

JIM WAGNERS WORLD OF REALITY Fighting Tips and Tricks

Wagner's 10 Rules of Combat By Jim Wagner

My uncle once told me, "It is easier to be a doctor than a car mechanic. Doctors only have two different models to repair, but a mechanic has to know how to repair hundreds of models." This observation is humorous if you're a mechanic, but we all know that a human being is infinitely more complex than the most sophisticated vehicle. Although the typical human has only one head, two arms, two legs and a torso, it's the human brain, which directs the body to work in order to accomplish a wide variety of tasks. One possible task is to engage in conflict with other human beings.

Regardless of the complexities of the brain, with all of its multi-layered motivations and creativity to wage battle, the average human is still limited to what work (techniques) can be performed while fighting since we are limited physically by one head, two arms, ect. Because we are limited physically, there will always be similarities in hand-to-hand combat, regardless of what part of the planet you live on. In other words, there are "universal truths" in real combat, just as there are universal truths with vehicles; a vehicle functions no differently in Africa as one does in Asia.

As a former soldier, and a police officer of 12 years, I have experienced my fair share of combat. My martial art skills have been put to the test on a number of occasions. Plus, a Defensive Tactics instructor from some of the most elite police and military teams of the world, I have trained with literally thousands of men and women who have "tasted" real combat. I have also been a devoted martial artist for 26 years – from tradition, to sport competition, to reality-based, and everything between. Though these experiences I have discovered that those who have actually had to rely on their skills for survival tend to train the same, use similar techniques, and think the same (like-minded) regardless of their geographical location. What has resulted from my observations are 10 rules that I believe are the key elements to surviving an actual hand-to-hand combat.

- 1. Be in good physical condition.** True warriors keep in shape. Just look at any Special Forces Unit or police SWAT team in the world and you will see this to be true. You must condition your body in all areas; cardiovascular, strength, and flexibility training. In addition to be able to endure prolonged fights and be more resistant to injuries, being physically fit will also increase your "command presence" (a police term which means that you gain respect by appearing as a formidable foe).
- 2. Do not be devoted to any one particular fighting system or instructor.** If you are serious about reality-based training, and all you want to know is how to defend yourself, then you must diversify. Study as many fighting systems, from as many qualified instructors as you can. For example: to be good at punching you might study boxing for six months, then move on. To know how to fight on the ground take six months of ju jitsu and move on. To become lethal with knives and other non-projectile weapons you need to enroll yourself in a Filipino Kali (also known as Arnis or Escrima). Six months later go take some Israeli Krav Maga for practical street fighting techniques. By exploiting the fundamental principles from each system, you will not ever fall into a trap of the "group think" mentality.
- 3. Keep it simple.** Without doubt, almost half of what you know can be eliminated. In real fights, when your safety is at risk, your mind and body will force you to use gross motor skills, whether you like it or not. This means that the complicated techniques you may be practicing will give way to primitive methods of survival. If you don't believe me, go up to someone better than you full contact. Thus, instead of wasting valuable training time practicing fancy moves you will never use, become highly proficient at the few techniques that will actually work – low thrust kicks, elbow and knee strikes, eye gouging, hard-hitting closed-fist strikes, hair pulling, ect.
- 4. Train hard to fight easy.** In the American Military we have an expression, "The more you bleed in training, the less you bleed in battle." You must always train harder than what you may face in real life. The average street fight lasts for 15-30 seconds, therefore you must practice "all out: for a full minute or more. Instead of bowing to your training partner and practicing your techniques, run 2.5 kilometers first, then try them (this simulates the exhaustion of the battle). Instead of sparring with one person, go up against two or three. Always push yourself to the point of near exhaustion when you train.
- 5. Positive mental attitude.** The true warrior is never defeated mentally. He or she has a grasp on what we call, "the will to survive." In some people it is stronger than others. Likewise, there are cowards who would not fight if their life depended on it. The will to survive is developed by pushing your training to the limit mentally (through role playing and increasing your pain tolerance threshold) and physically (trusting in reality-based techniques). Of course, an actual combat experience that you may have reinforces the will to survive.
- 6. Scenario training (role playing).** It's not enough to just know how to do fighting techniques, you must know in what context to use them. Most martial arts schools have their students bow to one another, get into a preparatory stance, then begin fighting. But, this is not the way it happens in real life. There are sudden bar fights, terrorist attacks, arguments that erupt into fighting, and the list goes on. Therefore you have to approach at least 1/3 of your training like

you would as is preparing a theatre production: actors, a script, props, and a story line (the other thirds would be practicing various techniques and conditioning). In other words, you must simulate events you are most likely to encounter as a civilian: robberies, bar fights, sexual assaults, and other modern violence. Doing it right requires wearing the proper clothes, creating a temporary, but realistic environment, and have your actors behave in a convincing manner. Military and police units do this all the time. It's about time that civilian schools follow.

7. Practice from A to Z. Let me start with an example. If you are practicing knife defense you don't just say "attack me!" then do your technique, and that's all. There are certain events that lead up to a knife attack, and a chain of events even after the knife attack; this is of course part of your scenario homework to know what usually takes place. Practicing from A to Z means..

- a. Being aware of your surroundings before an attack
- b. Have a plan of action prior to the attack
- c. Handle the crisis (using the techniques that apply)
- d. Follow-up (escape, take the suspect into custody, simulate calling the police, treating injuries, ect.)

8. Dress as you fight. Do you ever wear a business suit? Then practice fighting in one. Do you ever wear a heavy jacket in the winter? Learn how to punch and ground fight in one. Do you wear shoes or boots? Now you get the idea. The more you train in various "street clothes" the better prepared you will be in actual combat. For most of my courses that I teach, I make my military and police students wear everything they would wear in a real mission – minus the live ammunition and other hazardous weapons.

9. Adaptability. True warriors are flexible, and able to change tactics with the situation. Combat is fluid, so you can't be burdened with wanting to throw your "favorite" techniques. One way to learn how to rapidly adapt is to have your training partner introduce a surprise without your knowledge. For example; you may be working on ground techniques, when suddenly your partner pulls out a concealed knife (rubber training knife) and you have to unexpectedly deal with it. Or, you could be fighting with one partner and half way through the fight another student comes into the room to help you like a Good Samaritan. How would you coordinate your attack?

10. Aggressive Defense. Many people think self-defense means waiting for the attacker to throw the first punch. However, if you feel at anytime you, or someone else is in danger of immediate bodily injury or death, international law states that you have the right to defend yourself. (Check your own local laws to know your rights. Therefore, if you have to strike first, then do it. That's why scenario training is important – to understand the signs of imminent conflict. Also, during a fight you must think "do as much damage as necessary, as fast as possible" to overload the attackers senses and to stop him. Put him on the defensive with pre-empted attack or immediate counterattack. Adopt the military mentality, "attack the attacker."

As I mentioned before, these rules are based on my own experiences, and those who have successfully survived real encounters. If you agree with my 10 rules, adopt them. If you don't then write your own down and evaluate them. Every professional warrior has a written form of their "rules of engagement," and every unit lives by a motto. You need to know yours before you "engage" the enemy. Deciding what you believe, and how you should act during a battle maybe a little too late.

Combatives are Replacing Martial Arts

Jim Wagner

Did you know that law enforcement agencies and military units are doing away with martial arts. Well, actually they're doing away with just the terminology; the kicks and punches will always remain. The term "martial arts" is being replaced by the word "combatives." And, just what exactly is combatives?

The word combatives, when used by cops, SWAT team, and military Special Operations refers to unarmed combative subjects. If somebody is physically resisting we refer to them as a "combative." Add an "s" to the word and essentially you have a whole system that few civilians know about. I should also mention that the training includes techniques involving various weapons as well should a combatives situation degrade into lethal force or visa versa.

Have you noticed lately that there are a lot of martial arts instructors out there telling people that they instruct the Navy SEALs, Army Special Forces, Rangers, SWAT teams or whoever. They do this to boost student enrolment and to sell videos, but anyone making the claim that they instruct "elite teams" should come under suspicion. That's not to say that there are not legitimate claims out there, but these teams are very tight communities that few civilian instructors ever penetrate.

It is unlikely that a civilian instructor, who has never served or who has never worn a badge is teaching actual teams. For one thing, civilian instructors lack the training and experience needed to effectively train troops and cops. Secondly, these teams do not generally trust outsiders for those very reasons. Most of these self-appointed "teachers of the elite" may have indeed taught a few individuals from such teams, the ones who came to check out their training, but it is not SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) to bring in civilians to teach various levels of force. It would be a legal liability to any agency or unit who did so. An instructor has to be able to be cleared "vor dire" (deemed to be an expert) by the courts and stand behind his training if

challenged. The only way that the instructor can do this is if he himself has the experience and training to back it. A civilian without a combat military or law enforcement background would be eaten alive by a defense attorney in court. That's why you don't see non military or law enforcement combatives instructors in this business. Anyone who tells you otherwise had come up with some hard evidence before you hand over your hard earned money. With that said let's talk about legitimate combative programs for law enforcement and the military.

