

Armed to the Teeth, but with no Time to Bite

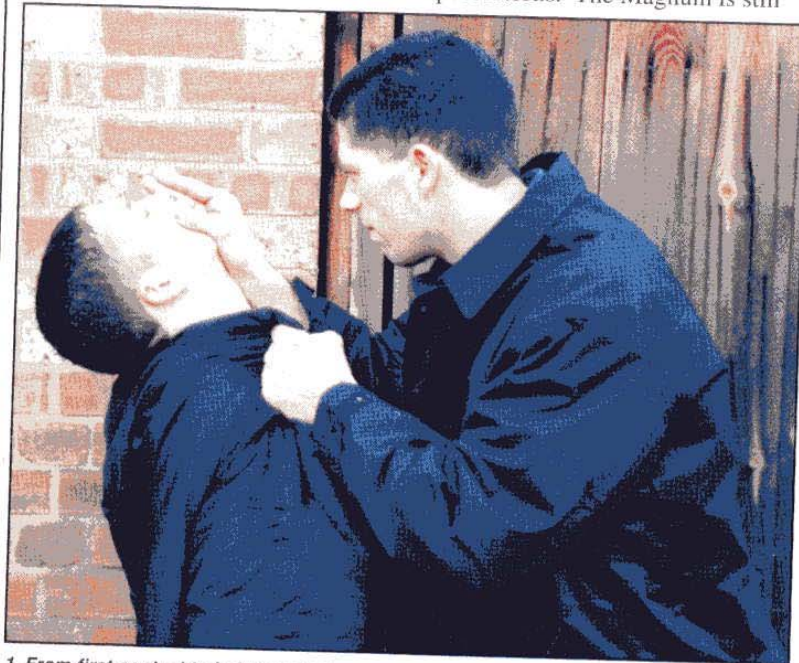
IF IT WAS LEGAL to carry firearms, would you feel safe? If you could walk to the shops with a samurai sword strapped to your back, would you feel that no one would even think about attacking you? If you trained in the martial arts for 10 years, would you feel safe? You may feel safe, but, would you have time to use the above?

By **ALAN CHARLTON**
(Self Protection Association)

Let's say you are armed to the teeth, and walking along minding your own business. When from nowhere, you are attacked (by 3 members of the local boots, alcohol

and drug association). What would you do? Would you shoot one of your attackers with the Magnum, cut the second to pieces with your sword, then treat the third to a lesson in ground fighting? Brushing yourself down, you look at your attackers, now recovering on the pavement, and tell them. "They messed with the wrong man this time".

More to the point, confident that no one is about to attack you, with all that back up you are carrying you turn a corner, and from nowhere, a Neanderthal grabs you by the throat, pushes you against a wall and demands all your wordly possessions. The Magnum is still



1. From first contact to being all over...



2...in under two seconds.

asleep in your pocket, the last thing the sword cut was your finger when you played with it in your bedroom. You could beat him to a pulp on the ground, if only he would let go of your throat and give you five minutes to get your breath back. To him, you feel as dangerous as a newborn baby, who is desperately looking around, for something to suckle.



Every second you wait the greater the danger.

So what's gone wrong?

It's no good having the firepower of a small private army, or the fighting ability that 10 years of hard training can achieve. If you think that you would have time to react, if you let your attacker throw the first punch you could be in line to learn a painful lesson.

Let me put it this way. If you were told that someone was coming to get you, and would kill you on sight, then you would have time to start making plans. (How much is a one way ticket to Acapulco?) If you locked your front door, would this give you enough time to call the police,

before your would-be attacker breaks the door down, and is now about to kill you? You may have enough time to set up an ambush. Time to check your gun, and clean and oil all the moving parts, putting a coffee table against the door would give you more time. With your chair as far away from the door as possible, using a table lamp to light the target area, you sit back and wait.

You can hear him coming, so you take aim. As he breaks down the door you open fire. Everything moves in slow motion. You hit him with so much lead you find yourself thinking. "If this guy ever survives this, he could work part time as a pencil".

