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# ***SURVIVING***

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# ***ARMED***

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# ***ASSAULTS***

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***A MARTIAL  
ARTIST'S GUIDE  
TO WEAPONS,  
STREET VIOLENCE, &  
COUNTERVAILING  
FORCE***

***LAWRENCE A. KANE***

*FOREWORD BY LOREN W. CHRISTENSEN*

## Praise for Lawrence A. Kane...

“I got a chance to read your book *Surviving Armed Assaults* over the weekend. Many thanks for sending it to me. What an excellent contribution to the community! I was particularly impressed by the encyclopedia-like thoroughness and depth of information, tapping into a diverse array of knowledge and experts. WELL done, my friend. This will be an invaluable resource for anyone walking the warrior’s path, and anyone who is interested in this vital topic. And you can quote me on that! Hooah! And ALL the best!” – **Lt. Col. Dave Grossman**, US Army Airborne Ranger (ret); Director, Killology Research Group; author of *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society*, co-author of *On Combat: The Psychology and Physiology of Deadly Conflict in War and in Peace*; Board Member of the American Sniper Association, International Law Enforcement Educators and Trainers Association, National Institute of Ethics, and International Conference of Police Chaplains

“From the very first few pages I could tell that the book will be a classic. It’s the book I would have liked to have written and the sheer vast amount of information and supporting views is tremendous. These days, I can only buy into concepts from people who have worked at the sharp end of conflict and that experience shines through. For me, however, it’s how the ‘science’ of close quarter combat is married with psychology, techniques and tactics. A really heartfelt ‘well done’. It will be on the shelves for years to come.” – **Peter Consterdine**, 8<sup>th</sup> dan black belt, Operations and Training Director of Risk Management and Security Company, Co-Founder and joint Chief Instructor (with Geoff Thompson) of The British Combat Association (BCA), author of *Streetwise: The Complete Manual of Personal Security and Self-Defense*, *The Modern Bodyguard: The Manual of Close Protection Training*, *Fit to Fight: The Manual of Intense Training for Combat*, *Travelsafe: The Complete Guide to Travel Security*, and *Powerstrike: The Art of High Impact Punching and Kicking*.

“*Surviving Armed Assaults* is a terrific addition to any serious library of self-defense books. Its emphasis on awareness and avoidance as your most effective survival strategies makes it a worthy companion to works by authors such as Alain Burrese, Loren Christensen, Marc MacYoung, and Peyton Quinn. Kane covers enough aspects of the topic to make the book useful as an encyclopedia, and yet his prose is so readable, and he uses so many real life anecdotes to illustrate his points, that you’ll have trouble putting it down. I’ll be drawing on some of the lessons learned from *SAA* in future John Rain books.” – **Barry Eisler**, internationally bestselling author of the John Rain series, shodan in Kodokan Judo.

“As both a private citizen and a security professional, I found this book an outstanding review of self defense tactics and techniques which can be used to save one’s life or the life of another. Kane’s synthesis of the physical and mental processes of self defense and counter attack will make this book a must-read for law enforcement, security and self-defense specialists.” – **Greg A. Gwash, J.D.**, Chief Security Officer of The Boeing Company, former Deputy Director of the U.S. Defense Investigative Service, decorated Vietnam veteran (5<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group).

“Mr. Kane’s excellent book covers a broad spectrum of topics associated with surviving armed conflict. It ranges from details about a variety of weapons to philosophical and matters relating to defense and the use of countervailing and potentially lethal force. Tactics, training and mindset are all discussed; and all of this is presented in a simple and logical format with great anecdotes to illustrate the high points. For a student or teacher of the martial arts, this is a must read.” – **Dr. Jeff Cooper, M.D.**, Tactical Medical Director of the Toledo Ohio SWAT; Commander, US Naval Reserve; 4<sup>th</sup> degree black belt in Goju Ryu karate.

“Some two million people in the United States are the victims of a weapon attack each year, and that includes black belts. The de-escalation and survival skills in this book will set your feet on the right path and put your head in the right place so you don’t become a shocking headline in your local paper, or lead story on the six o’clock news. Kane gets it; get this book and get it too.” – **Kris Wilder**, author of *Lessons from the Dojo Floor*, co-author of *The Way of Kata*, 4<sup>th</sup> degree black belt in Goju Ryu karate, 2<sup>nd</sup> degree black belt in Tae Kwon Do, shodan in Judo.

“*Surviving Armed Assaults* is a far-reaching and superbly informative text that relies on the author’s firsthand knowledge of weapons as a martial artist and security officer. His experiences are backed by recent statistics. A crucial part of the self-defense equation is the ability to understand violence, including knowledge of how weapons function and how they can fail, how an armed assailant reasons, and what he (or she) is looking for prior to an attack. Lawrence Kane’s knowledge of violence has allowed him to write a very valid and insightful book. I particularly appreciated the color-coded awareness levels, which help the reader classify and quantify the danger in order to understand it better.” – **Martina Sprague**, author of *Fighting Science, Strength and Power Training for Martial Arts, Combat Fitness for the Elite Female Martial Artist*, and *Norse Warfare: A History*.

“At long last, a no-nonsense book on armed assaults! Lawrence Kane has written a thorough, well-researched and highly-accessible guide to this vitally important subject. This book should in no way to be confused with those that claim to offer “practical” techniques and advice, but instead perpetuate many dangerous myths and impractical elaborate disarms. This book tells it how it is! *Surviving Armed Assaults* covers all aspects of dealing with armed assailants and gives you all the information you need to keep yourself and your loved ones safe. All serious martial artists should read this superb text.” – **Iain Abernethy**, author of *Bunkai Jutsu, Karate’s Grappling Methods, Throws for Strikers, Arm-Locks for All Styles*, and *Mental Strength*; British Combat Association Hall of Fame Member, 5<sup>th</sup> degree black belt in Wado Ryu karate.

“Lawrence Kane has done an excellent job of giving very practical and realistic information on how to handle a variety of scenarios that is helpful even for non karate practitioners. His examples help get the message across. In addition, he includes valid probability statements on the likelihood of an incident occurring or not occurring, based on crime statistics. The book will spark your thinking of what you should or shouldn’t do in different scenarios, and gives some practical solutions, weighing different ethical, moral, criminal and civil principles. Kane’s advice on self defense and moral and legal aspects is right on target and sound advice. This book is highly recommended!” – **Vicky M. Stormo**, Chief of Police, University of Washington Police Department.

“Read this book, it is a very well researched summary of street violence. Kane mixes the right amount of sociological data with well chosen first hand accounts of past events to present a refreshingly clear illustration of what actual street violence is. The book’s title can be deceiving, as the book is about much more than weapon involvement in street violence. This book presents street violence from the perspective of a civilian, in a refreshingly non-macho, un-romantic manner. Kane understands that most combative or combative-sport practitioners are filled with numerous fallacies when it comes to actual violence. This book sets forth to offer real perspective without being preachy. Kane has something for everybody in this book. No matter if you are an expert or novice, you will glean something from reading this. Rarely do we find such a good summary of a topic that is so broad, no aspect is ignored, including those aspects, which are not so obvious.” – **Aaron Fields**, 4<sup>th</sup> degree black belt; firefighter.

I was fortunate enough to receive an advance copy of Mr. Kane’s newest book. As with a previous effort of his, *The Way of Kata*, this one was again a researcher’s dream. Kane’s book is, if nothing else, comprehensive. He goes over far more than just physical self-defense techniques. This book covers the psychology of an assailant as well as what to look for in any situation. Kane peppers his text with a fine mix of statistics as well as quotes from other notables in the field such as Loren Christensen, Marc MacYoung, Massad Ayoob and others. I would bet that he has lectured on this topic quite a bit as his text is a good mix of conversational English and lecturer. It is an easy read and never gets dull. My favorite section covers the viewpoint of the law regarding a self-defense situation and how you should act when confronted by an investigating officer at the scene. This one section is worth the price of the book alone and this is a small section. I heartily recommend Mr. Kane’s book. It certainly has something for everyone from novice to master. – **Dan Anderson**, 8<sup>th</sup> degree black belt, 4 time national karate champion (who has won over 70 Grand Titles), 2002 Master’s Division World Champion; author of *American Freestyle Karate: A Guide To Sparring*.