In truth there are only a handful of legitimate combatives programs instructed in the United States, and all of them are taught by sworn officers, active duty military personnel or former of the mentioned.

The US Marines & US Army have their own combatives courses and are generally taught to combat personnel. Each are very comprehensive, easy-to-learn, and they cover all of the basics: punching, kicking, head butts, elbow & knee strikes, takedowns and some limited grappling. Unfortunately, few units maintain these skills for very long. Combatives is given a low priority even within the Special Forces. Unlike some countries where ongoing combatives training is mandatory, it is pretty much up to the individual in our military to keep on top of these perishable skills.

Law enforcement officers first learn their fighting skills in a law enforcement academy. The type of combatives taught falls under two categories: Arrest & Control Training (ACT) and Impact Weapons Training. At each perspective academy the recruit learns the basics: punching, kicking, controlling techniques, come-alongs, grappling and baton use. Some academies have exercises where they have students fight each other full-contact while wearing protective gear. Most academies, unfortunately, have eliminated this kind of training from their curriculum for fear of somebody getting injured. Weak logic considering what they really face in the streets. Instead they have watered down forms of combatives which gives these new recruits a false sense of security. Although they are ineffective the administration can say that they are meeting their legal obligation to "officer safety."

Once out of the academy every agency or department has their own Training Division or Training Officer. Some have great combatives programs and others are deficient or practically nonexistent altogether. The quality of training depends on who's running the show at the time. Most combatives courses are taught in-house. The instructors who carry out this duty usually have the title of Defensive Tactics Instructor; a titles which is slowly being phased out also. It's their job to keep everybody up-to-date on the latest tactics, applicable laws, conformity to the agencies' policies, and to stay within budget.

If you're an outsider looking in you would probably think that most agencies and departments would be really "into" combatives training, but that's a misconception. It takes motivated instructors with a lot of street experience who can effectively teach a truly comprehensive combatives course. There's just not a lot of them out there who can shoulder the legal responsibilities of what they teach. That's why agencies and departments, and even military units (Federal law requires limited exchange of information and training between military and law enforcement), enrolle their personnel into combatives programs hosted by established training organizations. These are private corporations run by active and former law enforcement/military instructors who've all had real world experience (the term "real world" refers to those who actually use, or have used, their skills in real military or law enforcement operations. Simply attending some trainging does not count). The most widely known training organizations that have combatives programs are Heckler & Koch, Inc. International Training Division on the East Coast (21480 Pacific Boulevard Sterling, Virginia 20166-8903), Chuck Habermehl with CQB, Inc. down in the Southeast (P.O. Box 895578 Leesburg, Florida 34789-5578), and HSS International on the West Coast (<http://www.hssinternational.com>). There are a few smaller ones, but not as widely known. In all fairness to you I'll tell you up front that I developed HSS International's Combatives program and instruct it, along with other tactical courses, when I'm not pushing around a police car 40 hours a week. However, each of the programs that I have mentioned are worth the investment, and I highly recommend them - even if they are competitors.

Beside the obvious benefit of self-defense, why do law enforcement and military personnel study combatives? The reason is to reduce liability. Let's start with law enforcement first.

When a law enforcement SWAT team breaks down the door to somebody's house and makes entry the operators (a term used for team members) are armed with submachine guns (typically with HK MP5s or 9mm Colt CAR15s) or handguns (9mm, .40 caliber or .45 caliber weapons of various makes and models). If an unarmed combative subject fights the officers the officers will not use lethal force generally (there are exceptions to the rule, but ones I am not privileged to give out). The operators are armed to the teeth, but they must be able to quickly switch (or as we say, "transition") from their weapons to combatives techniques. This brings up a good point. Contrary to what some people may think, an operator is not going to strike the resistor with the muzzle or butt of the weapon. Such a move, although it looks dramatic in the movies, can lead to an accidental discharge (AD) which is not only a tremendous liability, but can lead to a fellow team member getting shot. Instead, they transition to other means: impact weapons (baton, ASP, PR24), chemical agents (pepper spray, mace, CS gas), or combatives. The idea is to use the appropriate amount of force to subdue the person. If an entry team uses a "reasonable" amount of force they reduce the liabilities in turn. A good combatives course teaches operators the appropriate amount of force to apply in various situations.

Even though the military operates by a whole different set of rules of engagement the role of the military is expanding to include peace keeping missions. Such missions require a greater integration of police tactics. Counterterrorism teams, FAST teams, and military police SWAT teams also rely upon combatives programs to avoid unnecessary casualties in hostage rescue operations, dignitary protection, and other related missions. So, what used to get you shot in the old days not may only require a kick, hit, or thump or two and a dog pile.

Now that you know what combatives is, and why combatives are taught, let's look at the nuts and bolts as to what is actually taught.

The combatives course I instruct is taught in seven phases, and is generally the same for other instructors as well. 1. Medium range (punches and kicks) 2. Close range (knee & elbow strikes, head butts, pushing and pulling) 3. Takedowns (control holds, sweeps, trips and throws) 4. Ground fighting (grappling, defensive techniques and strikes from the ground) 5. Weapon retention (keeping the suspect or enemy from taking away your own weapons) 6. Lethal force transition (techniques against an armed resisters) 7. Team tactics (responsibilities and team coordination) 8. Scenario training (subduing combative instructors, who are wearing protective gear, using full-contact techniques while operators run through tactical problems).

The Israeli arts in the U.S. today

Is what is being taught today in the United States genuine Israeli military-based martial arts or not? The answer is - that depends on who is teaching it.

The downside to Krav Maga™, like any large martial arts organization, is that some instructors are “locked on” while others may tend to “water down” the system and go outside of Devine’s doctrine. Some instructors simply do not have the “real world” experience needed, such as law enforcement or combat military service, which is an absolute must in Israel to qualify the art as militarized. However, if you’re out there shopping around for mainstream Krav Maga™ there’s one easy way to make comparisons – buy their videos. The organization made several well-produced videos that lay out the fundamentals. You can obtain more information about Krav Maga™ from their website www.kravmaga.com

Alon Stivi of Dennis Hisardut® is a man who teaches his craft based on hard earned experience. A former Israeli paratrooper and Master Sergeant, Stivi fought in the Israeli-Lebanon War (1982), and has had some other hair-raising missions. He is also an expert on corporate security and terrorism awareness, and he is often featured in various Fortune 500 magazines and television interviews. Stivi is a superb athlete, and anyone who trains under him cannot help but get into good shape and in a proper combat frame of mind, because he always throws in a healthy dose of Israeli military calisthenics and drills along with fighting techniques. Plus, when you hear Stivi’s thick Hebrew accent, as he pushes you to your limits, you actually feel like you could just as easily be training in the middle of Israel.

Dennis Hisardut® of America, sanctioned by Dennis Hannover himself, is much smaller in scope than that of its Krav Maga™ competitors, but the quality of instruction is just as good. On the downside, some instructors under Stivi do not have the charisma that he does. You can obtain more information about Dennis Hisardut® on their website www.hisardut.com

If you are interested in studying Special Forces Kapap you must be an active member in law enforcement, corrections, probation or the United States military. The only organization authorized by the Israeli government to teach this system is HSS International. The most recent seminars were held in Los Angeles and Dallas. More police/military seminars are scheduled for both the West Coast and East Coast. You can obtain more information about Kapap on two different websites: www.jimwagnertraining.com or www.kapap.net For general information on the Israeli special forces here are some recommended sites: www.isayeret.com, www.specialoperations.com, and the official Israel Defense Force website: www.idf.il

Legal Risks in Self-Defense

Jim Wagner

Anytime you use your martial arts skills (use-of-force) against another person, even if you are justified in doing so, you will be held legally responsible for your actions. In short, it means going before a court of law within our justice system. Even if the litigation is not against you personally, but charges have been filed against the person who attacked you, you may still have to “take the stand” and testify before a grand jury, judge or jury of your peers. If you have not prepared for this type of “fight,” you may find yourself in a losing a battle. Losing can mean anything from you being sentenced for a crime(if you used excessive force for example) to watching a criminal go free because you didn’t know how to adequately articulate (starting with the police and ending with the jury) your case before the court or how to “behave” on the stand.

Based upon my experience and training, I’m going to give you some court survival tactics that will help you maintain your testimonial credibility, and to prepare you for the place in which your martial arts skills will inevitably take you – the court room.

