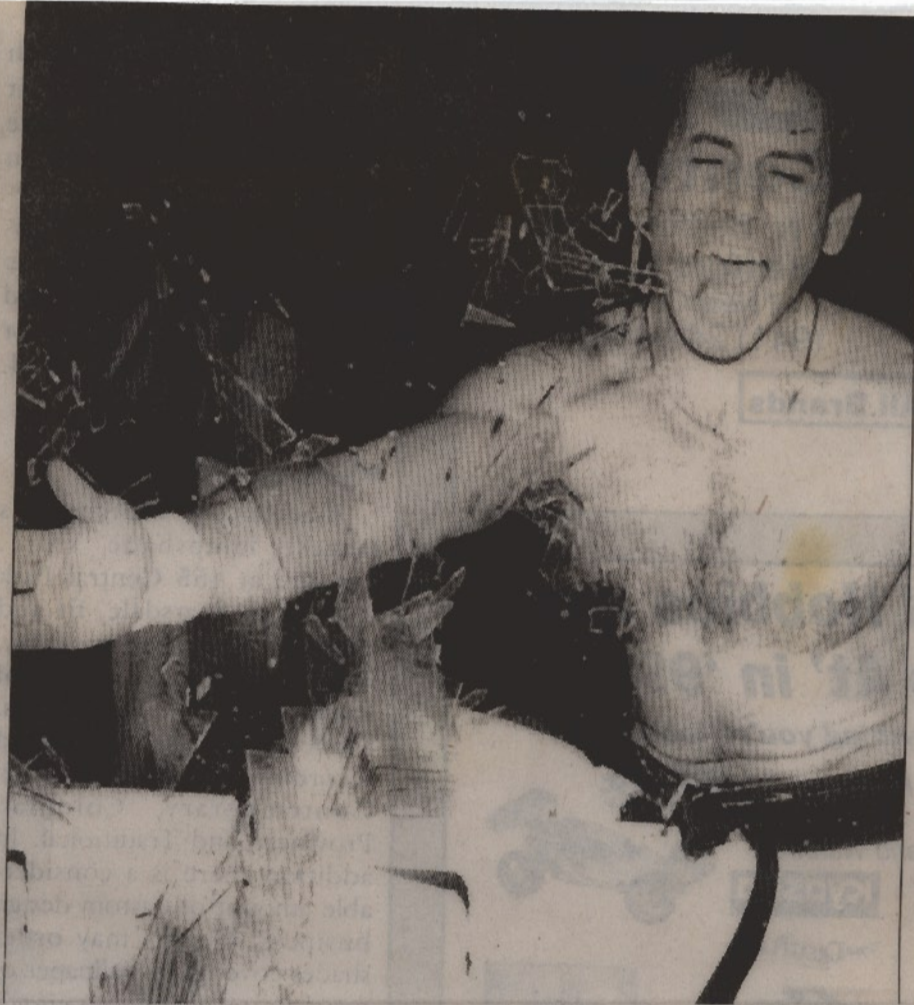


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MAURICE ELMALEM has gained world recognition in the martial art of glass breaking.

Martial artist lives life on the cutting edge

By AL ROBBINS

Riverdale's Maurice Elmalem appeared recently at Roseland in Manhattan in the Oriental World of Self-Defense show.

And quite a show it was.

He showed his specialty, shattering 90 sheets of glass with a downward thrust of his elbow, and by doing that he smashed his own world standing record which he had held for seven years.

But that should have been no surprise, given his list of accomplishments, which go back some years.

Elmalem, 44, has four world championship titles in the art of "breaking"; plus he has taken six AAU championships, nine U.S. Gold Cup Medals and three world records.

Elmalem explained that "breaking" is part of the martial arts where "all power must be focused on the target." And that is the key to not getting hurt.

Getting hurt is a distinct possibility, he said, when it comes to breaking up to 90 sheets of glass, each one-eighth of an inch thick. The secret: "It's a combination of focus, coordination and speed," he said in a recent interview.

In the course of his career, Elmalem has shattered 75 sheets of glass with his elbow and 48 sheets with his hand. "This is very dangerous," he explained, in what has to be a classic understatement. Still, to date, he has yet to suffer a serious injury.

"I've been cut here and there," he said, "but nothing serious."

A native of France, Elmalem lived in Morocco, Israel and Canada before arriving in the Bronx some years ago with his wife and four children. Along the way he lived in some pretty tough neighborhoods and developed self defense techniques as a matter of self-preservation.

He graduated to breaking boards when challenged by some of his employees at one of his Maurice Contractors and Designers Inc. construction sites. And it was a small step from there to breaking glass. All of which has led to his world class reputation, and the honors that go with it.

Later this month, he will be inducted into the World Karate Hall of Fame in upstate New York. Then he'll be the guest of the government of South Korea during a meeting of the Martial Arts World Federation from July 9 through 18.