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# Table of Contents

<i>Foreword (by Loren Christensen)</i>	xi
<i>Preface</i>	xv
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xvii
<i>Introduction</i>	xix
<i>How to Use this Book</i>	xxvii
CHAPTER 1 Awareness	1
Violent Crime by the Numbers	2
Weapon Awareness	8
Situational Awareness	32
Threat Level Color Codes	35
Fighting Ranges and Danger Zones	43
Summary	49
CHAPTER 2 Avoidance	53
Avoiding Risky Behavior	54
Principles of Personal Safety	55
Escalation to Violence	58
Evasion and Escape	62
Concealment and Cover	72
Summary	74
CHAPTER 3 Scenarios	77
Carjackings	77
Cash Machine Safety	81
Hostage Situations	84
Intimate Violence (Domestic Violence)	91
Planes, Trains, and Public Transportation	95
Sexual Assault, Rape, and Molestation	104
Workplace Violence	113
Summary	121
CHAPTER 4 De-Escalation Strategies	125
Talk	127
Active Listening	129
Command	133
Co-Opt	135
Submit	137
Summary	139

CHAPTER 5	Countervailing Force	143
	Legal Considerations of Countervailing Force	143
	AOJP Principle	147
	Ethical/Moral Considerations	149
	Combat Mindset	155
	Triggers	159
	Bystanders	161
	Summary	162
CHAPTER 6	Armed Conflict	167
	Levels of Force	167
	Principles of Defense	171
	Angles of Attack	178
	Stances and Footwork	182
	Range Considerations	188
	Empty Hand-to-Weapon vs. Weapon-to-Weapon Combat	192
	Summary	193
CHAPTER 7	Nine Rules to Live By	197
	1) Rule Number One is, “Don’t get hit”	198
	2) Pain is Your Friend	198
	3) Weapons Are Ubiquitous	199
	4) Always Assume They Are Armed	200
	5) Bad Guys Cheat to Win; So Should You	200
	6) Understand How Weapons Work	201
	7) Expect the Unexpected	202
	8) Yell for Help	203
	9) Check for Bleeding	204
CHAPTER 8	Aftermath of Violence	207
	Medical Triage	207
	Creating a Witness	211
	Interacting with Law Enforcement Personnel	216
	Working with an Attorney	220
	The Legal Process	223
	Dealing with the Press	226
	Summary	227

CHAPTER 9	Weapon Features/Functions	231
	Hand Weapons	236
	Knives	240
	Swords	248
	Mass Weapons	254
	Pole Arms	258
	Multi-Element Weapons	262
	Projectile Weapons	266
	Unusual Weapons	287
	Summary	293
CONCLUSION		297
	Rule number one is, “Don’t get hit”	298
	Pain is your friend	298
	Weapons are ubiquitous	299
	Always assume they are armed	299
	Bad guys cheat to win; so should you	299
	Understand how weapons work	299
	Expect the unexpected	299
	Yell for help	300
	Check for bleeding	300
	<i>Endnotes</i>	301
	<i>Glossary</i>	311
	<i>Bibliography</i>	317
	<i>Books</i>	317
	<i>Articles</i>	318
	<i>Web Sites</i>	319
	<i>Videos</i>	319
	<i>Index</i>	321



## Foreword

*by Loren Christensen*

During my 40 plus years in the martial arts and 29 years in law enforcement, I've learned that we need to tread carefully when using absolutes in our training, teaching and thinking about fighting, no matter if the battle is between two people or 10. Consider the absolutes "always" and "never." These can be dangerous words.

*"An assailant with a knife would never attack like that."*

*"A gunman will always threaten you this way."*

*"A strong punch here will always drop an attacker."*

*"Nine out of 10 fights always go to the ground."*

You have to wonder how the speaker knows these things. Were there studies done? Did someone compile statistics? To my knowledge, there has never been such an impossible study. Even if there were, there is no way to predict future fights.

So, what is so bad about these commonly heard claims? For one, they are not always true. Just because the scuffle you had on the basketball court ended up on the floor, or just because your cousin's friend was attacked by a guy who stabbed at him with a downward slash, doesn't make these characteristics absolutes in the world of fighting. It is dangerous to have these claims ingrained into your mind because they can cause you to train a certain way—a limited way. If you believe that an assailant would never attack in a particular manner, you are not going to train for that possibility. That can come back to bite you big time.

I always get a kick out of this one.

*"A trained knife fighter would never attack you that way."*

It's been my experience and the experience of every cop I've ever talked to, that being confronted by a trained knife fighter is about as rare as finding a Yellow Page ad for a martial arts school where the teacher isn't a past world champion.

During my decades policing the mean streets of Portland, Oregon and the war-torn streets of Saigon, Vietnam, I went toe-to-toe with assailants armed with shards of glass, boards with nails protruding from an end, a table leg with a screw sticking out, sharpened sticks, screwdrivers, knives of every make and style, and many other cutting instruments. Not one of these wielders of pointy objects was trained in ways of combat with these weapons. Yet they were still dangerous. While I was fortunate enough to never get nicked, people they had attacked before I got to the scene were not so fortunate.

During my first week as a rookie cop, my partner and I responded to a domestic

fight, finding the wife sitting in a comfortable living room chair with a kitchen knife protruding obscenely from her throat. Her husband was a railroad man who had never trained with a blade. He resisted arrest long and hard, but we eventually prevailed.

On another occasion, I was in a rough part of town taking a report from a man who was clearly in shock. His girlfriend, he said, had “threatened” him with a knife. After talking with the frightened man for nearly five minutes, he turned his head to the side to look at something. That is when I saw it, or maybe I should say, did not see it. His right ear was gone, sliced neatly from his head by his girlfriend who had clearly done more than just threaten. We looked for it for several minutes, eventually finding it under a parked car. Was the woman a trained knife fighter? No. Just a 50-year-old intoxicated street person.

Most knife assaults are not carried out by trained knife fighters. However, how trained do you have to be to wield a sharp tool and stick it into someone? In the 1998 movie *The Mask of Zorro*, master swordsman Anthony Hopkins’s character asks Antonio Banderas, the new Zorro-in-training, “Do you know how to use that thing?” referring to a sword.

“Yes!” he answers. “The pointy end goes into the other man.”

That is how simple it is and, consequently, what makes a cutting weapon so dangerous. And why you should never rule out any kind of attack? The next time your training partner or even your teacher tells you that a knife fighter would never hold a knife in such a grip or attack in such a way, say politely, “I’d like to practice it anyway.”

British Comedian Eddie Izzard says, “Guns don’t kill people; people kill people. And monkeys do too, if they have a gun.” For sure, a monkey can shoot a gun, and so can a drunk, your angry buddy, a disgruntled co-worker, and a six-year-old child.

The classic way to practice disarming is for your partner to point a gun at you from your front, side, or back. You train this way because for the most part these are the positions in which you are likely to try to disarm.

I know cops who have successfully disarmed people from this classic position. I’ve done it once, but it was not against a bad guy. It was against my six-year-old daughter. For years, I drilled and drilled into my kids that they were never to touch my guns. I told them I would not leave them out in the open, but should I make a mistake and do so, they were not to touch it but to come and tell me. This worked all the years they were growing up. Except once.

I had placed my .38 snub-nosed revolver in its holster on top of the camping gear that was to go into the car trunk. I then went into the kitchen to get something and when I turned around my daughter stuck my revolver in my stomach, and said with a smile, “Bang, bang,” as she tried to pull the trigger with her too-weak finger. As quick as a wink I bladed my body and snatched the gun away.

After I got out of the bathroom, I talked to my crying child about how daddy had made a mistake and so had she.

My other disarms were not as textbook (if you want to think of your child trying to gun you down as textbook).

There was the guy who after shooting a store clerk ran into the phone booth to make a call. My partner and I spotted him and we jammed him so he couldn't reach for his gun. But that didn't keep him from trying. There isn't a lot of room in a phone booth for one person making a call, let alone three people fighting for a gun. The good guys won, but not without a heart-hammering struggle.

There was the 16-year-old burglary suspect my partner and I were interviewing in his home with his mother. All was going well until he stood up to supposedly stretch, but then lunged for a rifle that was propped against a wall behind a door. I dived for the weapon with one hand and squeezed the front of his throat with the other, while at the same time my partner wrapped his 19-inch biceps around the kid's neck in a choke hold and grabbed the barrel of the gun with his other hand. We had control of the weapon, but it took a few seconds to free my hand that was trapped under my partner's massive arm.

There was the guy I pulled out of his car by his hair as he tried to retrieve his pistol from the floor.

And there was the guy I punched reflexively in the ear as he yanked my partner's gun from its holster.

There were many others, but you get the idea that not all disarm situations are those classic ones typically practiced in class. It makes sense, therefore, to practice in as many ways as your imagination can conjure, and then some. Just don't let anyone ever tell you, "A guy with a gun would never do that." Should you hear that, say to the person, "Just in case, let's practice it anyway." Hey, it's your life you might have to defend.

The book you are about to read takes the same self-defense philosophy I've been discussing. Lawrence Kane has done a marvelous job within these pages drawing upon his own vast experience in martial arts training and in real-world self-defense situations. Just as he has left no possibility unexamined in his own training and teaching, he has done likewise in his research and presentation in this excellent work. If you bought this book thinking you're getting a self-defense manual against weapons, you are. But he goes beyond mere technique to teach you all facets of the subject.

Lawrence begins with a discussion on the critical importance of personal awareness and ways to avoid dangerous situations. Understanding these chapters alone will help keep you out of danger. He then discusses common everyday places where you are likely to come face to face with a violent perpetrator. Should it happen, he teaches you ways to de-escalate an aggressor's intent. A rarity in this type of book,

Lawrence next discusses the ethical, moral and religious aspects of self-defense, as well as the necessary mindset to use extreme force in your defense.

The next three chapters deal with the down and dirty of fighting for your life against an armed assailant. Lawrence gives you more than just the physical; he also discusses ways to think before, during and after the confrontation.

The book ends with critical information on a variety of weapons you're likely to run into. A martial arts teacher once said, "I don't want you to fight, but if you have to, it's nice to know how. With this last chapter, I hear Lawrence saying, "I hope you never have to defend against a weapon, but should it happen, here are a number of weapons you might run into and critical information you need to know about them."

You made a good choice getting this book. Read it. Study it. Ingrain it. And train.

Always train.