After the fight

If you become the victim of a crime, or use your martial arts skills (the use of physical force) to protect a victim, the police are inevitably going to question you and take a report. In past issues we have covered the topic of police reports, but we will touch upon a few good pointers for those of you just joining HIGH RISK for the first time. First of all, whenever you are questioned by the police you must be truthful, clear, concise, and as detailed as possible concerning the facts surrounding the incident. State exactly what happened before, during, and after the conflict. Also, include how you felt. This may sound “touchy-feely,” but your mental state is very important in a use-of-force case. If you were afraid for you life, then say so. If you thought someone was going to get hurt, and you had no choice but to intervene, make this part of your oral or written statement. On the other hand, if at any time you think the police may perceive you as the suspect, which can happen, then stop talking. You have the constitutional right to remain silent and seek counsel (talk to an attorney). Remember, “Anything you say can be used against you in court.” These words are part of what’s known as the Miranda Rights advisement, and the police do not have to say them

to you unless you are being questioned while in custody (meaning that you are not free to leave). However, you are required by law to answer all booking questions: name, date of birth, address, etc. For the rest of this article we will assume that you are not considered the guilty party, and that our hypothetical situation is a clear cut case of self-defense on your behalf.

Going to court

If you have never had the opportunity to testify in a criminal case before a court, then you're in for quite an experience – usually a frustrating one.

One would have thought that my 13 years in law enforcement would have instilled in me a degree of confidence in our judicial system. After all, I have sent many individuals through it. Well, it hasn't, quite the opposite. If anything, the years have actually made me distrust the system. It's a sentiment echoed by law enforcement officers across the land. Remember, I have personally trained with over 500 agencies as a defensive tactics and special operations instructor, so I have heard the complaints of many officers on this matter. With that said, I have learned to navigate through the court system's quirks, and it's my goal here to help prepare you for this type of battle that you may have never had thought your martial arts skills would have gotten you into.

If you have not actually experienced the court system first hand, you may be under the assumption that you will have the opportunity to tell your side of the story when called up to the stand. After all, all you have to do is just tell everyone in the courtroom what happened from A to Z - just like you had done for the cops – right? Wrong. Nothing could be farther from the truth. You will be manipulated to tell your side of the story in piecemeal. There is no such thing as “telling the whole story.” The old, “Do you swear to tell the truth, the WHOLE truth...” just doesn't apply in today's American courts. Sure, you'll get your chance to speak if you if you choose to, but it won't be from start to finish like you would expect it to be. Nobody has that luxury. I have been to court many times for various criminal cases, and I have yet had the opportunity to tell my side of a story from start to finish without being interrupted, cut off, or not allowed to give it at all; except maybe in traffic court.

Obviously, anyone who gives a testimony is going to slant it in their favor, which is why there is cross-examination. This is the phase of the trial where the attorneys have the opportunity to question the opponent's witness. Story telling is as old as mankind itself, and everyone, even kids, know how to tell a story from start to finish. Not so in court. In fact, today's system reminds me of the refrigerator magnet game where you have a couple dozen words printed on the face of the rectangular magnets and you have to form a sentence with a limited amount of words given. Stray too far from what the attorney questioning you wants to hear come out of your mouth, and you will have to rearrange the order of the magnets on the door, so to speak.

It sounds absurd, but you do not get to tell your whole story in court. You'll be lucky if you are allowed to tell a fraction of it in most cases. It's not like the movies or the court T.V. shows that feature civil disputes (torts). If your testimony strays too far into those facts that the attorney does not want revealed, even though they may be the “whole truth,” you'll be cut off. In fact, you will be interrupted many times – regardless of the truth or lack thereof. Truth is not always goal of the judicial system anymore.

A little history lesson

Why isn't today's justice system like it was in the “cowboy days,” where if a person took the stand they had the opportunity to give their side of the story in its entirety? Then, after they were finished the attorneys would cross examine them to determine the truth.

As any law student will tell you, the system became jaded in the 1920s. This was the time period of the Mafia (Chicago mobsters, Al Capone, drive-by shootings with the Thompson machine gun, prohibition, etc.) When many of these gangsters were arrested and brought before the courts, they gave convincing stories of their innocence, or they flat out intimidated the jurors and witnesses who helped set them free. That's where we get the expression “they had their day in court.” To counter the trend, the government came up with restrictive rules, most of which remain with us to this day, in order to “protect” the public and to get the convictions they sought.

Today money and politics play an important roll in what defines “justice.” Defense attorneys do not want the “whole story” revealed, but only those bits and pieces that will get the case dropped or dismissed. The District Attorney's Office is also not interested in the whole story, but only enough to get a conviction. Many times legitimate criminal charges are never filed against law breakers if a prosecutor believes that the case is not winnable. After all, their position leads to bigger and better political positions in the future, and losses don't look good on record. That's not to say that there are not good attorneys on both sides of the fence who truly seek justice, because there are. It's just that the system is getting as complex as the tax code, and everyone works it to their advantage.

Court terminology

The person who attacked you is called the *defendant*. Since it is a criminal case (possibly followed by a civil suit at a future date) it is the State, through the District Attorney's Office, that files the charges against the defendant (assuming that there was a violation of the State's Penal Code – such as assault and battery, rape, assault with a deadly weapon, etc.). If federal laws were violated, the process is the same, only it is tried in a federal court.

You will be the *witness*, and will *testify* (give statements under oath) against the defendant. In order to have a fair trial, the defendant will have a *defense attorney*, either hired by the defendant himself or appointed to him if the defendant cannot afford one. When you are called up to the stand to testify the defense attorney will do everything he can to discredit you. He will try to

make it look like you are exaggerating, twisting the truth, or all together confused about the events that took place. The defense attorney may even go out of his way to try to get you angry or upset. Unfortunately, it doesn't end there. Sometimes the very person you think is "on your side," the prosecutor, may be just as brutal with you, if not worse, as the defense attorney. You just have to remember one rule – YOU HAVE NO FRIENDS IN THE COURTROOM. Everyone has their own agenda. Therefore, your main objective is to survive as a witness.

Courtroom survival tactics

Here are a few helpful hints that will work in your favor if you are ever called to the stand to testify:

Dress conservatively. Even the worst criminal will wear a suit and groom themselves for court appearances. Don't be fooled, people do judge you by the way you dress. You are more credible to the jury if you dress conservatively. This means a business suit.

Get a copy of the police report (if available). In most cases you can purchase a copy of the police report. The report will refresh your memory, and it will also give you insight as to what angle the police took. You can see what facts were put in the report, and what ones were left out. A report is nothing more than a synopsis, and need not contain every fact. In court the report is often referred to.

Think before answering. Whenever you are asked a question on the stand, think about it first. If you don't understand a question, ask for clarification.

Speak properly. Do not use slang or profanity, unless you are quoting someone (such as the words that the suspect spoke).

Be professional. Stay calm and in control, even if you are verbally attacked. Just as you learned how to how to control your mind and body through breathing exercises in your self-defense training, so to must you do the same in this new environment where your "opponent" is trying to corner you.

Make eye contact. When you are asked a question, look that person in the eyes as you listen. When you answer the question you need to also look the jurors in the eyes. This body language will reinforce the fact that you are telling the truth, and have nothing to hide. Looking around at the ceiling or at the floor will make you appear like you are fabricating an answer.

Beware of attorney traps

When you face cross examination (questioning) by the attorney there are two strategies often taken: tactics and tricks. A tactic will be used when the attorney thinks that you are lying and will seek to draw out the truth. A tactic could be asking the same question in different ways. A trick is used when the attorney knows that you are telling the truth, but tries to make it appear that you are lying, or at best, that you are confused. Here are a few tricks that you should be aware of:

Yes and No answers. You may be directed by the attorney to simply answer with a "yes" or a "no." Yet, in so doing, your answer may mislead the jury. For example, you may be asked, "Were you drunk at the time of the fight, yes or no?" For argument sake, let's say that you had not been drinking at all. If you answer the question, "No" it makes it appear as if you had been drinking that night, but were stating that you were not "drunk." Based on just a "no" answer the jury may think that you had indeed been drinking, which makes a juror wonder how close to being drunk, or out of control you were. It's all ludicrous, because you had not been drinking at all. Thus, if you feel that you cannot answer a question with just a "yes" or a "no" answer, then answer it as quickly and as appropriately as you can before being cut off, "I wasn't drinking at all that night." The defense attorney may object and have the judge order you to make a yes or no statement, in which case you have to answer it as directed or you will be found in "contempt of court" (breaking the rules).

Diversion. Another nasty attorney trick is to ask you irrelevant questions that will divert the jury's attention away from pertinent information that will hurt the defendant's case. For example: you might be asked what color the attacker's shoes were. Unless the shoes really stood out in your mind, most people wouldn't know. The point is that it doesn't really matter in most cases, but the attorney will grill you on this point, knowing you probably won't remember, in order to get you frustrated. The attorney might ask you something like, "You can't remember what color his shoes were? That's part of a physical description isn't it? Are you sure that you even saw the attacker at all? What else can't you remember?" If you can't remember something, then don't worry about it, and certainly don't get frustrated over the question. If you don't know, just say, "I don't remember" or "I can't recall." The human eye is capable of taking in millions of bits of information every second. In a crisis situation, the mind focuses on key elements (this is known as "tunnel vision"). Nobody can recall every single detail in a crime, so don't pretend to.

