



DOUG MARCAIDA
DISCUSSES MARTIAL ARTS,
HEALTHCARE, KNIVES AND
“FORGED IN FIRE”

STORY BY JOSHUA SWANAGON
PHOTOS BY DOUG MARCAIDA AND
COURTESY OF THE HISTORY CHANNEL

A LIFE WELL LIVED

It's not hard to understand why Doug Marcaida was selected to be the edged weapon combat specialist for "Forged in Fire." As a martial artist myself, I remember watching Doug Marcaida videos and being impressed with how fluid, and surprisingly fast he was with a knife. When I found out that he was selected as one of the judges for "Forged in Fire," I was very excited to see where the show was going to go. From the first episode I have not been disappointed. Doug has added a dynamic to the show that I believe to be a large part of its success to date.

I recently got to speak with Doug about his passions and his time on the show.

Martial Arts

KI: When did you first get into martial arts?

DM: I started when I was 7, dabbling in different classes, but I didn't really take it seriously until I was 16 years old.

KI: How long have you studied Kali?

DM: Almost 28 years! [gulp] Am I that old?

KI: What arts, other than Kali, have you studied?

DM: Karate, combat judo, kick-boxing, Tae Kwon Do and Silat.

KI: Did you see a future for yourself in the entertainment industry when you began your martial arts career?

DM: Not at all. My full-time job was as a respiratory therapist in emergency care and teaching martial arts all over, while doing military contracting work on the side. That became a seven-day work week.

But a very lucrative opportunity for contract work arose to teach my system overseas. Unfortunately, there were some delays to the contract, and I had already quit my hospital job. That's when "Forged in Fire" presented itself, and I found myself doing this work instead.

Doug Marcaida of the History Channel's "Forged in Fire." Photo credit: History Channel, "Forged in Fire"

“MY FULL-TIME JOB WAS AS A RESPIRATORY THERAPIST IN EMERGENCY CARE AND TEACHING MARTIAL ARTS ALL OVER, WHILE DOING MILITARY CONTRACTING WORK ON THE SIDE.”

“Forged in Fire”

KI: How did you get involved with "Forged in Fire"?

DM: I got messaged that they were looking for an end user with bladed weapon skills. At that time, I had been posting videos of my Kali journey on YouTube, and they found my videos. They contacted me, and after a Skype meeting, voilà.

KI: What has been your greatest challenge being a part of "Forged in Fire"?

DM: The biggest challenge is to let the weapon speak for itself and not my skill. The viewers get to see, but not feel, if the weapon's balance is off. It affects the way one would move with it, the way one would control it. If I have to adjust too much to make it work, then that is more on the skill. It's a fine balance but we try our best.

Also, being away from family and the time restraints have been hard. I love the show, but being a judge, cutting and testing pulls me away from what got me there.

I miss my family, I miss my students, and I miss training and teaching Kali the way I'm used to doing it. My seminars are very limited because of time.

I also miss the healing touch of healthcare work.

KI: What is your best story/memory working on "Forged in Fire"?

DM: There are many, but Ryu Lim ... watching him battle himself. Round 2 with seconds left, he comes out of a plume of white smoke covered in dust, looking like a ghost, as if straight from a John Woo movie, to turn in his blade. All that was missing were doves flying. I'll never forget that image.

KI: How does the production schedule with "Forged in Fire" affect your personal business?

DM: It has overtaken my life because of the amount of time we spend filming the episodes.

KI: How has your time on "Forged in Fire" enhanced your personal business?

DM: I can now pay off some of my bills [laughs]. All kidding aside, the exposure is global and I'm able to share more of what I do and have also developed a following. I am now able to design and work with big name tactical companies like 5.11 Tactical. It has also opened more demand for the art I teach.

Knife Testing

KI: Do you come up with all of your own tests?

DM: For Kali, yes. For the show, no. The show has a team that comes up with the tests.

KI: What goes into the planning and creation of the tests?

DM: There are the kill, sharpness and strength tests—anything to be able to address those things. The team tries to be creative, but they are not harsh, nor easy, on testing the attributes of these weapons. It is a middle ground.

What the viewers may not realize is that I don't get to zero in on the contestant's weapons. Handling them before a test can damage the weapon, and these are indeed made for one reason. When you have a firearm, you get to sight it in, I don't have that luxury, because it's a competition.

KI: How much fun is it getting to play with such elaborate testing grounds on a regular basis?