Loren W. Christensen  
[www.lwcbooks.com](http://www.lwcbooks.com)

*Loren Christensen began his martial arts training in 1965, earning 10 black belts over the years, 7 in karate, 2 in jujitsu, and 1 in arnis. He is a retired police officer with 29 years experience in military and civilian law enforcement, where he specialized in street gangs, defensive tactics, and dignitary protection. He is the author of 31 books on the martial arts, self-defense, law enforcement, nutrition, prostitution, and post traumatic stress disorder. His book On Combat, which he co-authored with Lt .Col. Dave Grossman, is mandatory reading at the United States War College in Washington, DC. Loren's web site is [www.lwcbooks.com](http://www.lwcbooks.com).*

## Preface

*“Not to be the bearer of bad tidings, but the reason someone uses a weapon on another human being is to stack the deck in their favor. People don’t use weapons to fight, they use weapons to win. The absolute last thing any attacker wants to do is to fight you with equal weapons. If he was looking for a fight he wouldn’t have attacked you with a weapon in the first place. And if he knows you have a knife, he is going to attack you with a bigger and better weapon to keep you from winning. You pull a knife and he gets a club. You pull a club and he pulls a gun. There is no fighting involved, you use the superior weapon to disable your opponent. And you do it before he does it to you.”<sup>1</sup>*

– Marc “Animal” MacYoung

Most people intuitively understand that dealing with weapons effectively is far more challenging than surviving unarmed assaults, yet many martial artists are not adequately prepared for such encounters. Unfortunately armed assaults are quite commonplace. The sad fact is that ordinary citizens are victimized an average of 1,773,000 times per year by weapon-wielding thugs in the United States alone. More than 90 percent of all homicides, about half of all robberies, and a quarter of all assaults involve an armed assailant.

Self-defense training that does not consider the very real possibility of an armed attack is dangerously incomplete. Unfortunately, many martial systems, particularly traditional ones, lack a comprehensive weapons familiarity program. There is an awful lot of dangerous stuff out there to be concerned about. About a third of all homicide victims are killed by knives, blunt objects, or similar weapons, while the rest are typically murdered by some type of firearm, more often than not a handgun. Although crimes committed with or without weapons are about equally likely to result in victim injury, armed assaults are 3.5 times more likely to result in serious damage to the victim such as broken bones, internal injuries, loss of consciousness, or similar trauma resulting in extended hospitalization.

No one wants a fair fight, least of all a criminal who is looking to make a quick profit at your expense. It really does not take a whole lot of skill or special training to use many types of weapons effectively. That is why lawbreakers frequently use them to stack the deck in their favor. In the minds of many, the term “fight” implies a rule-based contest between relative equals such as you would find in a martial arts tournament or boxing match. I prefer to use terms like ambush, slaughter, or assassination when describing armed combat on the street. Anyone coming at you with a weapon is planning to win at all costs. There is no fight, at least not in the traditional sense of the word.

If your self-defense training does not consider the very real possibility of an armed attack, you are putting yourself at risk. I do not assert that all martial artists need to be experts in any particular weapons form nor do they even have to demonstrate a particular interest in such techniques, but I sincerely believe that it is remiss to suggest that we do not need to know about weapons at all. Bad guys simply do not hesitate to use them even in public places where you might not naturally expect them to do so. That is part of what classifies such individuals as “bad.”

Colonel Jeff Cooper<sup>2</sup> wrote, “Anyone who is aware of his environment knows that the peril of physical assault does exist, and that it exists everywhere and at all times. The police, furthermore, can protect you from it only occasionally.” When it comes to defending yourself from armed aggressors, you cannot count on receiving timely assistance, nor any help at all for that matter. You may have to go it alone. Consequently, you must acquire the knowledge, skills, and ability to safeguard yourself.

The evidence is compelling; the danger is quite real. Anyone whose interest in martial arts is driven in part by a desire to remain safe must learn about weapons in order to do so. Every martial practitioner should be both mentally and physically prepared to deal with an armed assault. Exposure must be comprehensive enough to account for the plethora of pointy objects, blunt instruments, and unfriendly projectiles that may someday be used against them.

## Introduction

*“There will be no justice as long as man will stand with a knife or with a gun and destroy those who are weaker than he is.”<sup>1</sup>*

*– Isaac Bashevis Singer*

When dealing with weapons, awareness is the best defense followed immediately by avoidance and strategic withdrawal. Most violent encounters with a blade, for example, begin with a victim who is unaware of the fact that the aggressor is even armed until he or she has already been injured, sometimes fatally. Unfortunate, but all too often true. Even though they must take place at very close range, knife attacks typically occur unexpectedly when assailants can use the element of surprise to ambush a victim.

It really does not matter how fast or strong you are, nor how developed your martial prowess, if you do not detect the presence of a weapon before it is used against you. For example, on April 29, 2001, taekwon do champion Mark Acaley, 25, was shot to death by gang member Grin “Smurf” Arkanit who was sentenced a year later to 51.4 years in prison for the murder. Acaley, a Minneapolis native, had traveled to Seattle (Washington) to compete in the annual West Coast Tae Kwon Do Championship at Bellevue Community College in the hours prior to the shooting. After winning a silver medal, he and a group of friends went to a nightclub in Seattle’s International District to celebrate.

Later in the evening, they were driving from the nightclub to a nearby restaurant when Arkanit opened fire on their rented SUV. Hit in the chest, Acaley died at the scene. His friend James Franklin took two slugs to his right leg and later recovered. The remaining passengers were unharmed. Sadly, Acaley and Franklin never even recognized the threat until Arkanit began firing the first of 13 rounds into their vehicle. The shooter was motivated by a mistaken belief that Acaley and his friends were men with whom he had a confrontation earlier that evening.

Another self-defense expert who recently suffered a similar fate was Alex Blue, a 41-year old Scottish kickboxing champion, who was murdered in Glasgow on June 21, 2004. A few weeks before his murder he demonstrated his martial prowess by successfully fending off an attack by two baseball bat-wielding thugs near his home. Another champion kickboxer James Curran, 42, was shot to death during a karaoke session at the Green Lizard pub in Dublin Ireland on April 3, 2005. A 47-year-old security guard was charged with his murder.

Even trained law enforcement professionals can succumb to sneak attacks. On May 8, 2005 Denver police detective Donald Young, 43, was shot to death and a sec-

ond detective, John Bishop, was also wounded while the two worked off-duty providing uniformed security at a private party. Young, a decorated 12-year veteran detective, was shot three times in the back, while his partner Bishop was also shot from behind. Bishop was treated and released from the hospital shortly thereafter. Young and Bishop were off-duty but in uniform while providing security outside a rental hall often used for birthday and baptism parties. Two other officers who were nearby rushed to the aid of the fallen detectives and saw a man fleeing with what appeared to be a weapon, early reports said.

On April 17, 2005, detective James Allen, a 27-year veteran of the Providence, Rhode Island police department, was overpowered by a prisoner he was interrogating and killed in the police conference room with his own gun. Esteban Carpio, who was being questioned about the stabbing of an 84-year-old woman (who survived the attack), allegedly grabbed the officer's gun, shot him, broke a third floor window in an adjacent office, and jumped onto a service road to make his escape. He was captured after a brief struggle a few blocks away and subsequently charged with murder. Police said Carpio was injured in his jump from the window and was subsequently treated at a hospital for injuries to his leg, arm, and head.

If you are thinking feet and fists only to discover a knife or other weapon in the middle of a fight you are more than likely doomed. The stark reality is that most victims of weapon attacks do not recognize the severity of the threat in time to react properly. Imi Sde-Or<sup>2</sup>, the founder of Krav Maga, wrote,

*“Victims who survived a violent confrontation against a knife-wielding assailant consistently reported that they were completely unaware of the existence of the weapon until after they had suffered stab or slash wounds. In essence, these survivors of edged weapon attacks state that they believed they were engaged in some sort of fist fight; only later, after sustaining injuries, did they realize that the assailant was armed.”*

Many such attacks are made from behind. In order to remain safe you must be vigilant, aware of everything happening around you at all times, at least in places where potential adversaries may be present. Constantly scan your environment, being sure to listen as well as look. Take special care near potential ambush areas such as building corners, doorways, and ornamental foliage. Beware of people acting strangely. Stay out of bad neighborhoods and dangerous locations if at all possible.

If you can, keep sufficient distance between you and a potential assailant to give you time to react. Minimum distance is generally considered to be 21 feet though some experts argue that even that gap is not sufficient. While that may seem a rather lengthy separation, several tests, including the famous Tueller Drill, have been conducted that validate this assertion. This drill, named for Sergeant Dennis Tueller of



the Salt Lake City Police Department, was first described in his 1983 *S.W.A.T.* magazine article “How Close Is Too Close”.

In his drill, Tueller conducted a series of tests showing that people of various ages, weights, and heights could close a distance of 21 feet in an average time of 1.5 seconds, about as long as it takes for a highly trained officer to draw a handgun and fire one or two aimed shots. Knowing that people who have been shot do not often fall down instantly, or otherwise stop dead in their tracks, Tueller concluded that a person armed with a blade or a blunt instrument at a range of 21 feet was a potentially lethal threat. A defensive handgun instructor whose class I took reiterated this point, stating that it takes a fatally wounded person between 10 and 120 seconds to drop so you must fire then move off-line, expecting your attacker to continue their assault even after your bullets have hit him or her.

In training as well as in real-life encounters, even highly trained police officers are frequently unable to draw their guns and fire a shot before being cut, sometimes fatally, by a knife-wielding opponent moving toward them from distances as great as 20 to 30 feet. It is reasonable to assert that the average martial artist is somewhat less prepared for such encounters than the typical law enforcement professional. The best response I have found for dealing with these situations is either to run like hell, respond with a bigger weapon, or both.