Character assassination. You see it all of the time with alleged police brutality cases. The first thing a defense attorney does when a law enforcement officer is accused of improper use-of-force is to dig into the officer's background to see if past complaints against the officer had been filed. Even if the officer was justified in using force against his client, the goal of the defense attorney is to make the officer look like a "bad apple." The same thing often holds true for female victims who have been sexually assaulted. The defense attorney will try to paint a picture of a woman who was actually "inviting" it if in their research they discovered that the victim is sexually active or was wearing sexy clothes. Likewise, if you're a martial artist the attorney is going to make it look like you are a "lethal weapon" or a "big bully." Because of your "high level of martial arts training" they will make it appear that you could have controlled the situation, but you didn't. You were just itching to "test out"

your fighting skills. To prevent character assassination, you have to start now. Yes, now. Be careful of what you say while training. Statements made in front of students or instructors, such as, "Whoever attacks me will be sorry" or "Anyone who rushes the cockpit I'm taking out" can one day be used against you in a court of law. The last thing you want to happen is to see one of your fellow martial artists on the stand testifying against you, saying something like, "He (or she) is always talking about 'no mercy' during training." Just remember, anything negative you say in the dojo can turn around and bite you one day. On the other hand, if you say things like, "I hate violence, I hope I never have to use this" people will remember that as well. I'd rather have a jury hear that I had a reputation of being against violence, than testimony after testimony saying I was "gung ho." Again, these are just small things that should be part of your current training.

Rapid Fire Questions. To get you frustrated the attorney may ask you a series of rapid fire questions. If this happens to you, slow down and take one question at a time. There's nothing wrong with saying, "I'm sorry, can you repeat the first question again? I will answer that one first."

Don't dig your own grave

Don't be your own worse enemy while on the stand. Words are important, and every word out of your mouth will be carefully evaluated. Again, you need to think about each question, and carefully give your answer. If asked why you used certain techniques against the attacker, don't say something like, "Because I was trained that way." This statement will never be your justification for the use of force. You must be able to explain why you chose certain techniques and not others. You must know the various use-of-force levels (see past issues), and under what circumstances you can use them. This is where good reality-based instructors really earn their pay.

Another pitfall to avoid is stating that you are an "expert" in the martial arts. Only a judge can declare you an expert (vor dire). If you are asked about your martial arts background, give them only a basic outline: styles studied, rank, amount of years.

Here's another one. If you are ever asked, "Are you trained to kill or injure your opponents?" Your response should be something like, "I have been trained to stop the attacker from continuing his attack." This is ultimately the true goal of the martial arts; not to inflict casualties. If an attacker is inadvertently injured or killed in the process of you trying to stop him, than that was an unfortunate consequence of his actions. Even police officers are not taught, "Shoot to kill," but rather, "Shoot to stop." The fact that the aim point is center mass with multiple rounds is immaterial.

If your attacker is injured as a result of the techniques that you used, you may be asked, "Didn't you know by hitting my client in the ribs that you would break some bones?" Your response should be on the lines of, "I hit him in the side to stop him from continuing his attack on me." Even if the attorney keeps pressing you, you might want to respond, "I'm not a doctor. I don't know how much force it takes to break bones. When we train at the dojo we use padding or hit punching bags." Believe me, if there are injuries as a result of what you did the defense attorney is going to get a physician, an expert witness, to testify on their behalf to the injures and what may have likely caused them. Likewise, if you received injuries during the conflict, you need to make sure that the attorneys on your side bring this fact up. Make sure you get copies of any medical records that were produced as a result of the fight. Usually at the crime scene the police take photographs of all injuries. But if they don't, insist on it. A Crime Scene Investigator (CSI) will take photographs and document it for the report.

How to train for "your day in court"

T.V. court shows and dramas are entertaining, but they are not truly representative of what you will be facing in a real use-of-force case. My advice to you is to take a field trip to your local court house and sit in on some actual proceedings. In most cases the public is allowed to attend. You can sit quietly in the back of the courthouse, and leave during a recess.

If you are a martial arts instructor you have a moral obligation to prepare your students for the legal battle that awaits them after they use the very techniques that you taught them. Therefore, you may want to bring in a criminal trial lawyer or prosecutor into your school as a guest speaker or even set up a 20 minute mock trial like they do for recruits in police academies. You may have to pay for the services, but it would be the best hour or two of training you could ever provide your students in educating them in this phase of post-conflict training.

Evidence of a Fight Sergeant Jim Wagner

After you have experienced a real-life self-defense situation, win or lose, you will want justice. You'll want the perpetrator arrested and prosecuted. This is human nature. Of course, the proper venue to bring about justice is through the law enforcement and justice systems. Therefore your training should include the eventuality of coming into contact with these two systems.

In any conflict there are three distinct phases: *pre-crisis phase* (before the fight), *crisis phase* (during the fight), and the *post-crisis phase* (after the fight). Any good reality-based martial arts training program will include dealing with law enforcement and the judicial system, which falls into the post-crisis phase category. Although there are many subsections under this category (in past issues I've covered a few of them: *self first aid*, *identifying the suspect*, *making a citizen's arrest*, *post-crisis management*) in this issue we will focus on identification and preservation of evidence.

Definition of evidence

The exact meaning of the word evidence is “proof.” There are two types of proof, *evidence* and *physical evidence*. Evidence includes personal testimonies, writings, or other things presented to the senses (graphs, charts, diagrams, etc.). Physical evidence is any and all physical objects or recorded observations and measurements of events (tape recordings, videos, receipts, etc.).

Identification and preservation

Whenever a crime occurs (when objects or persons come into contact with one another) there is a transfer of materials. This transfer can be *one way* where the criminal leaves materials behind, or it can be *two ways* where items in the crime scene may affect the criminal. Materials that can be transferred in a fight include blood splatters, strands of hair, skin cells, clothing fibers, wood splinters from a baseball bat, paint chips from a hammer, gun powder residue from a shooting, or even semen in the case of sexual assaults.

After the fight is over it is imperative that you protect the transfer materials, and the exact location where it occurred; also known as the “crime scene.” The most important thing in preservation is not to touch anything, or permit anyone else to tamper with anything that can be evidence. For example, if you’ve got blood on yourself you may be tempted to wash it off prior to the police arriving because it feels disgusting, but don’t. When the police arrive they will want to document the event. This is accomplished through the police officer’s own observations and through photographs taken by Crime Scenes Investigations. If the suspect happens to get their blood onto you, you’ll definitely want to preserve it. A sample of the suspect’s blood (microscopic evidence) can link the person to the crime through DNA testing. One mistake that many rape victims do before reporting this heinous crime is to shower. Needless to say, evidence that can possibly put the suspect behind bars literally goes down the drain.

You never want to touch or move objects (unless leaving the object is an immediate risk to you or others). You would never want to pick up a weapon that the suspect has left behind. If you do so, you run the risk of destroying valuable fingerprints, having human sent rubbed off (which can sometimes be tracked by bloodhound dogs), a single strand of hair flying away, or any number of possibilities. If you are in inclement weather, you can throw a box or cover over the weapon or object in order to protect it from the elements.

While you are waiting for the police to arrive you do not want to smoke in the crime scene - especially indoors. Smoking can affect the evidence in some cases.

While waiting for the police, mentally note (or write it down if possible) any movement that had taken place in the crime scene (reconstruct in your mind the exact events). Plus, take note of who has come in and out of the crime scene since the cessation of hostilities (the route people came in, and the route that they left). This is information that the police will definitely want.

Even though a Crime Scene Investigator (CSI) will collect and examine all of the evidence, you must always keep in mind that whatever you tell the police or the courts will also be considered evidence. Therefore always tell the truth, be detailed and accurate in your recollection, and get a copy of the report when it is finished. You have a right to the report (under the Public Information Act) in most instances, and it will refresh your memory when the trial takes place, months or years down the road. Remember that memory fails with time.

Don’t be disappointed

As a police officer I have gone to many crime scenes, and the victims were disappointed to find out that I had no intention of collecting finger prints, blood samples, etc. The reason I didn’t “do the works” many times was because it was a minor incident in the eyes of the law (although that certainly did not diminish or invalidate the emotions of the victims). If you end up in a simple bar fight where you get a bloody nose, at best you will get a photograph taken of it and a police report. If you know who the suspect is, or can point us to him, great, we’ll do our duty and go look for him. But, if there is little change of finding him, don’t expect a manhunt - because it’s not going to happen.

On the other hand, collection of evidence is almost always going to occur in serious crimes – robbery, attempted murder, rape or attempted rape, assault with a deadly weapon, etc. If you end up in this category, then all the mentioned rules will apply to you.

The training environment

It is very easy to include evidence identification and preservation into your training from time to time. One method you can use is to dab boxing gloves into a little stage blood (bought at a theatrical supply store or homemade with a little corn starch and red food coloring). Then, after the sparring match or scenario training students will look for and identify any “blood” transfer on them.

