the other side of the reception area, the Institute has a connecting room wh more than 3,000 square feet of new Olympic-quality mats. Square and well lit, it places. Campers get to know it very well. There's a blackboard here for the occa Across the matted room, the wall displays medical quality anatomy charts which back and front of the adult male body. Around the next corner, these charts are r custom Peterson Attack Trainers. PATs are SCARS' own line of practice dumm gingerbread men dotted from head to foot with colored striking points.

Finally, a yellow and red water barrel sits on a shelf strewn with plastic cups a of over-the-counter painkillers. This snapshot image, captioned "Thirsty and Hu the basic SCARS training experience.

For the next four days, we spent 11 hours of our nonstop 14-hour days on thos daily were given over to one-hour catered cafeteria-style breakfasts, lunches and

together at long communal tables set up in the reception area. And, unlike Elvis, building.

The space beyond the mat room is a two-story 10,000 square-foot "environmental mission specific installations are built to suit the training requirements of whatever currently being serviced at the Institute. When a tactical law enforcement unit rappelling tower complete with water hazard and white sand beach, SCARS put

We never got into the environment room. However, its very existence powerful humbling fact: Occasionally training a handful of civilian amateurs is not really all about. If you are used to studying only with teachers whose qualifications earned a lot of plastic trophies, you can feel the difference in authority immediately.

The SCARS Institute feels serious. This place is not a martial arts school. It does sportsmanship. Most of the people who train here are paid professionals of cover about to go in harm's way.

The basic staff consists of Jerry Peterson, and his right hand man and son Blake rotating crew of hand-picked "operators" who are proficient in various specialties needed.

During breakfast on the first morning of the camp, without any fanfare Jerry Peterson among us. I examined him carefully and told myself, "This guy makes a seven-foot walking into roomfuls of bloody minded security experts and proving to them, in superiors, that they don't know squat about their own trade." It's something that comes away with, much less make money at.



Because of the nature of SCARS Institute clients, quick and effective techniques such as this back breaker are the focus of the self-defense training.

In person, California-born Peterson is a man of medium height who projects candor. A youthful 50-something morphing of three cinematic icons of masculinity: Kris Kristofferson, Clint Eastwood, and Tom Selleck, depending on which angle you view him from.

Peterson is a decorated Vietnam War veteran of Charlie Company of the famous 173rd Airborne Brigade. He took the brunt of the fighting during the Tet offensive. Peterson survived, and historians concede he was among the few who did that ugly war. His unit's job was to search for and pull out other troops in trouble.

In recent years, Peterson has contracted work for various units under the Joint Special Operations Command, which coordinates operations with the Air Force special-operations units employed by the Department of Defense, materials transport people, various federal agencies, counter-narcotics units, Treasury's U.S. Secret Service missions, and more. It is all documented by the numerous photographs that hang on the Institute's walls.

Other government and federal agencies have been trained by Peterson, but SCARS will not deny anything. And that makes sense before anyone can train such groups, he has a pile of documents saying that he

them. And that's just Peterson's V
Currently a small infamous East
wants him to revamp its entire m
back in Hollywood a SCARS TV
scripted and cast: it awaits only t
Today Show keeps calling, too.

On day one, Blake introduced himself and passed around spiral bound copies of *Manual #1, Hand-to-Hand Combat for United States Operations Forces Army/Navy/Air Force*.

Every single page of course material is slashed diagonally with "Restricted Copy-Property of SCARS Institute."

The meat of this text consists of 25 combat lessons. Each one is a sequence of four or five techniques, usually including a throw, initiated off an opponent's punch or kick. These sequences contain no defensive moves whatsoever. Instead, all checks to attacking arms or legs are delivered as intercepting counterstrikes aimed at specific nerves.

Whenever Peterson taught us, he wore a wireless microphone. A staff video cameraman followed him around, taping every move. On this first morning, Peterson gathered us in the mat room. He began by outlining the value of what SCARS calls the "offensive mind-set."

"This is why defensive fighting systems cannot win against SCARS, Peterson told us. Diagrams on the blackboard indicated that direct offensive action is always quicker through the nervous system than the stop-and-catch-up reactions of a defender. "SCARS is literally faster than any other kind of fighting," he said.



Ground-fighting practice at the SC includes an often-neglected elemen

Then, to demonstrate, Master i
attack Peterson. What does the b
teacher on Earth look like in acti
Peterson moves like a younger n
unhurried economy of motion. H
efficiency spares students that pe
often feel when asked to duplica
defense technique. Today so ma
aspire to big paydays cultivate a
which, in truth, has little or nothi
successful self-defense. But fron
instructors make you confident c



Jerry L. Peterson is the founder and sole developer of the SCARS program for the Navy SEALs.

duplicate their every move, and feeling that you need to be an OI so.

What is the thrust of the training SCARS?

Yes. It is a core concept that Peterson calls "autokinematics." Briefly put, he has spent years researching the effects of stress on every vulnerable nerve, bone and muscle in the body. Not just the various injuries that can be inflicted, but precisely how the entire body reacts instant it is struck.

What are the ground-breaking combat implications of one simple concept? When it comes to absorbing punishment, the human body reacts in exactly the same way every time.