If you have an avenue of escape, your best course of action is usually to swallow your pride and run away. Unfortunately, that is not always a possibility and you may have to defend yourself or a loved one from armed assault. If you cannot escape but can do something that immediately prevents the attack from getting started that is your second best bet. The third alternative is to create sufficient distance to deploy a better weapon.

If all else fails, you can try to go berserk, hoping to stop your attacker before you are fatally injured yourself. This is the least preferred scenario. In such cases you must be prepared to use any available weapon (e.g., rock, stick, belt, shoe, flashlight, set of car keys, garbage can lid) to even the odds. Unlike a gunfight where a bullet can miss or a fistfight where you can use your martial skills to avoid being hit, you can pretty much count on being injured in a knife attack. Never forget, the term “assassination” more accurately describes such encounters than the word “fight” does. This is a perspective that merits careful consideration.

Footwork is the most important defense fundamental when engaged with a weapon-wielding assailant. Your ability to move quickly in any direction will not only help you avoid being injured, but may also open windows of opportunity for counterattack. These types of encounters are extremely anaerobic and typically brutal. If you have been hurt and are bleeding, you will weaken rapidly and must end the fight as quickly as possible.

There are no absolutes in real-life self-defense encounters. Too many variables exist. Nevertheless, the bottom line for most professionals is that the only way to guarantee survival in an armed encounter is to avoid getting into one in the first place through a combination of awareness, avoidance and, where possible, de-escalation. De-escalation is an essential skill. At times, it is possible to talk, negotiate, or even laugh your way out of a fight. Yes, I have actually been able to laugh my way out of a knife fight:

It was late in the third quarter of a nationally televised football game between two intrastate college rivals. The winner would receive not only bragging rights of a heroic victory in this annual event, but an invitation to the Rose Bowl as Pac 10 champion. Emotions amongst the 78,000+ attendees were naturally running hot, especially in the east end zone where students and alumni from both schools sat in close proximity hurling insults and the occasional solid object at each other. I was responsible for keeping them in line and, along with my crew, ensuring that no one got hurt.

Though alcohol was prohibited, many of the students applied ingenuity bordering on sheer genius to smuggling in and consuming mass quantities undetected. Anyone we had already caught drinking had previously been ejected from the game, so we were dealing with primarily hard-core fans and hard-core party animals, two of which began a shoving match in the stands.

As I approached the scuffle, I scanned the rest of the crowd. Most were uninterested, intently watching the game so I felt little concern that things would escalate too badly before I got there. After all, it was more pushing, shoving, and expletives than an outright fight. I also spotted two pairs of police officers, the closest 60 or 70 feet away. Like most of the fans, however, their attention was focused on the field yet they were close enough to react if I needed help.

I felt confident that I could handle the situation. Wanting to put a damper on things quickly before someone actually got hurt or other fans got involved I broke my own safety rule and decided not to bother bringing anyone else along to back me up.

As I approached the two rowdies, one saw me coming, had a change of heart, and backed off. The other noticed my approach and turned to face me. As I prepared to speak to him, he reached into his pocket, withdrew a four-inch switchblade knife, flicked open the blade, and took a step toward me.

Now I have had more than a few occasions when irate fans took a poke at me with a fist and/or a foot, but that was the first time anyone had drawn an actual weapon. Not only was the switchblade illegal in its own right, but weapons of any kind were banned from the stadium.\* Moreover, there were thousands of witnesses not to mention camera crews all around the incident. I just could not fathom the mentality of anyone who thought they could stab someone in such a public place and not get caught.

\*Except active duty for law enforcement personnel, of course.

The first thing that flashed through my mind was not fear of being cut, though perhaps it should have been. My first thought was actually trepidation of being spotlighted on national television beating the tar out of somebody, even if I had a darn good reason for doing so. I should also point out that unlike the vast majority of my time away from the stadium I was not armed myself. Yet even if I had been, there was no way I would discharge a firearm with a 100 percent certainty of hitting an innocent bystander should I miss my opponent or the bullet travel through my attacker.

In the second or two, I had to figure out how to stop this guy from killing or maiming me without being accused of excessive force I was so struck by the absurdity of the situation that I broke out laughing. It was not an intentional tactic, but my unexpected reaction froze the guy in his tracks nevertheless. Sometimes laughter really is the best medicine.

When he gave me a puzzled look I cocked my head toward the nearby officers and said, "Put that thing away before they shoot you!" It suddenly dawned on him that he had pulled a blade in front of a huge crowd of witnesses including two cops (who still had not noticed) so he closed the knife, shoved it back into his pocket, and sat back down. I had him arrested a short while later.

To assure our personal safety, we must be prepared to face just about anything on the street. Beyond the obvious knives, swords, chemical spray canisters, stun guns, and good old fashioned firearms, you can potentially find sticks, stones, baseball bats, pool cues, boards, bottles, hammers, tire irons, wrenches, screwdrivers, ice picks, chop sticks, box cutters, belts, chains, rolled coins, canes, attack dogs, chainsaws, hair dryers, furniture, fire extinguishers, and even laptop computers in an adversary's makeshift arsenal. Understanding how such implements work in actual combat is much more useful than one might initially imagine.

"Good guys" can use weapons too. I have blocked a punch with a clipboard and poked an opponent in the ribs with a radio antenna to great effect. I have also defended myself with a ski pole as well as an expandable baton and have even flashed a gun to convince an aggressor to find someone else to pick on. Fortunately, I did not have to withdraw it from the holster and shoot him. Had I not been better prepared and better armed than he was at the time, however, things could have gotten ugly.

If your goals for learning a martial art include the ability to defend yourself from a real-life attacker, you absolutely, positively must learn how to contend effectively with an armed assault. Experience dictates that if you do not have at least a passing familiarity with how weapons work you are practically begging to get hurt by one.

At a minimum, your tactics must adapt to the longer range and greater lethality of an armed aggressor as opposed to an unarmed one. You should also consider the

fact that untrained adversaries, many of whom employ weapons, often act in erratic and unpredictable ways. Even though traditional martial systems contain techniques for dealing with certain types of weapons (e.g., *kobudo*), some empty-hand strategies are simply incompatible with armed attacks.

When facing the prospect of an armed opponent you must understand where, how, and when you would need to adapt if you wish to survive. Many grappling techniques, for example, require you to get a bit too close to a knife for my comfort. Kelly Worden<sup>3</sup> agrees. He wrote, “In reality, whether in the streets of our inner cities or on the battlefield in a war zone, it takes nothing more than a simple boot knife or folding pocketknife to kill or maim a grappling strategist during a physical engagement.” That is not to say that there

is absolutely no place for traps, locks, and disarms when dealing with knives, assuming you are a true master of such techniques. No matter what martial style you practice, controlling an opponent’s arms (or elbows) and disrupting his or her balance is a sound strategy, one best executed at close range. For the lesser-trained practitioners, however, many grappling applications are risky indeed. No matter how well trained you are, against a blade many types of takedowns are a recipe for murder—your own.

Even if you do study a weapon-based form that does not automatically mean that you are prepared to deal with an armed assault on the street. *Kobudo* practitioners, for example, learn how to turn common farm implements such as the *bo* (staff), *tonfa* (gristmill handle), *kama* (sickle), *kuwa* (hoe), and *ueku* (oar) into effective weapons yet they do not always consider other improvised devices they might confront on the street or how to respond when the practitioner him or herself is unarmed. Furthermore, these forms frequently assume specified lines of attack and often do not deal with scenarios where an opponent has taken the practitioner by surprise.

One of my favorite weapons for home defense is a rock pick,\* a short-hafted tool with a hammer on one side and a slightly curved spike on the other. This weapon is not only effective in close quarters, but it also eliminates the worry of stray bullets



MODERN ROCK PICK AND MEDIEVAL WAR HAMMER. THE ROCK PICK IS ON THE LEFT. NOTE THAT THEY ARE SIMILARLY CONSTRUCTED.

\*Other than a gun which is my first choice.

traveling through sheetrock into an innocent victim. Used by rock hounds and lapidaries, it costs around \$35 at most hardware stores. Little to no training is required to deliver crushing blows with the hammerhead, while the tempered steel pick can punch through heavy clothing or even high-tech body armor much like a medieval war hammer could break through a knight's protective plate.

An important advantage of this tool is that should an opponent only block your arm or the haft of the rock pick they will be hit by the point anyway. I have seen training knives and guns in many *dojos*, but never a rubber ax, rock pick, or war hammer. Do you know how you would defend yourself against extrusion weapons? If so, have you practiced the appropriate techniques recently? This type of attack is not as far-fetched as it seems. On March 9, 2005, a 36-year-old Lynnwood (Washington) man murdered his father with an ax just a few miles North of where I live in Seattle. He then turned himself in at a nearby mental services center in Edmonds and confessed his crime. Axes and other extrusion weapons are used to commit numerous murders throughout the world each year.

Training must be holistic, realistic, and adaptable. Any mistake you make when dealing with an armed opponent may well be your last. It is critical to think about how to adapt your martial arts techniques to unexpected movements by your assailant.

Several years ago, I had a confrontation with an aggressive teenager who was breaking car headlights in my neighborhood using an aluminum baseball bat. Although I probably had a legal right to draw my gun and respond with countervailing force when he attacked me, he was much younger than I was and I felt that such a response would literally be overkill. For a martial arts instructor and firearms expert, I am a really a very non-violent guy. Besides, I had enough experience with weapons that I thought I had a pretty good idea of what to do.