Another effective training method to get students use to thinking *evidence* is to have sparring matches or scenarios where the “suspect” drops a knife or gun (rubber training weapons) and the student is required to preserve the crime scene and makes a simulated call to the police. When the “police” (a fellow student) arrives, the student describes what had happened and where all possible evidence is located. Of course, the more elaborate your “stage” the better the learning curve.

The Five Levels of Force

Sergeant Jim Wagner

There is a proverb that declares, "You do as you are trained." If you are trained to always defend yourself with *feet and fist blazing*, then be prepared to possibly go to jail, face criminal charges, or lose everything you own in a civil suit.

The vast majority of civilian-based martial arts programs have a "cookie cutter" approach to self-defense. They use the exact same amount of force, delivering a variety of defensive and offensive techniques, regardless of the opponent or the circumstances.

Whether it's one point sparring or freestyle sparring, most practitioners visualize their training partner as "the generic attacker." The generic attacker is someone who comes at you, but they have no specific reason for attacking you, there is no history leading up to the attack, and there are no special circumstances surrounding the impending event. It's just an attack. Of course, in order to effectively deal with a generic attacker you must deal with them generically; be it with a kick, punch, take down, or any combination thereof.

Unfortunately, in real life the generic attacker does not exist. Every individual is unique, and every situation will not only be itself unique, but radically different from the next. For example, what will you do when your unarmed attacker is a drunken old man trying to hit you with his fist? Do you punch him like you would a 20 year old? What action do you take when the attacker is a sixth grader trying to stab you in the leg with a pair of scissors? Do you strike her in throat with the knife-edge of your hand because she is using a weapon? Would you use lethal force on someone who purposely threw bleach into your eyes? The possible scenarios are endless. Do you train for such unconventional attacks?

Law enforcement training vs. civilian training

One area where I believe that law enforcement training is light years past civilian martial arts training is in the area of the appropriate use of force in conflict situations. Every law enforcement agency across North America has a Use-of-Force Policy (a written document) found in a Manual of Rules and Regulations. The policy sets forth broad guidelines, which recommends that officers use physical force, which is both reasonable and necessary to overcome resistance, and to protect lives and property. The articles are generally loosely worded since any incident would be evaluated in its "totality of circumstances." We'll get back to this term later.

In addition to the Use-of-Force Policy, law enforcement officers are taught early on in their careers, starting at the academy, the Control Continuum. This is a fancy terms which means that there are various levels of threats, and therefore require the appropriate level of response to control each one. The five levels of threat (the threat being from our would be attacker) are: **1. Intimidating demeanor 2. Passive resistance 3. Active resistance 4. Assault 5. Aggravated Assault**. The five corresponding responses to these threats are: **1. Command Presence 2. Verbal commands 3. Controlling Force 4. Impact force 5. Deadly force** Now, if you're not a cop you're probably wondering how this all applies to you. Here's how. Although law enforcement officers are held to a higher standard than civilians, guess what? If you use force on someone you will be held to similar standards. In fact, who do you think is going to make the first judgment call concerning your actions? That's right, a law enforcement officer who, by the way, has all of these terms deeply ingrained in their head. Then, when you get to court, the lawyers and the Judge, will also be swinging these terms around. Therefore, as I go through the list, these terms will also apply to you should you ever find yourself "post self-defense."

Command presence

This is a very popular term in "cop speak." It basically means, appearing confident and in control. The mere presence of such a person demands respect, or at least instills a healthy dose of "the fear of God." Likewise, you can use command presence to avoid a fight just by coming across bold to those you come into contact with. Advice typically given to women in rape prevention courses is, "Walk like you have a purpose, so as not to look afraid and vulnerable."

In addition looking squared away, you should always look people directly into their eyes, and keep your face emotionless when dealing with people who are trying to intimidate you.

Verbal commands

When I was off duty one day with my wife at a hot dog stand a transient approach us to pan handle. I politely told him to move on, but he insisted on getting some money from me. I then jumped into the next level of my command presence and told him that if he didn't get out of my face that I'd call the cops. He was shaken by the tone of my voice, muttered some profanities, and then scurried off. Oh sure, he could have just as easily have pulled a knife and lunged at me, in which case I was also ready for that, but he didn't. My "tactical talking" had worked. Not just at that incident, but good strong verbal commands have worked for me hundreds of times when in uniform.

The key is to look like your going to back up your words with the proper body language. Thus, verbal commands go hand in hand with command presence.

Controlling force

Controlling force means laying hands on someone, but it is less than fighting. For example, if an obnoxious drunkard gets into your face and won't step to the side when politely asked, then you may have to push them out of the way. Or you may find yourself holding down a child who is throwing a tantrum and being violent. When the kid accuses you of abuse, you'll simply state that you were controlling them by holding them down in order to prevent them from injuring them self and others. Teachers run into these kinds of problems all of the time. It may not be high risk, but it is conflict.

Of course, anytime you touch someone who is agitated may suddenly lash out at you. Therefore, never drop your guard when you are using controlling force. Be prepared for a rapid escalation of force.

Impact force

If somebody attempts to punch or kick me, as a law enforcement officer I have the right to use impact weapons. My impact weapon is a police baton. Or, if I have the time, and the opportunity, I may select to use my pepper spray (such chemical agents fall into the category of controlling force by some agencies). The law is designed so that the officer is always on a higher level of force than the subject. Impact force can cause pain or blunt trauma injuries, thus it is reserved for assault situations.

As a civilian you have the legal right to defend yourself or others against assault. Although you may not be able to take a baton to someone (that is a felony in most states), you may be permitted to use chemical agents (which is legal in my state of California) and you will most definitely be able to use your martial arts skills; those which are reasonable and necessary to end the attack. What constitutes "reasonable and necessary" you're probably wondering. The standard is this: what would the average person do in exact same situation? If the average person would react like you, then you'll have no problem. But, if the average person (the jury) feels you went over board in using physical force, you're going to have a difficult time convincing them that it was justified.

Deadly Force

If somebody is trying to inflict great bodily harm against you, or someone in your immediate presence, you have a legal right to defend yourself. In some situations this may require deadly force. The law does not state that you need feel that your death, or someone else's, is a prerequisite to using deadly force. The law states that great bodily harm has, or will, occur.

If you use a weapon for self-defense, you will be question about such a weapon. Before you carry any weapon you should consult with your local law enforcement agency as to what is legal to carry and what is not (provided that you are concerned about local, state, and federal laws – the bad guys are certainly not).

Totality of circumstances

We've returned to this term. Should you ever have to appear in court in a use-of-force case, you will be judged based upon the totality of circumstances. In other words, all of the factors will be evaluated to determine if your actions were reasonable and necessary. Factors that the court system will take into account are: your skill level, the suspect's skill level, physical condition, weapons involved, influence of alcohol or drugs, fatigue or injuries, the environment, and of course your actions and that of the suspect's. It's not merely enough to say, "I was afraid for my life" as many instructors will advise their students to say, although that would definitely be a factor if it were true.

The following example is a situation of unreasonable and unnecessary force. Let's say that you chase a thief down the street for stealing your watch. You catch up with him and jump him. You beat him senseless, and you get your watch back. No member of the jury is going to buy it that you were "afraid" for your safety. Seriously injuring somebody just over property (petty theft), who was in the act of fleeing, does not justify the use-of-force.

Approximately 10 years ago officers were told that they had to follow the Control Continuum in the exact order as they appear. First you started with verbal commands, and then if things got bad you went into controlling force, then impact force, and right up the line. However, this idea was abandoned because administrations realized that actual situations don't always go in sequence. You could end up talking with someone one moment, then using deadly force against that person the next because

they pulled a knife on you. It would be suicide to use controlling force on somebody with a knife, and impact force won't stop him or her in time either. Therefore, the system is merely a guideline, which must be flexible.

By committing the levels of force mentioned to memory, you will be prepared to effectively defend your actions should the need ever arise.

Putting all of this into practice

Realistic training (or often called reality-based training) is the first step to knowing when and how to employ the proper use-of-force concepts. Just as in real life, not all conflicts end with punching and kicking. Your training should also include confrontations (scenarios) that requiring verbal commands or a bit of controlling force, such as attempting to separate disputants or telling an aggressive transient to back off. Sure it burns a few more calories being creative, but it's going to develop your skills at other levels seldom exercised.

If you conduct your training in this manner you can proceed to the next phase, which is justifying your actions (explain why you did what you did with your training partner or instructor). As one of my academy instructor's used to tell my class, "You can do whatever you want to do in this job. You just have to be able to explain why you did it."

The promotion

You probably noticed the title in front of my name has changed from Officer to Sergeant. Yeap, I got promoted. I'm back out on Patrol and recently assigned to my department's Dignitary Protection Unit. Thus, you can be assured that the information in this column each month is not just theory coming from the safety of four walls of a school somewhere, but it's information, which I myself take to the streets and implement in my own training.