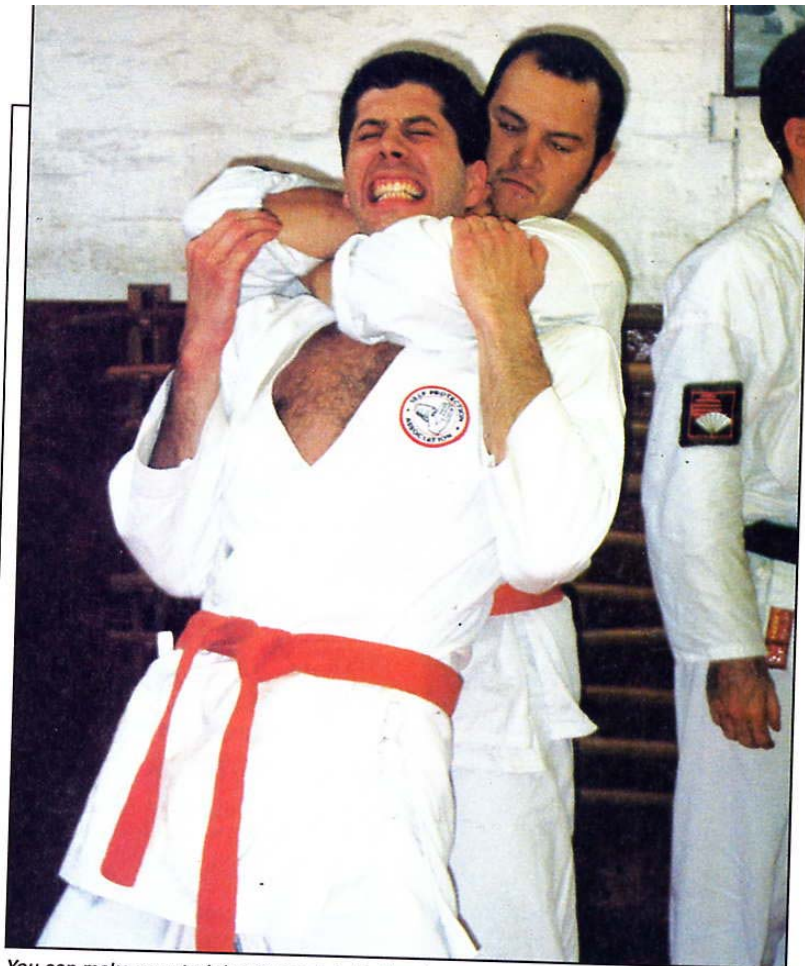
Awareness the dangers of the unseen attack

So the time to prepare for an attack is before it happens. That's all well and good, but on the street if you are not aware, you only have a second. The great news is that basic street awareness is a skill we use every day, but we rarely have it switched on to possible attacker mode. I believe that awareness training, along with pre-emptive techniques, should be the basis of any self defence system.

How can we start teaching



What would you do?



You can make your training in the dojo feel real.

ourselves basic awareness and how do we assess a situation as safe, or a threat? In our day to day lives, our brains are bombarded with information, from smelling the morning coffee, to reading an important news item. Some of the information our brain receives is processed as things to do (making an appointment to see the dentist or to get petrol on the way into work.) At the same time we process this information, we can make a cup of coffee, put bread in the toaster, then from nowhere we can find ourselves thinking about something that happened yesterday or maybe years ago. Our brain is also telling our heart to beat, and our lungs to take that next breath. Our eyes can override all our thoughts to tell us, the cup is full and to stop pouring the coffee.

The more you think about it, the more amazing it gets. We seem to do this automatically working on instinct (or what ever you like to call it). It is something that has taken millions of years of evolution

to create, and is key to us surviving the next second, into the rest of our lives.

So you are taking in all the information, it's just up to you what you feel is relevant. Every time you cross a road you are being aware, you look to see if any cars are coming. No cars in sight, but you can hear one and it sounds as if the engine is going full out, so you wait. When the car goes past you check again. This time you are happy, it's safe, so you cross. This is awareness, taking seen or unseen information and using it to make a decision, to cross or wait. So instead of a car, you are aware of the Neanderthal standing on the street corner, and now you have time to prepare.