In my sword training, there is a tandem drill that teaches practitioners how to use range and angle to avoid a strike. As the blow comes toward us, we shift slightly out of range to keep from being hit, then follow the weapon back in to counterattack before it can be redirected. Although it is a sword-to-sword drill, I figured that the same principles would apply to an unarmed confrontation against a bat as well.

Assuming I could use the same technique to disarm this kid without either of us getting seriously hurt I prepared to do so. Unfortunately, he was not on the same lesson plan. As I shifted out of range, he simply let go of the bat, something I had never seen done with a sword. It flew a short distance through the air and rapped me across the head and shoulder with stunning force.

Before I realized what had happened I was on the ground in dire straits. I still do not actually remember falling, yet once I hit the ground, I had the presence of mind to scissor his legs, knocking him down before he could do anything worse. I followed

up by grabbing a hold of one of his feet, pulling him in, and simultaneously kicking him in the family jewels to end the fight. Not quite what I had planned, yet effective nevertheless.

Some martial styles begin with empty-hand techniques then progress to weapons while others begin with weapons forms and work the other way around. Unfortunately, not all styles cross-pollinate. If I had a less varied background, I doubt I would have survived my close encounter with a baseball bat and come away with only a few bruises.\*

If you do not regularly train with weapons yet have an opportunity to participate in a seminar or visit an instructor of such arts I highly encourage you to do so. After all, you simply cannot learn everything you need to know from any book, not even this one. Knowledge must be applied; techniques must be practiced. Regardless, the broader your understanding of weapons, the greater your odds of reacting appropriately when you run into one on the street. Such encounters are, unfortunately, quite commonplace.

This book includes nine chapters that can be briefly summarized as follows:

**Chapter 1 (Awareness)** helps you develop the skills necessary to identify a potential threat and prepare for an assault before it is too late to react. This section covers crime statistics, the types of weapons you might encounter on the street, common concealment strategies, situational awareness, and fighting ranges/danger zones.

**Chapter 2 (Avoidance)** demonstrates that, ego notwithstanding, it is far better to withdraw than it is to face the consequences of causing or allowing an argument to escalate to the point of physical confrontation. This section covers fundamental principles of personal safety, the escalation process, evasion, escape, concealment, and cover.

**Chapter 3 (Scenarios)** delves in-depth into various self-defense situations you could encounter in your everyday life to help you better prepare for any eventuality. Scenarios discussed include carjacking, cash machine safety, hostage situations, intimate (domestic) violence, public transportation, sexual assault, and workplace violence.

**Chapter 4 (De-Escalation)** covers strategies you can employ to help keep confrontations from boiling over into violent encounters.

**Chapter 5 (Countervailing Force)** covers important aspects of physical confrontations including the legal aspects of self-defense, ethical/moral considerations, psychological effects of violence, combat mindset, triggers, and the unpredictability of bystanders.

**Chapter 6 (Armed Conflict)** delves into what happens when real-life confrontations get ugly. This section covers levels of force that you might employ to defend yourself, principles that can help you defeat an armed attacker, angles of attack, empty hand vs. weapon combat, footwork, and range considerations.

\*Yes, I'm not ashamed to admit that my ego was one of them.

**Chapter 7 (Nine Rules to Live By)** summarizes essential principles from the rest of the book that can help keep you safe on the street, collecting them all in one place for added emphasis. If you remember nothing else from this book, Chapter 7 hits the highlights.

**Chapter 8 (Aftermath of Violence)** covers what happens after you survive a violent encounter, focusing on medical triage, legal concerns, and associated issues such as dealing with law enforcement personnel, attorneys, and the press.

**Chapter 9 (Weapon Features/Functions)** describes how various types of weapons are used so that you can be more familiar with the strengths and limitations of the various items you might use for self-defense or that might be used against you during an attack.

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### How to Use this Book

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As you can no doubt tell from the chapter summaries above, there is a lot of material in this book, perhaps more than most people can absorb in one pass. It may be useful, therefore, to read this work from cover to cover, and then go back and focus on the sections most applicable to your situation to help you internalize the materials most pertinent for you. Everything in here is important and necessary to provide a comprehensive picture of weapons, street violence, and countervailing force yet select areas may be more or less urgent for each individual reader.

The majority of readers will fall into one of three broad categories. Aligning yourself in this manner will help you individualize the contents to meet your needs.

**Category 1.** Little or no martial arts background combined with little or no street experience. The majority of people fall into this category, including those with a year or two of boxing, wrestling, or martial arts training who have managed to avoid serious violent encounters and wish to continue to do so.

**Category 2.** Advanced martial arts skills but little or no street experience. This includes professional or semi-pro boxers, wrestlers, and higher ranking martial artists (e.g., black belts) as well as individuals with concealed weapons permits who have received a high degree of training yet have not had to use that training on the street.

**Category 3.** Significant martial arts experience and a great deal of street savvy. This can include law enforcement officers, security personnel, and other professionals who have a high degree of training as well as experience with weapons and violence.



If you fall into Category 1, you will likely want to focus on awareness, avoidance, and de-escalation, the things that precede violent encounters. Without the knowledge, skill, and ability to fight back successfully, your greatest urgency is avoiding harm in the first place. Situational awareness and de-escalation skills are paramount. The various scenarios in chapter 3 may be especially useful.

If you fall into Category 2, you will probably want to focus on countervailing force, armed conflict, and the aftermath of violence. Without actual street experience it is easy to underestimate the seriousness of a violent encounter, particularly if you have never faced a weapon before. It is easy to develop a cavalier attitude, perhaps even subconsciously looking for conflicts in order to prove your martial prowess. You will want to understand the emotional, legal, and medical cost of such actions to assure that you will act in a prudent and well thought out manner should you be confronted by an adversary on the street. You will also benefit from a thorough understanding of the weapons features and functions to help plan your response in an unavoidable encounter.

If you fall into Category 3, you will probably want to focus on de-escalation, armed conflict, and aftermath of violence. Many people who fit this category have a high probability of experiencing a violent encounter because of their chosen profession. With both skill and experience comes a higher level of responsibility than most. You will want to refine your ability to resolve bad situations peacefully as well as to survive if de-escalation does not work. You will also benefit from a thorough understanding of the weapons features and functions to help plan your response.





PHOTO COURTESY OF AL ARSENAULT

## CHAPTER 2

# Avoidance

*“People should learn to see and so avoid all danger. Just as a wise man keeps away from mad dogs, so one should not make friends with evil men.”<sup>1</sup>*

– Buddha

In a review of Marc MacYoung’s book *Street E & E: Evading, Escaping, And Other Ways To Save Your Ass When Things Get Ugly* posted on Amazon.com, one customer wrote, “I guess it was pretty good, and I’m sure that a lotta folks will be able to get something out of it, but I could never run away. Maybe I’m stupid or something, but I just can’t do it. Of course, for all of you folks running away is probably really good advice—especially if you’re facing three attackers and they’ve all got knives. Valhalla, here I come!”

I hope this person was not serious, but I have met all too many martial artists for whom his/her perspective would resonate. There is absolutely nothing wrong with running away, especially if you wish to enjoy life beyond an extended stay in a jail cell or a one-way trip to the morgue. Will it kill you to swallow your ego and back down from a confrontation even if you are in the right? Probably not. Failing to do so, on the other hand, can have lasting repercussions including, but not limited to, your untimely demise.

In fact, the only way to guarantee victory in a physical confrontation is to walk away before the first blow is thrown. Although martial artists train to survive (or even triumph) in a fight, we should do everything we can to avoid violence in the first place. We can use humor, deception, bribery, or any other plausible tactic that might work. Even if a person legitimately uses force in order to escape an imminent and unavoidable danger, he or she will still have to live with the physiological and psychological results of doing so. Further, he or she must be prepared to face the prospect of subsequent litigation by the defeated opponent and/or a government prosecutor.

Avoidance is your best strategy for safety and survival. The more dangerous you are, the less you should need to prove it. Ego notwithstanding, it is far better to withdraw than it is to face the consequences of causing or allowing an argument to escalate to the point of physical confrontation.

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## Avoiding Risky Behavior

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*“The average citizen makes one terrible, frightening mistake when he buys a gun for self-defense. He sees the weapon as a talisman that magically wards off evil. In fact, it is nothing of the kind.”<sup>2</sup>*

– Massad Ayoob

Martial artists and people who carry weapons for self-defense frequently develop a feeling of invulnerability and begin to court danger in ways they never would have prior to beginning their training. Sauntering through a dark alley in a bad neighborhood after midnight, leering at a professional ballplayer’s girlfriend at a nightclub, and antagonizing protestors at a political rally are all bad ideas no matter how well trained or armed you happen to be. If you really need to prove how tough you are, there are plenty of relatively safe and thoroughly legal venues to consider such as Ultimate Fighting and similar “no-holds-barred” style tournaments<sup>3</sup>. Do not court trouble on the streets.

We talked about awareness conditions and danger zones in the previous chapter. Being prepared and alert for trouble can stave off most attacks before they even begin. Put yourself in a potential attacker’s shoes, taking note of locations where you might lurk if you wanted to get the jump on someone. A few extra precautions near these potential ambush sites can add an extra layer of safety.