FIGHTING WORDS **Jim Wagner**

How do most sparring matches begin in a typical dojo? It usually goes something like this. Two opponents square off on each other, give some form of salutation, and then start fighting on command of the instructor or referee. There's nothing wrong with beginning like this, if you happen to be in the traditional or sports martial arts, but it has no place in reality-based martial-arts (martial arts which is 100% dedicated to realistic self-defense). Therefore, in seeking realistic training we must ask the question, "How do most fights begin?" The answer is – with words.

Whether it is a drunk patron in a bar or restaurant mouthing off to you, or a drug-crazed gunman who wants to carjack your vehicle, most attacks are initiated with some form of verbal communication – whether for mere dominant posturing or for victim compliance. Although there are no recorded statistics on this subject matter, I would estimate (based upon my experience as a cop and Defensive Tactics instructor training departments globally) that 90-95% of all domestic and civilian street conflicts begin with verbalization. Those attacks that do not begin with words are in the ambush category (sneak attacks).

Using Words As Weapons

Just as we may use a kick or a punch to defend ourselves, the proper words spoken at the right moment during a crisis situation may also protect us. For example, you're depositing a check at the ATM machine and an armed robber holds you up demanding that you withdrawal the maximum amount of money that the machine will allow you and hand it over to him. The wrong word to say to him would be, "No!" Such a simple word could get you shot. On the other hand, if you say "Okay, I'll give you as much money as you want" it makes the robber relax knowing that you are compliant. Ultimately, that's what any attacker wants from his victim – compliance. Whether you verbally comply to buy yourself sometime to set up your counter attack or you decide to gamble that handing over the money will prevent physical harm, then your words are your best form of defense initially. Such words spoken at the right moment are called deflection phrases, because they deflect the immediate danger of the initial attack. It may buy you a few minutes, or mere seconds depending on the crisis.

Expanding on our ATM illustration, let's say that you were unable to withdrawal any cash from the machine (perhaps it's a business account for deposits only, your broke, or whatever), what are you going to tell the robber? "Sorry, I don't have the money to give you." Is he going to believe you? Probably not. Therefore, in order to prevent him from "capping you" (shooting you) you may use a deflection phrase such as, Look, it won't let me take any money out, but I'll give you my wallet (or purse)." By offering the crook what he wants you are verbally deflecting harm. Even if you end up saying the wrong thing, don't hesitate to immediately rephrase your words to deflect negative consequences.

By playing the game, and verbally backing down, you lead the attacker to believe he is in control.

Words Are Not Enough

When you use deflection phrases the attacker must be absolutely convinced that you mean what you say – even if you are bluffing to set up a counter attack or escape.

In human communication there are three components, which the receiver (the person you're talking to) cues in on:

1. Content – the actual words used (10%)
2. Verbals – how the words are spoken: tone and pitch of the voice (40%)
3. Non-Verbals – body language: face expressions, hand gestures (50%)

Whatever you say to your attacker, he is going to be more focused in on your non-verbal indicators, and how you say it, then the actual words you use. Therefore, whatever you say to the attacker, all three components must be in harmony to make him believe you – especially if you're about to execute a daring move. In some respects, you have to learn to be a good actor (I highly recommend martial artists to take a few acting classes in learning how to pull off successful ruses).

Another key factor worth mentioning is that of cross-cultural communications. If you ever find yourself dealing with an attacker from a different culture, it is definitely worth the effort to understand the cultural norms you may be exposed to; whether in your own neighborhood or upon your travels. For example, on many Hispanic cultures direct eye contact is avoided when speaking to a superior as a sign of respect. If you should ever find yourself in this situation and make direct eye contact with the wrong person, then this one little mistake could be interpreted as defiance, and it could cost you dearly.

Practical Application

The words that your attacker uses will usually determine his intent. Likewise, your words can help diffuse the situation, distract your attacker, or the wrong thing said could get you killed. In some high-risk situations, such as kidnapping or hostage taking, your words will be more important than any kick or punch you've perfected. Therefore, learning Conflict Communications is absolutely necessary.

To incorporate Conflict Communications into your reality-based training, you must seamlessly blend it into your scenario training (role playing); in police and military circles we call this Practical Application, or "Prac Ap" for short.

Rather than beginning a "match" in the traditional way, you and your partner(s) must establish the context of the conflict (robbery, bar fight, sexual assault, ect.). Then, you must have an initiating script (words the attacker(s) will use to initiate the assault). Finally, your scenario needs to follow predictable patterns (logical events that would result emulating real life. In other words, what would really happen if the victim chose to fight, flight, or submit).

Dealing with combat stress before it happens

Sergeant Jim Wagner

How will you perform at the moment of truth? What's going to happen to you emotionally when you're locked in mortal combat? Will you have the *Will to Survive* or will you be so paralyzed with fear that you hesitate during the first few critical seconds or can't move at all? The answer is - you won't know until you can say, "Been there, done that."

Tough Talk

As a police officer I've heard my fair share of locker room bravado where officers boast about "hookin and bookin" criminals only to find these same officers standing around on the sidelines when a suspect went 918V (violent). I've been knee deep in some fights where a fellow officer failed to jump in and assist. Of course moments of paralysis are not limited to law enforcement or soldiers in the fox hole. We've all heard a story or two about a "black belt" getting beat up after years of training. Some people gleefully recount such stories, like news of an evangelist having adultery, but sadly we know such things do occur.

Years ago I assumed (and yes, you can fairly parse this word) that most people getting into the military or law enforcement would be aggressive by nature. After having trained personnel from over 400 agencies and military units I have discovered that there are a lot of people in these professions who have never had to "*fight for their lunch money.*" About half the students who attend my courses have no real fighting experience; people who lack not just street experience, but who don't even know how to throw a proper punch or kick. What is taught in today's law enforcement academies and military boot camps, when it comes to hand-to-hand combat, is just the bare minimum; and sometimes not even that. It's no wonder that many officers use excessive force in the course of their duties, or in some cases not enough force and they themselves injured during an altercation.

It has only been in the last couple of years that more emphasis is being placed on Combatives training (also known as Defensive Tactics - DeTac) and the stresses associated with type of conflict. After all, the average law enforcement officer is involved with more hand-to-hand situations than shootings. And yet, up until now, most of the combat stress training has revolved around firearms situations.

Martial Arts Schools

If law enforcement and the military are just now addressing combat stress management in hand-to-hand confrontations, then that lack of proper training is even greater in the civilian martial arts (*when it comes to realistic training I believe that the military and law enforcement are years ahead of civilian martial arts having myself been on both sides of the fence*).

Most martial arts schools teach very effective self-defense techniques to their students that will work in the streets. A kick is a kick, and a punch is a punch. Where most schools lack is addressing the stress that these techniques will be performed under. The following training methods will help you implement your own combat stress management program.

Hace frio (*it's cold*)

When the human body is subjected to extreme cold there are predictable physiological conditions which occur: the body pulls blood from the limbs and concentrates it in the inner core to give warmth to vital organs, digits get numb, reaction time slows, fine motor skills are reduced, and the thinking process is dulled.

In actual combat the body can experience similar stresses like that of cold: fine motor skills give way to gross motor skills, breathing becomes rapid and shallow, and reaction time may be slowed. To simulate this stress takes nothing more than cold water.

In the privacy of your own shower turn on the cold water and let it run over you. The sudden shock to the body is close to the shock that you'll experience when your life's on the line.

Under such conditions it's hard to carry on normally, but that's exactly what you have to train yourself to do. When you're running the water your breathing must be deep and rhythmic. The better you control your breathing the more relaxed your muscles will be and the clearer your thinking will be. Build up your tolerance a little each time. Your reward will be a warm shower afterward.

In the US Navy SEALs, Marine Force Recon, Army Special Forces or other units who train extensively in waterborne operations, personnel are subjected to cold conditioning - notably, standing in the cold surf without thermal protection. Prior to reaching hypothermia (condition where the body heat falls below normal) they are ordered out of the water and are required to perform various tasks (in the form of strenuous physical exercise) then sent back into the water. Cold is a great demoralizer, and dealing with it takes mental fortitude.

A few months ago I was training a Brazilian Military Police SWAT team called G.A.T.E. (Grupo de Ações Táticas Especiais) and I had them jump into icy ocean water from a boat dock. The water was approximately 55 degrees Fahrenheit / 13 degrees Centigrade. They entered the water with their Battle Dress Uniforms (BDUs), but left their tactical gear on shore or else they'd sink to the bottom like a rock. When they crawled up on the rocky shore they immediately put on their gun belts and practiced gun retention techniques (preventing a suspect from taking the officer's own sidearm from the holster) while dripping wet. My students found that the stress induced by the cold required more energy and determination than when they were performed earlier in the ideal conditions of the training room.

A WORD OF WARNING! When we train in waterborne operation we always have a trained Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) present to monitor swimmers. Prolong exposure to cold can cause injury and/or death.