So from its first blow, SCARS exploits the human nervous system, which controls all our behavior as pulling fingers out of our mouths, off sharp sea shells and everything else. We can stop ourselves from doing

By knowing in advance which reactions the enemy will be unable to suppress, a SCARS fighter can seize the opponent and work the man like a pain puppet. SCARS puts the enemy through traumas which will increasingly incapacitate - or ultimately kill him. What is truly remarkable about how complete, detailed and scientifically absolute Peterson's grisly research is. So much information, it's difficult to cite examples of SCARS. However, to give the smallest example, if you poke somebody in the eye, SCARS can tell you not only how his head and neck will involuntarily react, but also exactly where he will move both hands and one of his feet. In other words, this sort of merciless insight over every single inch of the human body. In addition to these other things, a whole genre of combat techniques which are new to most martial arts.

Chalk talks were few and far between in the camp. Instead, we were almost always practicing combat lessons at half-speed. SCARS is so fast that you have to practice it slowly. In a two-man self-defense set, the opponent attacks, gets blocked and then stands around while the partner follows up with multiple high speed blows. SCARS partners, in fact, precisely mimic the autokinematic reaction caused by striking any given body part. When you stand there: we flinch, fold, lurch or fly, depending on how a real-world opponent

Total immersion in the course of the SCARS teaching method. This is not so much on committing sequences to memory; it is about learning to feel the attack body targets, and in the long run, we are expected to get a little bang for our buck.

Working through the 25 basic techniques over three days of relentless practice. We are permitted to buddy up for long, s



Blake Peterson has worked as an assistant for SCARS military courses since he was 16. He is now in his mid 20's master instructor at the institute.

techniques was tried over and over of the 30-odd campers. Since most contain a throw, everybody was endlessly.

By the second day, we were down numbers, and the pace got even in a 40-hour haul, not being able to handle repeatedly thrown seemed to account for problems campers experienced. Some guys accidentally eating a technical a heart shot and proceeded to demonstrate an autokinematic reaction we had been. The incandescent pain only abated for the camper. It kept him awake at night. He completed the course.

Peterson's training style is real. One camper thought he broke a rib, and he said "Hold your arms over your head

Wincing, the camper did so. Peterson slapped his flanks hard with both hands. He was white-faced with pain. "No," Peterson continued affably, "you're OK. If any ribs are on the floor by now." To change the pace, our long training days were broken into drills. One involved putting on a "flak jacket." Then we proceeded to drive our full length of the room using full-force fist, elbow and palm strikes to the torso. At the end, we would then exchange the jacket, and the "beatee" became the "beator."

Our SWAT-team leader hit so hard that Peterson finally asked him to pull his nice Indian fellow gave me a sternum shot that I could feel for days.

Later, after trying all our upper-body weapons, we went on to further explore kicking each other to and fro. When asked why we performed this exercise, Peterson said "Learning the autokinematics." But I think a large part of it also has to do with the fact that a fighting course in which no one gets banged up is phony. "You have to learn," he remarked later.

The training peaked in intensity on Saturday night. After another long sweaty session we were by-God told to stop acting like a bunch of sissies and start really trying to spar with partners. By now, if somebody wasn't deft enough to stop an attack - well, too bad.

We got into doing line drills in which you keep personally creaming the entire line freestyled with everyone else over and over. By now, a few guys had opted out and were just around the walls just watching. But the rest of us were going through a roomful of drills handedly and never once repeating a sequence of moves. We had achieved impressive efficiency.

Overall, the curriculum turned out to be more varied than I had expected. During the day we practiced hand-to-weapon attacks using padded clubs and knives. Then we went on to drills involving rifles and semi-automatic pistols. The same basic SCARS moves and techniques were carried over seamlessly to all those ancillary exercises.

At another point, Peterson discussed Brazilian *jujitsu* and demonstrated how some grapplers. Some grapplers among us put him in some of those "inescapable death holds" that always broke free within two or three seconds. As always, too, each camper was capable of doing exactly what Peterson had done. Bland as this may sound, it is

to do but rarely achieve so well.

After being challenged by one participant, Peterson duplicated a stunt famous ads. Thirty of us could not pin him against a cinder block wall. A minute later - 1 once - each of us was making Peterson's escape work for us.

Peterson is able to do all those "miraculous" things because he applies univers to specific situations; he does not just remember moves shown to him by someb significance of that cannot be overestimated. It means that SCARS is alive and s

The camp's emotional climax came after our last lunch together. We all sat ar applauding each other for having made it through, Peterson and his staff dealt o certificates that cited "extreme training conditions including extensive physical l named "qualified SCARS training partners." Instead of a handshake, our Indian hugging Peterson to great laughter and applause.

The rest of Sunday was largely given over to a seminar on how to deal with ca were opened, the mats peeled back and a sweet-looking red pickup was driven in

We were told that the teachings we were about to receive had already saved r SCARS adepts. But tomorrow was another hard Monday, and various guys had catch. One by one, the campers began peeling out of formation and heading hom bruises.

And me? In 40 hours, everything I thought I knew about unarmed combat got found out that the Navy SEAL fighting system is simple and groundbreakingly c and yet unanswerable.

I have seen the future of self-defense, and it is SCARS.

About the author: Herb Borkland is a free-lance writer and martial artist based in Sandy Spring, Reprinted with permission from Black Belt Magazine and Herb Borkland.

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