For example, when approaching alleyways, doorways, and likely ambush locations swing wide to increase your odds of spotting an attacker before he or she can surprise you. Keep your hands free to the extent possible so that you are ready to use them at a moment’s notice. The sooner you spot a potential attacker the more time you will have to react.

Do your best to avoid perilous locations, dangerous times, and hazardous people. For example, if you need money from a cash machine during a night out, choose



AVOIDING AMBUSHES. SWING WIDE OF DOORWAYS, ALLEYS, AND POTENTIAL AMBUSH LOCATIONS TO GIVE YOUR SELF TIME TO REACT.

one in a well lit, populated store rather than using a freestanding parking lot kiosk or bank side ATM. Better still, use a credit card and avoid carrying large amounts of cash altogether. There is more information about cash machines and other hazardous situations in Chapter 3.

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### Principles of Personal Safety

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*“No one program can train you for every situation you encounter on the street because there are always surprises in a fight, things you never thought would happen. It’s important, therefore, that you are aware of your training’s strengths and weaknesses. Do all that you can to eliminate or at least minimize those weaknesses, but understand that you can’t get rid of them all. Assess the many possible situations you might get into where those weak points could raise their ugly heads and then take every precaution you can to avoid getting into them.”<sup>4</sup>*

– Loren Christensen

You can avoid risky behavior relatively easily simply by controlling your own actions yet you cannot forestall all danger no matter what you do. To keep yourself as safe as possible you must always be prepared to respond to confrontations, pre-planning what you might do should things go wrong. Purchasing this book is an excellent first step in the process.\*

Detective (ret) J. J. Bittenbinder suggests four principles for personal safety that I think are pragmatic, practical, and easy to remember. These include (1) making yourself a hard target, (2) denying privacy, (3) attracting attention, and (4) taking action as appropriate to your circumstances. The following is not a direct quote from his work, but uses his premises as foundational material.

#### **Never Make Yourself an Easy Target**

Tough, alert individuals are typically not selected by criminals. Predators are excellent at identifying body language, mental state, and awareness, automatically sorting the metaphorical sheep from the sheepdogs (and fellow wolves). The more alert and prepared you are, the less likely you are to be attacked.

Develop and hone your awareness, listening to your intuition to discern and avoid danger before you stumble upon it. Operate in Condition Yellow or higher in all public places. Train hard and realistically, preparing for the unlikely occurrence that you should need to utilize your martial skills to defend yourself.

I cannot remember who said it, but the phrase “somewhere, every day, someone is training to kick your ass” sums things up brilliantly. You can assume that anyone

\*Shameless self-promotion alert



PHOTO BY BRANDON POOLE

## CHAPTER 4

# De-Escalation Strategies

*“What are you going to do, shoot us?”<sup>1</sup>*

*– Nicole duFresne*

On January 27, 2005, actress Nicole duFresne was shot and killed by an armed robber immediately after uttering her fateful last words, “What are you going to do, shoot us?” This tragedy is an excellent case study in what not to do when confronted by an armed aggressor.

According to news reports, the suspect Rudy Fleming, age 19, and his friends allegedly believed that duFresne and her party would be easy marks for a purse snatching. What was supposed to be a simple property crime turned deadly when the 28-year old actress became confrontational with Fleming after he stole her friend’s purse and pistol-whipped her fiancé. She became furious, shoved him, and died shortly thereafter in her fiancé’s arms.

Many experts state that robbery is more often about power than anything else. Discussing the duFresne shooting, Alfonso Lenhardt of the National Crime Prevention Council said, “It’s a tragedy, but in this case it sounds like the suspect felt he wasn’t getting the respect he was due. When a gun is in the hands of a desperate person with low self-esteem, they’re going to react that way.”

Property is replaceable. Your life is not. If you can satisfy an attacker by giving him/her your wallet, you will be far better for it. After all, anything you live through and learn something from cannot be all bad. Save your righteous indignation for a safer environment after the immediate danger has past. It does you no good to be right yet dead. Having to be right despite the cost or reacting indignantly in the face of a threat frequently guarantees that a conflict will escalate out of control.

Rage is an extreme, energized, and frequently explosive state of anger, typically coinciding with an adrenaline rush, which further clouds the mind. Emotions overrule your common sense in this state. Like duFresne’s righteous indignation, road rage is another instance where an out of control attitude can get you killed. For example, Mark Leidheisl, 39, a regional senior vice president for Wells Fargo, died on April 20, 2005 from a blunt force trauma injury to the head. Sacramento police

reported that the incident that led to Leidheisl's death might have been fueled by road rage and that he appeared to have been the aggressor. An unmarked medicine bottle in Leidheisl's car contained Paxil (an antidepressant), morphine (extended tab painkiller), and an unidentified third pill type. Tests later found that he had a blood alcohol level of at least 0.13 (more than the legal driving limit of 0.08) and opiates in his system.

Reports state that Leidheisl allegedly cut off another vehicle while driving out of Arco Arena's parking lot after the Wednesday night game. Leidheisl, a friend and the two men in the other vehicle reportedly exchanged heated words, stopped and got out of their vehicles on a nearby street. During the subsequent fight, Leidheisl fell and hit his head on the pavement, causing the fatal injury. The suspects from the other vehicle, ages 43 and 44, reportedly left but contacted police after seeing news reports about how serious Leidheisl was hurt.

District Attorney Jan Scully told reporters, "After a thorough review of the police investigation, it is clear that Mark Leidheisl died as a result of mutual combat between him and Jeffrey Berndt. One punch thrown in self-defense by Jeffrey Berndt struck Mark Leidheisl in the face, causing him to fall backwards striking his head on the asphalt pavement. This fall fractured Leidheisl's skull, causing his death."

De-escalation is the opposite of escalation, a reduction of the intensity in a conflict. This same phenomenon can be seen in interpersonal, inter-company, and even international relations, as all conflict inevitably stems from disagreements among individuals regardless of what ideology or interest they represent. De-escalation can occur quickly, even spontaneously, especially when a conflict escalates so rapidly that the parties involved fear that any further escalation would be catastrophic and they back off. This only works so long as logic prevails over emotion, however. Enraged people seldom act in their own enlightened self-interest.

A good example of spontaneous de-escalation might be the so-called "Mexican standoff," a common movie cliché where two or more opponents have weapons, typically guns, aimed directly at each other at close range, so that one cannot attack the other without being hurt or killed themselves. Facing certain death, such individuals may be motivated to find a saner alternative. This tension makes movies interesting, but the scenario is not all that common in real life.

The Cuban Missile Crisis<sup>2</sup> was a more realistic example of this sort of thing actually occurring. This same type of phenomenon can also come into play in real-life self-defense situations where we face off against an aggressor who has not yet attacked. There are several strategies we can employ to facilitate de-escalation before things spiral out of control but it does take proactive effort. So long as at least one side believes they can win, de-escalation can be harder to achieve. It is often brought about by changing the context and/or by convincing a predator that it will be too



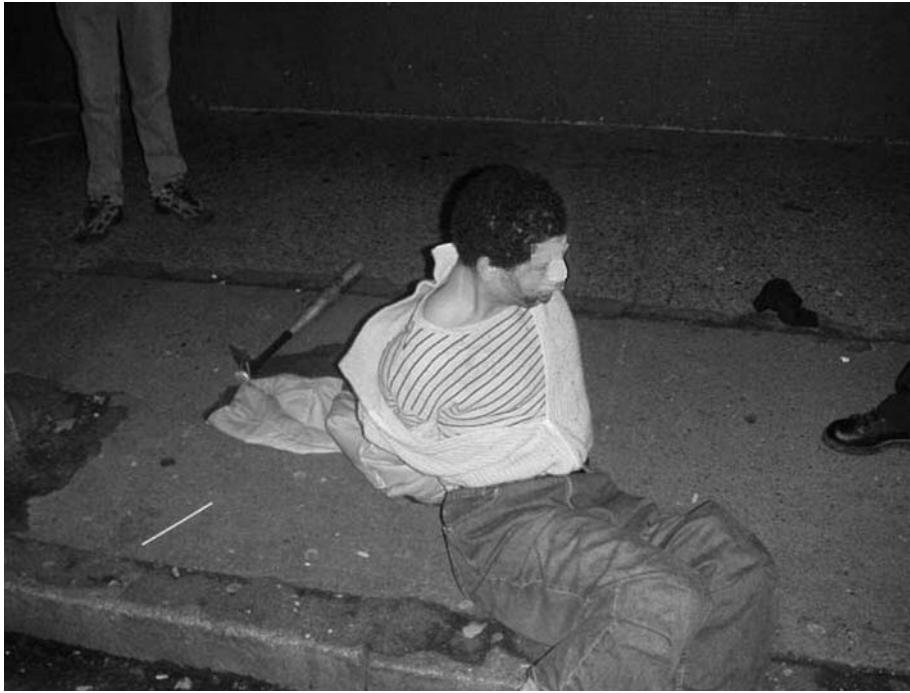


PHOTO COURTESY OF AL ARSEMAULT



## CHAPTER 5

# Countervailing Force

*“We sleep safe in our beds because rough men stand ready in the night to visit violence on those who would do us harm.”<sup>1</sup>*

– George Orwell

Physical violence should be last-ditch effort to keep yourself safe after awareness, avoidance, and de-escalation have all failed to do so. Countervailing force, or physical self-defense, is violence applied against an aggressor to keep him or her from hurting you. In the process, you may intentionally or unintentionally injure, maim, or kill an opponent. Because of this possibility, the legal, moral, spiritual, and psychological aspects of self-defense must be explored.