Sleepy Time

Fatigue, like cold, is a demoralizer. When you are extremely tired even simple tasks become difficult. In combat it is easy to become exhausted very rapidly, especially in prolonged conflicts. Most fights I've been in have ended in seconds. However, I recall one time in the jail when a sergeant and I tried to subdue a combative prisoner who had fried his brain on a hallucinogenic drug. We struggled with this guy for 5 straight minutes before our back up arrived. This was in the days before pepper spray or impact munitions, but we would not have been able to get to them anyway. After the ordeal we were spent. If it would have went on any longer we would have had to use lethal force.

Depriving students of sleep and forcing them to perform physically demanding exercises is common in various specialized military and law enforcement training. In the US Army's Ranger School students receive approximately three hours of sleep a night. In the Navy SEALs BUD/S (Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL) training, during a period called "Hell Week" candidates receive an average of 20 minutes of sleep per day.

Head Games

Jim Wagner

Anxiety is an emotion that if conquered, can teach you survive in a crisis situation. Anxiety can also be a useful tool to the martial arts instructor who wants to teach his or her students to overcome combat stress.

Being anxious just before any conflict is a natural human emotion, especially if there is some time to contemplate the perceived threat. Most martial arts training is geared towards immediate attacks, and rarely addresses those situations that can produce a building up of anxiety. Traditionally, students are placed before one another like a sporting event, then commanded to spar or perform a specific self-defense drill. There is no pretext of the conflict, one just simple "does." By setting up the event artificially, there really is no fear of anything happening until the command is given, whereas in a real life conflict there are a chain of events which leads up to combat, and at any point there is potential danger; whether the person is aware of it or not. Of course, there is nothing wrong with throwing two students together and having them practice something. It saves a lot of time, and many real fights do happen instantaneously: carjackings, muggings, drive-by shootings, etc. However, the future can just as easily

hold fights that build up to a point of conflict such as road rage, a drunken patron egging you on, a gang member who starts to challenge you because you looked at him with “disrespect,” or somebody stalking you. Such events, that follow a time line, produce anxiety. The attack that happens instantly, like someone jumping you when you turn a corner, does not give you enough time to build up anxiety.

Many people, if given the choice in a real fight, would certainly prefer to have some sort of advanced warning in order to react to the threat. Yet, if too much time elapses there is a chance of getting “psyched out.” If a victim has time to think about what’s coming, they might even second-guess themselves, which can lead to poor tactical choices. Some people may even submit to the attacker because fear has set in, and they have deduced that there are no other options. After all, there are only three choices in any battle: *fight*, *flight*, or *submit*. Submission can occur only after analysis. Yet, if students are not exposed to those time lines which produce combat stress, how will they be prepared to deal with it?

Creating anxiety in training

I’ve seen some of the most skilled fighters be overtaken by pre-conflict stress. I’m not talking about karate champions or boxers, although it certainly can happen them, I’m talking about those who fight for a living – cops, soldiers, special ops people, etc. Let me give a couple of examples.

There is a police sniper school, which I shall leave unnamed, that will pass out a right-out-of-the-box, single match grade, 168 grain, boat tail, .308 caliber bullet on the very first day of a one-week course, and tell the students to hang onto it. The instructor tells the receiving students that very bullet in their hand is their final exam. They must keep the bullet in their breast pocket the entire week, and not let anything happen to it. It has been marked. On exam day, one week later, the students are required to fire the one issued bullet at a target that will be scored by the staff. The target that the student must hit is the size of a silver quarter at 100 yards away. It’s a photograph of a suspect whose face is partially hidden by a hostage in front of him. The target area is the space between the upper lip and the tip of the nose. If they hit the target, they will pass the course and go onto be police snipers with their department. If they miss the target, they fail the course and will not graduate, thus throwing away the department’s money and embarrassing themselves.

As the course progresses and hundreds of rounds have been expended, the instructor will occasionally have the students pull out their “exam bullet” and have them rub it, look at it, and put it back, all the while telling them that they are holding the bullet that will determine their final grade, and they had better not screw it up.

Come exam day each and every student feels some degree of anxiety, even if they have been shooting great all week. The stories of past students who have failed are constant reminders that not everyone makes it through the course. When the final test is administered, and the single bullet is fired (not at leisure, but under a demanding tactical situation) most students can handle the mental stress, but several cannot and they blow the shot. They miss, because they let the anxiety get to them. After all, if a police sniper cannot take a precision shot in a hostage situation, which is the ultimate pressure, he or she has no business being a police sniper.

The second example of creating anxiety in a training environment happened to me just recently in a career-defining course. For several days the instructors told us that we would have to fight full contact against fellow classmates (with mouthpiece and gloves) in order to pass the course. We wouldn’t know with whom we would have to go up against until moments before the fight. Everyday during physical training (PT) the Defensive Tactics instructors would tell us that everyone had better try to win their fight or it would be viewed as weakness and the student would be subject to expulsion. We were also warned that anyone who retreated or tried to quit in the heat of battle would automatically be dropped from the course and sent home.

Some guys were really worried about “the big day” since the class contained some real warriors that could do some serious damage in the two minutes they allotted for the fight. Although I had experienced such a drill years earlier in the army and the police academy, and I had trained with a lot of “big boys” since in teaching Defensive Tactics courses, I admit that I did feel some anxiety, especially since the whole class would be witnessing it. Here I was, this well-known martial artist who writes for Black Belt, and I could possibly get my assed kicked in front of everyone. The thought of it worried me. The actual physical fight, or possibility of injuries didn’t bother me, it was the uncertainty of the outcome. However, once I caught myself feeling anxious (the butterflies in the stomach), I decided to visualize myself not just fighting, but also wanting to win against every one of my classmates. In fact, I kept telling myself that I would be cheated if I couldn’t fight all of them, one by one. This was the same attitude I had always carried with me on the streets as a cop – “Bring it on.”

When the day finally came I dropped my opponent to his knees with the first thrust kick to the center of his gut. That pretty much took the fight out of him. The rest of the fight was easy after that. The turning point for me was that I had to reacquaint myself with anxiety, and deal with it.

Putting anxiety into practice

If you are a martial arts instructor, try this experiment with your adult students. Select a date on the calendar, preferably a training day when the class is normally packed, and tell the students that they will have the opportunity to fight full contact with a few Marine Close Combat instructors who have graciously volunteered their time to help the class. Tell the students that they

will only have to go one minute, and the fight will be immediately stopped if someone is going to get seriously hurt. Right then and there you will see anxiety on some of your students' faces just at the thought of going against a stranger at full contact.

A couple of weeks prior to "the big day," hype up the event by telling the students that they will all do well if they will just keep a "winning attitude." Throw in some extra training and exercises to "prepare" them for the Marines who like to "play a little rough."

When the day of the event arrives, have a couple of good-sized guests (posing as your Marine instructors, or any other story you wish to give your students – SWAT guys, bouncers from the local bar, whatever), standing in one corner of the training area giving "hard looks" as the students filter into class. Select two of your most nervous students and have them suit up – if they're willing to do it, that is. Send the rest of the students outside to wait their turns.

Once the students are suited up you will have them spar each other, not the guests, using only light contact. When the one-minute fight (sparring match) is up, tell them that there is not going to be a fight with the "Marines." For those students who were apprehensive about the fight in the first place, you will see them relax with relief. The actual sparring match with each other was to burn up some of that stored up tension caused by the anxiety.

Towards the end of class find out what students did not even show up for the event. You'll be surprised at how many will call in sick, or can't find a baby sitter on that day. For those who came, and that were willing to face the unknown, ask them if they experienced any anxiety about the thought of going up against professionals. In a group setting or in private, ask each student if they would share their secrets on how they dealt with this potentially incapacitating emotion known as anxiety. Let the students know that this "head game" was to help them understand the emotions they may actually face before a conflict, and that the only way to simulate it was to create something stressful in training. Barring a few hard core students who were willing to take on the Marines, most will have experienced a great deal of anxiety.

The goal of such a ruse is to help your students find some sort of inner strength to deal with anxiety, be it prayer, a "can do" motto, a "mad dog" look, or a combination thereof. Whatever it takes to have them face conflict head on, let them discover it now instead of in real combat.

With a little creativity you can introduce your own head games into training that will help your students overcome anxiety. Creating physical stress is easy. Creating mental stress is the most difficult task there is in teaching the martial arts. Hopefully these ideas will help you.

Developing the Warrior Attitude Officer Jim Wagner

Aggressiveness is a key trait that a martial artist must possess or at least seek to acquire. Developing aggressive behavior in beginning students without discouraging them can be a difficult task for the instructor. Not just for instructors who teach in civilian martial arts schools, but for trainers like myself who instruct law enforcement and military personnel. It seems that there are a lot of people getting into these potentially dangerous careers who have never had to "fight for their lunch money." Although one would expect a police officer or soldier to be more aggressive than the average person would, it is not always the case. As an instructor, I increasingly find myself having to build up the aggressiveness in many of my students before I can take them to the next step - learning how to fight.