The "F" Word?

In a street situation to think that a physical reaction will beat a physical attack is wrong. If you wait for the attack, you will find yourself in the middle of a battle, with 90% of your techniques no

longer able to work for you. What would you do? Please be honest with yourself and just think about how frightening this situation can be.

At the point of engagement you will experience the "F" word (Fear and Freeze). Your body is getting so many signals from your brain you are frozen to the spot. You have seen many people fall apart at the sight of someone just being verbally aggressive to them. Even just shouting the more frequently used "F" word, the attacker works without even throwing a punch. You are not aware of what is going on around you, then one problem you are already giving off the signals that you are a victim. A street attacker may well have the brain the size of a peanut, but he will see a victim quicker than a vulture finds a rotting carcass.

Awareness or just paranoid

If you are comfortable walking down the street or having a drink at a local pub then that's great, enjoy the walk and the drink. The grim reaper is not standing on every corner, or about to walk into every pub. That's being paranoid.

As I said before, being aware is the key. On that walk to the local pub you see in a man showing a small child the finer points of hitting a ball with a baseball bat, and your mind puts this together with father and son bonding, sunshine and birds singing, a happy family scene. But as you leave the pub later that night, you see a man walking towards you with a baseball bat. The image is no longer a happy family scene, this time the feeling is very uncomfortable. The hairs on the back of your neck are sending you alarm signals. Would you cross the road to get out of his way, or ask him if he was going to late night baseball practise?

If all situations were as easy to see, we would have no problems going about our day to day lives. The attacker on the street today would not be so obvious. He will pick out a victim, and strike when you are



Train under pressure to find out what works.

off guard, taking you by surprise. From walking up to you smiling and saying "Excuse me mate do you know the way?" BANG! Before the question was finished you have been hit and on your way down, no time to pull the gun, or get your hand onto the sword.

So how can we prepare for this? First anyone who is in your personal space is a threat. No I'm not being paranoid just because someone walks into my personal space. It's because they are a stranger, and after asking me a question they are still moving into my space. The last time you asked someone a question on the street, I bet as you spoke you stood some distance from them and waited for the reply. From the day we are born

we learn the social skills of our society, and being too close when asking a question, or just in polite conversation, is one of them. So if someone is much too close you must make the first move. You could step back, giving distance to make the point that you feel they are too close. At this point most street attackers will gauge that you are aware and back off. If they do not, the fact that you have reacted in a positive way means you cannot be taken by surprise.

Put it to the test

Whatever fighting system you enjoy, you should practise street awareness and threat assessment. The street is not the place to test unrealistic theory. Practising your fighting skills is important and great fun, but the street is simple and

basic, hit hard and hit first. If you feel you could wait for the attack, then counter, you are going to be fighting in close combat and the grappling ranges. But remember no referee, no rules.

Try it out in the dojo with a partner. Let your partner attack you in anyway he can. The attack stops when you, or both of you hit the ground. You will find that striking range is lost very quickly, and it soon breaks down into pushing and shoving. Very soon you are on the floor, not pretty but real. Now, this time before your partner can attack, you hit first if he gets too close strike. If his body touches your leading hand, strike now. Get your strike in first and take the physical fight to him.

Just because someone is not throwing punches at you, do not drop your mental guard. If they are moving in, it's the same as someone throwing a right hook, don't be taken in, it only takes a second to become a victim. Remember, not all attackers drool from the side of the mouth, and have their knuckles dragging on the pavement. An attacker could be as charming as someone selling double glazing.

I hope you have enjoyed reading this article and it has made you think about some important points. Whatever system you train in, I hope you fulfil all the goals you set yourself. No one system or one person has all the answers but together we can find them. You may drive the safest car in the world, with seat belts, roll bars, air bag, and fitted with the best ABS system money can buy. But if the windscreen is covered with mud, and you cannot see the dangers ahead, you will still end up driving over the cliff.

If you would like any more information about the Self Protection Association training or seminars please write to Mr Alan Charlton, 3 Petersfield Close, Edmonton, London, N18 1JJ.