During combat, it takes both physical skills and mental determination to survive. We will also discuss the combat mindset necessary to carry you through a battle as well as the mental triggers that can help you know when there is no choice but to engage an enemy.

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### Legal Considerations of Countervailing Force

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*“You may find yourself tangling with criminals or terrorists. Sometimes you’ll need to neutralize them until the police arrive, and sometimes you’ll be forced to kill. Either way you must act on moral, ethical, and legal principles that are based on the circumstances... use discretion. Remember that you are the good guy and act like one.”<sup>2</sup>*

– W. Hock Hochheim

Let us face it practitioners of the martial arts, even those whose primary goal is not self-defense, learn dangerous, even deadly techniques. We have an obligation to understand not only how to hurt someone, but also when it is appropriate to do so. Every martial practitioner should have a good understanding of the law as it applies to countervailing force. While the specifics often vary by jurisdiction, the following principles generally apply:

- Adopt a defense-oriented mindset.
- Strive to avoid confrontation.
- Understand self-defense laws.
- Ensure a legitimate claim of self-defense.
- Understand the legalities of deadly force.
- Understand how the courts might rule.
- Never overreact.
- If you must fight, respond judiciously.

### 1) Adopt a Defense-Oriented Mindset

Most martial practitioners have been taught to avoid conflict. Karate, for example, is first and foremost a defensive art. This essential tradition is best described by Gichin Funakoshi's famous saying, "*karate ni sente nashi*" which translates as "there is no first strike in karate." This convention helps practitioners of potentially lethal arts behave in a manner appropriate to interaction within polite society, something I think we would all agree is a positive thing indeed. This mindset is so important that it goes beyond mere words and is reflected in the training methods and physical movements of the art. For example, every *kata* in Goju Ryu karate begins with a defensive technique.

To ensure clarity, however, cutting off an attack before it is fully in play looks like a preemptive strike but is still a defensive movement. In this fashion, practitioners sense that an attack will be forthcoming and then cut it short before the opponent has the chance to transform the mental desire to attack to the physical movement necessary to execute that desire. This preemptive defensive strike is called *sen sen no-sen* for those of you who recognize the Japanese expression.

Martial practitioners study their art for physical conditioning, mental discipline, personal growth, and self-defense purposes. The ultimate goal of the serious *budoka* should never be the ability to go around beating people up. In fact, I would assert that the more dangerous you really are the less you should feel a need to prove it. The best martial artists I know are quiet, unassuming individuals who avoid conflict whenever possible.

### 2) Strive to Avoid Confrontation

As I have stated previously, the only way to guarantee victory in a physical confrontation is to walk away before the first blow is thrown. Although martial artists train to survive or even triumph in a fight, I believe that practitioners should do everything they can to avoid violence in the first place. Even if you legitimately use force in order to escape imminent and unavoidable danger you still have to live with the physiological, psychological, and litigational results of doing so.

## CHAPTER 6

# Armed Conflict

*“Many that live deserve death. And some die that deserve life. Can you give it to them? Then be not too eager to deal out death in the name of justice, fearing for your own safety. Even the wise cannot see all ends.”<sup>1</sup>*

– J.R.R. Tolkien

By the time a confrontation has escalated into armed conflict, you know that you are in serious trouble. After all, awareness, avoidance, and de-escalation have already failed. Non-violent techniques for controlling the confrontation have likewise been unsuccessful. Your demeanor, voice, presence, and/or body position has not been enough to dissuade your attacker.

You are now in survival mode. This kind of thing is totally different from an unarmed fistfight. Any time you are touched by an opponent’s weapon you may be seriously injured, crippled, maimed, or even killed. Under these extreme conditions, you will have to rely on your courage, training, creativity, and determination to survive.

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### Levels of Force

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*“The first right of every human being is the right of self-defense. Without that right, all other rights are meaningless. The right of self-defense is not something the government bestows upon its citizens. It is an inalienable right, older than the Constitution itself. It existed prior to government and prior to the social contract of our Constitution.”<sup>2</sup>*

– Senator Larry Craig

A continuum of force should be applied judiciously to preserve your safety as the situation warrants. There are no absolutes in self-defense but your ultimate goal is to apply sufficient force to effectively control the situation and keep yourself from harm. In general, you may legally use reasonable force in defending yourself. “Reasonable force” is considered only that force reasonably necessary to repel the attacker’s force.



THIS CHOKEHOLD IS GENERALLY A NON-LETHAL RESTRAINT YET IT CAN EASILY KILL IF IMPROPERLY APPLIED OR HELD FOR TOO LONG. ANYONE WHO ATTACKS YOU IS DOING SO FOR A REASON. YOU CANNOT COUNT ON HIS OR HER GOOD GRACES TO LET YOU SURVIVE WITH ONLY A BEATING. WHEN FACING AN ARMED ATTACKER THE DANGER IS EVEN MORE SEVERE. YOU MUST FIGHT AS IF YOUR LIFE DEPENDS ON IT.

shrug off the pain. Be mindful of additional assailants and be prepared to continue your defense as long as necessary. Remain vigilant until you are absolutely certain that your adversary is no longer a threat and that no one else is prepared to take up the battle on his or her behalf.

### **Fight as if Your Life Depends On It**

You can never tell for certain what an attacker's intentions are, but an armed aggressor certainly means to do you some harm. Even when someone only intends to scare you, injure you, or otherwise "teach you a lesson," they might still inadvertently cripple, maim, or even kill you. Some criminals intentionally kill for no apparent reason, perhaps just for the thrill of it. You cannot assume that they will limit their actions voluntarily, beating rather than killing you. You must make them stop. Your survival is at stake. Use every tool at your disposal. Be prepared to use real or makeshift weapons to even the odds.

### **Cheat to Win**

There are no rules in a street fight. Anything goes, including biting, spitting, hair pulling, eye gouging, and punching or kicking targets that would get you disqualified from a tournament match. You must be firmly resolved to do whatever it takes to survive. Try to distract or disorient an assailant or otherwise trick your attacker into letting his or her guard down.

Grapplers such as judo, jujitsu, and wrestling practitioners, for example, are conditioned to stop all movement when an opponent taps out, signifying defeat. If someone has you in a choke, joint lock, or pin from which you cannot quickly escape, you can try to tap him three or four times with your fingertips,\* wait until he hesitates or release the hold, then hit him with everything you've got. This technique frequently works even when someone realizes you are doing it because they are so conditioned to let go when an opponent taps, signifying submission.

You might also try to do something that is out of place, unexpected, loud, or dis-

\*Or your foot if your hands are entangled.

gusting. Anything that surprises an opponent will aid your defense. One of the best examples of this I have seen was when two male fighters were tangled up, one leaned forward, planting a wet, sloppy kiss on the other's nose, then kneed his opponent in the groin as he instinctively flinched away from the kiss.

I have also seen *judoka* pick their noses and pretend to wipe the snot on an opponent's uniform to get him to flinch away. While this is certainly a violation of tournament etiquette, it can be effective on the street. Even a properly delivered spirit shout or *kiai* can momentarily freeze an opponent leaving him or her vulnerable to your attack.

### Account for Adrenaline

When I took a defensive handgun course several years ago, I was taught to train for handling the survival stress reaction commonly associated with actual combat. To simulate the reaction we had to do as many pushups as we could as fast as we could for one minute. Immediately after completing the pushups, we sprinted to the parking lot and raced around the building four times as fast as we could go, covering close to a mile in the process. We then sprinted back into the building and attempted to accurately fire down range under the watchful eye of our instructors.

While I could normally hit the bulls-eye of a static paper target much of the time at 25 feet during shooting competitions, and always put every shot in the black, the first time I attempted to do so after this stress test I missed the paper completely. It was an eye-opening experience.

Once they taught us breath control techniques to help us recover from the affects of adrenaline I found my targeting much less diminished. This breathing was similar to *ibuki* breathing in martial arts, breathing in through the nose and out through the mouth following a 4-count process for each step—inhale, hold, exhalation. In other words, each cycle of combat breathing includes:

- Inhale for a 4-count.
- Hold for a 4-count.
- Exhale for a 4-count.

The more comprehensive and realistic your *dojo* training is, the better you will perform in actual combat since conditioned responses can help you counteract, or at least work through, the affects of adrenaline. Conversely, the more stressed you are through exertion, fear, or desperation, the harder it is perform. In a violent encounter, your heart rate can jump from 60 or 70 beats per minute (BPM) to well over 200 BMP in less than half a second. Here is how accelerated heart rates can affect you:



PHOTO COURTESY OF AL ARSENAULT

## CHAPTER 7

# Nine Rules to Live By

*“On May 17, 1792, Deputy Sheriff Isaac Smith with the New York City Sheriff’s Office investigated a disturbance at a colonial inn owned by Levi Hunt, located in what is now the Bronx. The victim deputy was shot with one of two flintlock pistols carried by John Ryer, an unruly drunk, whom the officer was attempting to arrest. Although Ryer fled north into Canada, he was shortly located, arrested, and extradited to New York, where he was tried and hanged for the murder on October 2, 1793. This scenario describes what is now believed to have been the first law enforcement officer feloniously killed in the line of duty in the United States.”<sup>1</sup>*

– Federal Bureau of Investigation

While the tactics you might employ to defend yourself from the various pointy objects and blunt implements you might be facing will vary, certain principles remain the same. I consider these principles critical items to remember to help keep you safe, affectionately calling them my nine rules to live by. All this information has been discussed in greater detail somewhere else in this work yet I feel that that it is important enough to be collected in one place for emphasis. Since you have seen this before in one fashion or another, however, I’ll be brief:

### **Rules:**

- Don’t get hit.
- Pain is your friend.
- Weapons are ubiquitous.
- Always assume they are armed.
- Bad guys cheat to win, so should you.
- Understand how weapons work.
- Expect the unexpected.
- Yell for help.
- Check for bleeding.