Sparring too soon

Beginning students or timid students are rarely ready to just jump right into sparring (simulated combat through free style contact), even though it is a great preparatory drill for real life threats. The instructor must, therefore, have other "tools" in his instructional toolbox besides sparring to introduce students to physical contact.

Every person has the "fight or flight" instinct (actually, there are three: fight, flight, and submit), but not everyone possess the "warrior attitude" (valor, fortitude, bravery, fearlessness, courage). The instructor's primary goal should be the development of this lifesaving attitude; more so than the mere instructions of techniques. However, an instructor who pushes a student into high anxiety situations before they are ready emotionally, such as sparring, risks the "flight" response. Usually the flight is right out of the studio as a dropped student, or in the case of law enforcement or the military, a negative attitude toward officer safety training.

Even though sparring in a studio situation is not "life threatening" per se, it evokes similar physiological responses that parallel the real thing: fear, knotted stomach, paralysis, shallow breathing, even vomiting are some of the more commons symptoms. Experienced fighters may find themselves going through the same "crisis cycle," just like a beginner, when going up against a superior opponent. Obviously, the real concern is losing or being injured.

The beginning student may indeed give sparring a try to please the instructor or peers, but they may not like the emotional trauma or physical symptoms that it heaps upon them afterward, and they may soon drop out. To prevent this from happening there must be a step-by-step approach, with slow and methodical conditioning that reduces predictable anxieties. In other words, to get people who are generally nonviolent accustomed to violence, you must start with exercises and drills where the risks are low and increase the intensity gradually. To accomplish this I have developed a series of exercises, which I call

“Contact Conditioners.” They introduce students to physical contact, but without the fear of injury. Here a few of them that you can incorporate into your own training.

Contact Conditioners

SHIELD FIGHTING EXERCISE

Shield fighting is as ancient as warfare itself. By taking this ancient tactic and putting it into today’s training arenas, students will learn a variety of lessons: stay on the offensive, gain ground, and never give up. All that is needed is a little space and two kicking shields.

What to do?

1. Mark a ring, 10 feet by 10 feet, by using tape or placing a boxing glove at each corner.
2. Have two students, at opposite ends of the ring, each armed with a kicking shield.

Rules

1. The students are to force one another out of the ring by using the surface or edges of the shields only.
2. The students may not step out of the ring at anytime, although one foot out of the ring in order to gain balance is acceptable.
3. The first one to force his opponent out of the ring (both feet over the line) wins. There is no time limit. It takes as long as it takes.

HEEL STOMP EXERCISE

Although the heel stomp can be found in almost any martial art in the world it is often a neglected and unrehearsed technique. Its power can be crippling in a real self-defense situation, but it’s also a great endurance and aggression exercise. It sounds easy, but it can become quite a challenge.

What to do?

1. Two students will grab the shirt of each other’s shoulders, and get into a fighting stance.
2. On the command of, “Go!” they will try to stomp on the feet of one another, at the same time avoiding getting their own feet stomped on.

Rules

1. The first person to stomp both of his opponent’s feet, within 15 seconds, wins.
2. This exercise should be practiced gently to start since the bones in the foot are fairly fragile. A quick step on top of the other’s foot will suffice for the exercise.

GROUND FIGHTING

Since most fights end up on the ground it is crucial to know how to fight from there. This contact exercise is the first step in learning to be comfortable fighting from the ground.

What to do?

1. The trainee lays down on the ground, on his side, in a fighting posture.
2. The trainer wears boxing gloves and shin pads.

Rules

1. The trainer must tap the top of the trainee’s head while avoiding being kicked or tripped by the trainee. A 15-second time limit is given. If the trainee survives the 15 seconds without being tapped, he wins. If his head is tapped, he loses and is punished; usually 20 push-ups (in my courses losing is ALWAYS punished. If my students lose in real life they are seriously injured or killed).
2. The trainee avoids having the top of his head tapped by trying to kick and trip the trainer (avoid direct kicks to the knee for safety’s sake).
3. The trainee may switch from side to side, rotate, or get on his back to defend himself.

KAMIKAZE STOMACH EXERCISE

A strong stomach is essential for a good fighter. A fighter must be able to take strikes to the stomach. More importantly, a fighter, once committed to an attack, must go with 100% determination; what the US Marines call, “Violence of Action.” This

exercise combines an old karate strengthening drill with aggressive resolve (I usually save this exercise for after lunch as my courses last 8 hours per day).

What to do?

1. The trainee will put his hands on top of his head.
2. The trainer will be in a fighting stance prepared to deliver a front kick to the trainee's stomach.

Rules

1. The trainee will walk briskly toward the trainer with the intent to walk right through them. As the trainee closes the distance the trainer will delivered a front kick into the trainee's abdomen (half force). The trainee will override his natural instincts to stop and protect himself, and charge through anyway with tightened muscles to deflect the blow.
2. The trainer will aim for the mid section only, and execute kicks that the trainee can handle. We kick with combat boots, but you may want to use tennis shoes or bare feet. However, the trainee is very vulnerable in this position, and caution must be taken.

KNIFE EVASION EXERCISE

If somebody pulls a knife on you you're already at a 90% disadvantage. In a real knife fight most people cannot even survive for the first five seconds without receiving a life-threatening stab or cut to the torso, head, or neck area (that includes armed law enforcement officers as well). Good luck in disarming! Rarely can it be pulled off. Your only chance is to avoid the initial attack just long enough to counter attack, go for your own weapon, or run.

What to do?

1. The trainer is armed with a rubber knife.
2. The trainee is empty-handed (wearing safety goggles).

Rules

1. The trainer tries to stab or cut the trainee (who is approximately 6 feet away) in the torso area at full speed, and never gives the trainee a chance to grab hold of the weapon.
2. The trainee keeps both hands up and slaps the trainer's knife hand away with both hands to defend himself.
3. The trainee must move to the side or backwards to avoid getting stabbed or cut.
4. If the trainee can survive for 5 seconds, then he wins. The average knife fight (in real life) last five seconds; an eternity when you're in the danger zone.

GLADIATORIAL COMBAT EXERCISE

This exercise goes way back - to the Roman era. Although long gone are the days that two people would fight each other with knives, this exercise really instills the "Will to Survive," and aggression like few exercises can. As a bonus, the previous exercise, KNIFE EVASION EXERCISE, is reemphasized in the students' minds .

What to do?

1. Both students are equipped with eye protection, and are each armed with rubber knives (the soft kind that bend easily).

Rules

1. Each student will attempt to deliver a fatal blow against one another: a stab to the chest, abdomen or head, or a cut to the neck area. The one who does so, wins. Defensive wounds to the hands and arms do not count (those areas are not usually life threatening in a real knife fight).
2. If the student is stabbed in the arm or leg (a strike that would definitely render it useless) then he loses the use of that limb. If it is his arm, it must go behind his back. If it is in the leg, then he must go down on that knee. Minor nicks don't count.
3. Even if a fatal blow is delivered, the fight continues for another five seconds to train for real life confrontations. Just because someone receives a fatal wound, does not mean that they will go down right away. They may still have enough life in them to do you in.

KNIFE FROG LEAP KNIFE EXERCISE

Nothing creates more anticipation in a student than this exercise. Going for a single weapon is a game where winner usually takes all. This exercise teaches quick reaction, speed, and of course incorporates the last two exercises: KNIFE EVASION EXERCISE and GLADIATORIAL COMBAT EXERCISE.

What to do?

1. Have both students lay in a prone position facing each other approximately 25 feet away from each other.
2. Place a rubber knife between them in the middle.

Rules

1. When the instructor gives the command, "Go!" both students will leap for the rubber knife.
2. The first one who gains control over the knife will stab the other student in the torso once then disengage. GLADIATORIAL COMBAT can be done only if both students are suited up with protective gear.
3. The winner is the one who ends up with the knife.

WALL SPARRING EXERCISE

Putting a student in unusual fighting situations can really benefit the student by making him or her comfortable fighting in any position. This exercise accomplishes two things. One: it isolates the hands. Two: it forces the student to look over their shoulder and counter attack.

What to do?

1. The trainee places both hands on a wall, and may not remove them during the length of the exercise.
2. The trainer is behind (or to the sides) of the trainee wearing boxing gloves, chest protection, and shin pads.

Rules

1. The trainer will attempt to punch or kick (light to moderate) the trainee utilizing a half circle around the trainee.
2. The trainee will counter attack using only his legs. He may kick or trip the trainer.
The exercise will last for 15 seconds.

Overcoming

These exercises are just a few that my law enforcement and military students enjoy; from the most advanced, down to the beginners, and yes, even the timid. They are confidence builders that permit students to experience limited physical contact. When students "survive" or "endure" these Contact Conditioner exercises they learn a little bit more about themselves, and their own limits. It's not long after that they are in the ring sparring with the best of them.