DM: So much fun. On my own I couldn't afford the things we test on,



let alone the different iconic weapons from history.

KI: If you don't mind me asking, how did you hurt your arm?

DM: During one of the tests. Heavy, dull blade; target was hard. Just my luck that day.

KI: Is everything healing up ok?

DM: Yes, slowly but surely. Thanks.

Photo credit: History Channel, "Forged in Fire"

Knife Design

KI: How long have you been designing knives?

DM: In the course of my study in Kali I designed my knives based on how I trained with the art. I started designing about 10 years into the art. So, I would say it has been about 18 years. I was lucky to know talented bladesmiths in the Philippines who could make my

designs at a low cost.

KI: How many different designs do you have?

DM: I currently have 10 designs in collaborations and more waiting to be released.

KI: What attributes do you think are important in a combat knife?

DM: A knife is only as good as its

availability in its time of need. So, deployment and ease of carry are very important. Otherwise it will collect dust at home. Sharpness, retention and wieldability are also important attributes. You should be the one who controls the knife, not the knife controlling you.

KI: Has your time on "Forged in Fire" influenced or changed the way you think about your own designs?

DM: It certainly complements my design ideas. I now have a better understanding of historical designs and their function. I'm no longer one dimensional in thinking about weapon designs, because the different designs we pick from history for the bladesmiths to make has exposed me to other trains of thought. After five seasons, thanks to the mastersmiths and bladesmiths, I have really learned a lot. I get to test their designs and study the outcome. It has been very educational.

KI: Have you learned any forging since being on "Forged in Fire"?

DM: Yes. You can learn by watching, but I also learned under Mastersmith J Neilson, and took a knife-making course at Arc Flame, in my home town of Rochester, New York.

"Forged in Fire," the Future

KI: Are there any changes, formatting or otherwise, planned for "Forged in Fire" that you are at liberty to talk about?

DM: Bigger, better and more engaging. Any more information and they will make J Neilson critique my being every minute. [laughs]

KI: Do you know how many more seasons of "Forged in Fire" are scheduled?

DM: We are on our fifth season and will begin to film 30 episodes.

KI: Do you have any advice for "Forged in Fire" contestants?

DM: Watch the show. Learn from it, because that will be you. It's not like the forge at home, know our challenges and prepare for them.

"ROUND 2 WITH SECONDS LEFT, [RYU LIM] COMES OUT OF A PLUME OF WHITE SMOKE COVERED IN DUST, LOOKING LIKE A GHOST, AS IF STRAIGHT FROM A JOHN WOO MOVIE, TO TURN IN HIS BLADE."

Always have fun. Don't forget, it's not indicative of your normal work, only of what happens that particular moment in competition.

KI: How about "Forged in Fire" hopefuls? Any advice for how to be selected as a contestant?

DM: Apply and a casting person will contact you. Be ready to show your work and answer questions. We cast all levels of skill.

Wrapping Up

KI: If someone wanted to become a

student, how would they go about it?

DM: DougMarcaida.com is my website, where I feature videos and tutorials. They can also follow me on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. [Information provided in the contact sidebar, pg. 20. —Editor]

KI: Do you have locations in other cities or a correspondence program of any kind?

DM: Right now, I have video tutorials, and I am working on long distance courses. I currently have reps teaching my system in Italy, Greece,

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Doug Marcaida by the Numbers

04 The number of seasons Doug has been a judge on "Forged in Fire."

06 The number of martial arts, including Kali, Doug has studied.

07 The age that Doug first started dabbling in the martial arts.

10 The number of knife designs Doug has been a part of creating.

16 Doug's age when he first started getting serious about the martial arts.

18 The number of years Doug has been designing knives.

28 The number of years Doug has studied Kali.

"THANK YOU FOR FOLLOWING MY JOURNEY AND LETTING ME CELEBRATE AND SHARE MY PASSION WITH YOU."

Contact

Doug Marcaida

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Romania, Bulgaria, Mexico, Chile, NYC and Maryland, with our HQ in Rochester. Our reps for those locations also have pages on Facebook.

KI: What would be the best way for people to purchase your knife designs?

DM: They can be purchased on my website.

KI: Is there anything else you would like to say to your fans?

DM: Thank you for following my journey and letting me celebrate and share my passion with you.

Knives Illustrated would like to thank Doug for taking the time to speak with us and open up his life to us. His professionalism and humility are a true testament to his character. **KI**