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## 1) Rule Number One is, “Don’t get hit”

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*“I don’t care how tough you are, a knife in the guts will mess up your day. In light of this, I fight like a mongoose against the cobra. Unlike a king snake, which is immune to the rattlesnake’s venom, the mongoose could be killed by the cobra’s bite. One hit and it’s all over for Mr. Mongy. Therefore, when the cobra strikes, the mongoose dodges. Then, once it is off the line of danger, the mongoose strikes and kills the snake. That’s how something that isn’t immune to snake venom can survive hunting snakes, and that’s how you can survive a street situation.”<sup>2</sup>*

– Marc MacYoung

The first person to be forcefully struck is at a severe disadvantage in any fight. This is especially true in armed confrontations. If possible, withdraw before the first blow is thrown. Awareness, avoidance, and de-escalation are paramount. Never start a fight and always do your best to avoid situations that are likely to lead to violence. If things do go bad and weapons are involved, your best tactic may simply be to run away. If you do have to engage an armed aggressor in combat, end the fight as quickly as possible to increase your chance of survival.

Not getting hit means that if you cannot avoid a violent encounter altogether you must deal with the immediate threat expeditiously and do so in a manner that facilitates your ability to escape further harm. Getting off line is an important principle of weapons defense. It makes you much harder to hit. Doing so in a manner that precludes continuance of the attack or at least affords you the opportunity to counterattack is paramount. Use movement to control the fight, removing options and initiative from your attacker’s arsenal.

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## 2) Pain is Your Friend

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*“Focus on the offensive. Ignore the pain... Adrenaline pours into your system, adrenalin being the magical substance that doctors in emergency rooms inject into cardiac arrest patients to bring the dead back to life. It puts your pain tolerance through the roof... Remember that the control of fear and the commitment to ignore pain are the keys to your positive, aggressive response in a street survival situation.”<sup>3</sup>*

– Massad Ayoob

Okay, so you’ve blown rule number one. The next most important thing to remember is if it hurts, you are still alive. According to Massad Ayoob, a seasoned



## CHAPTER 8

# Aftermath of Violence

*“Winners have aftermaths too... the person you injured is quite likely to sue you. One friend of mine, an accomplished martial artist, shattered a man’s jaw in a brawl; he wound up paying \$5,000 to an orthodontist for putting the man’s teeth back together. Even if the clown who sues you loses in court you still lose in your pocketbook. It can cost you thousands to mount even a minimal civil court defense...”<sup>1</sup>*

– Massad Ayoob

Once you survive an armed conflict, there are a host of other consequences to address, including medical triage, legal issues, managing witnesses, dealing with the press, interacting with law enforcement, and dealing with psychological trauma. Your first order of business is survival. If you have been injured during a fight you may have to take care of yourself until professional help can arrive.

First and foremost, you need to make a mental commitment to live. Your attitude plays a large part of your ability to survive. The next most immediate concern will likely be hemorrhage and/or traumatic shock caused by an attacker’s weapon. Control your breathing. Try to stay calm and rational when you are injured. Panic will not do anything but kill you faster as it raises your blood pressure increasing the impact of shock and hemorrhaging. If you are still in the grip of an adrenaline rush from your fight or flight reflex, the pain will be significantly dampened. Take advantage of this time to call for help and begin treating your wounds.

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### Medical Triage

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*“Calling for help is often the most important action you can take to help the person in need of aid. If the person is unconscious, call 9-1-1 or your local emergency number immediately. Sometimes a conscious person will tell you not to call 9-1-1, and you may not be sure what to do. Call anyway if the person becomes unconscious, is bleeding severely, has injuries to the head, neck, or back, or has possible broken bones...”<sup>2</sup>*

– American Red Cross



PHOTO COURTESY OF AL ARSENAULT

## CHAPTER 9

# Weapon Features/Functions

*“Weapons can get long term ugly. Losing the fight, cops, hospitals, and revenge seekers all make the aftermath of weapon fighting a real pain in the ass... In case you hadn’t noticed, there are a lot of guys in jail for a thing called murder. Jails are for the guys who lived. There are also a lot of people in graveyards for something called death. You may not always be the one swinging the bottle. If you’ve got a hot head, you’d better learn to control it before you get into this territory. With weapons there is no room for ‘loose cannons on deck.’ The people who live and stay free are the ones who think before they act.”<sup>1</sup>*

– Marc MacYoung

In this chapter, we will discuss the attributes of various weapons along with how they are generally used. Categories covered will include hand weapons, knives, swords, mass weapons, pole arms, multi-element weapons, projectiles, and unusual weapons. One could write an entire book about each type of weapon listed herein, so the sake of brevity I’ll only hit the high points of how they are commonly used, covering certain strengths or weaknesses and important features of each category such as availability, effective range, carry-ability, conceal-ability, reliability, and commonality.

My goal is primarily to explain what each weapon can do as opposed to describing specific techniques for how to defeat them. There are simply too many variables to consider including any weapons you might have available, your skill level, fitness level, martial style, body type, predilections, fighting environment, and range considerations. The type and number of adversaries you face, their intent, disposition, size, and skill level also come into play. So do all the other things we have covered previously, of course, including the legal, ethical and moral issues that may temper your response. On the street, you must be flexible; relying on the knowledge you have gained herein along with the strategy and tactics of the martial art you practice to keep you safe.

Knowing how the various weapons work will give you a leg up on figuring out how best to deploy counter-weapons or, if they are unavailable, apply your empty-hand martial techniques to survive an armed confrontation. Clearly if we have to respond to an armed opponent it is vastly preferable to so when we ourselves are armed. When this is not possible, we can find empty-hand techniques to meet the threat.

## About the Author

Lawrence Kane is the author of *Martial Arts Instruction—Applying Educational Theory and Communication Techniques in the Dojo* (YMAA Publication Center, 2004) and co-author of *The Way of Kata—A Comprehensive Guide for Deciphering Martial Applications* (YMAA Publication Center, 2005). Over the last 30 or so years, he has participated in a broad range of martial arts, from traditional Asian sports such as judo, *arnis*, *kobudo*, and karate to recreating medieval European combat with real armor and rattan (wood) weapons. He has taught medieval weapons forms since 1994 and *Goju Ryu* karate since 2002. He has also completed seminars in modern gun safety, marksmanship, handgun retention and knife combat techniques, and he has participated in slow-fire pistol and pin shooting competitions.



Since 1985, Lawrence has supervised employees who provide security and oversee fan safety during college and professional football games at a Pac-10 stadium. This part-time job has given him a unique opportunity to appreciate violence in a myriad of forms. Along with his crew, he has witnessed, interceded in, and stopped or prevented hundreds of fights, experiencing all manner of aggressive behaviors as well as the escalation process that invariably precedes them. He has also worked closely with the campus police and state patrol officers who are assigned to the stadium and has had ample opportunities to examine their crowd control tactics and procedures.

To pay the bills he does IT sourcing strategy and benchmarking work for an aerospace company in Seattle where he gets to play with billions of dollars of other people's money and make really important decisions. Lawrence lives in Seattle, Washington with his wife Julie and his son Joey. He can be contacted via e-mail at [lakane@ix.netcom.com](mailto:lakane@ix.netcom.com).

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"The book will spark your thinking of what you should or shouldn't do in different scenarios, and then gives some practical solutions, weighing different ethical, moral, criminal and civil principles. Highly recommended!" —Vicky M. Stormo, Chief of Police (University of Washington PD)

*Fair Fight? Not likely. Least of all from a criminal who is looking to make a quick profit at your expense.*

A sad fact is that weapon-wielding thugs victimize 1,773,000 citizens every year in the United States alone. Even martial artists are not immune from this deadly threat. Consequently, self-defense training that does not consider the very real possibility of an armed attack is dangerously incomplete.

Whether you live in the city or countryside, you should be both mentally and physically prepared to deal with an unprovoked armed assault at any time. Preparation must be comprehensive enough to account for the plethora of pointy objects, blunt instruments, explosive devices, and deadly projectiles that someday could be used against you.

This extensive book teaches proven survival skills that can keep you safe on the street. A multitude of real-life scenarios and case studies analyzing violent encounters will help you to internalize this crucial knowledge. Contents include:

- Awareness
- Avoidance
- De-escalation
- Countervailing force
- Armed conflict
- Managing the aftermath of violence
- Weapon features and functions

If you are serious about self-defense this book is for you.

Everyone, including experienced martial artists, security, and law enforcement professionals, and concerned citizens will benefit from this vital information.

**Lawrence Kane** is the author of *Martial Arts Instruction* (YMAA, 2004) and co-author of *The Way of Kata* (YMAA, 2005). He has also published numerous articles about teaching, martial arts, and countervailing force. Over the last 30 years he has studied and taught a wide variety of martial arts including *Goju Ryu* karate, *kobudo*, medieval weapons forms, and close-quarters combat (e.g., knife, gun). Working stadium security he has been involved in hundreds of armed and unarmed confrontations. Lawrence lives in Seattle, WA.



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