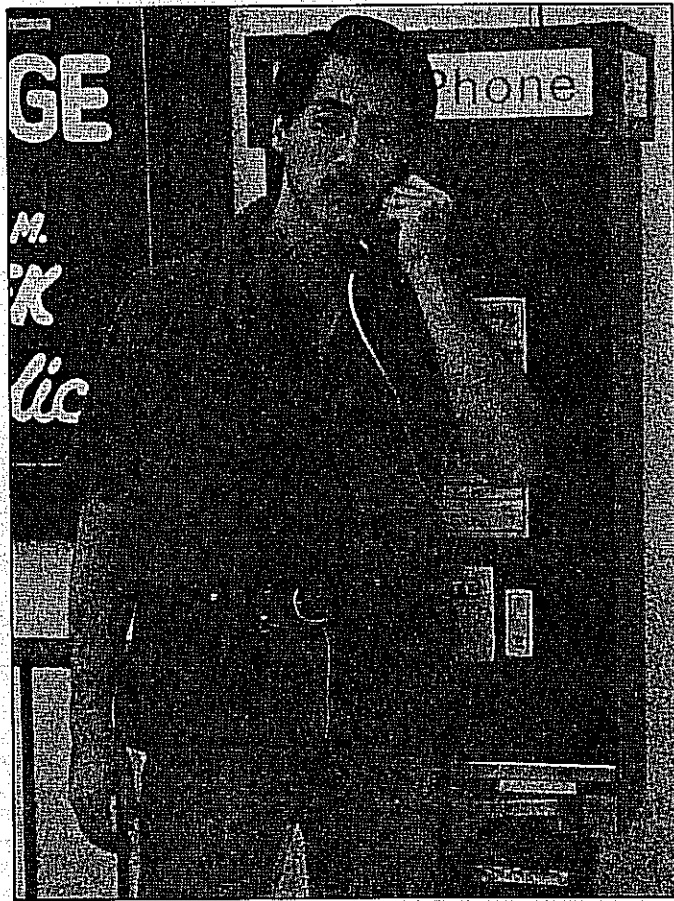
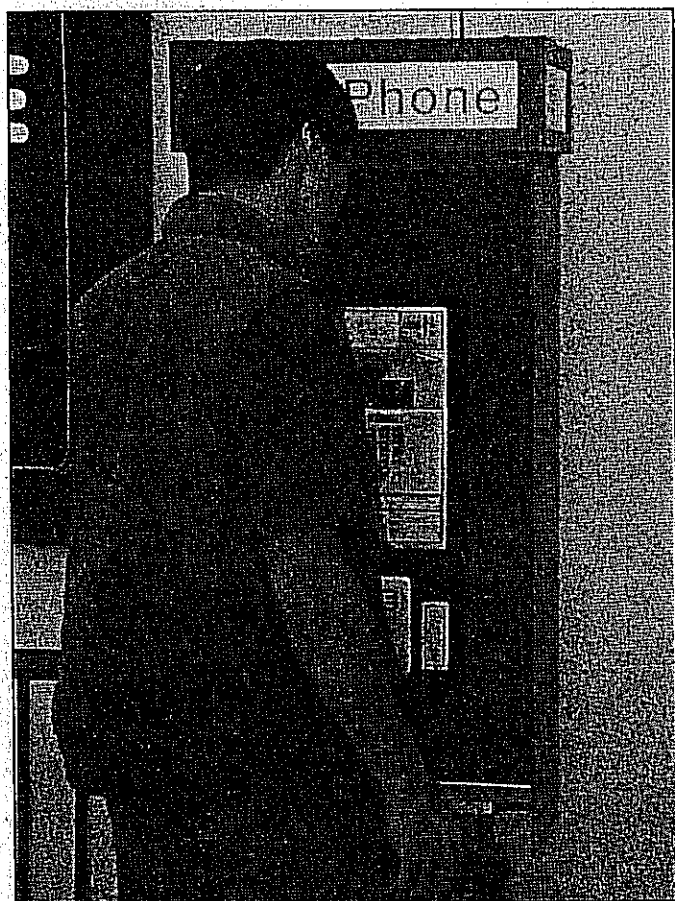


# Common Sense Tactics

Street survival tactics that work—whether you're armed or not!



Only suckers stand at payphones like this. The body language bleats to muggers like a wounded rabbit call to a coyote. Mike Izumi demonstrates proper way to stand at a payphone. Back is to the wall, cord is clear of arm and neck. Note how previous photo makes caller look closer and defensive, this man isn't paranoid, just an ordinary guy with nothing to hide...who doesn't let people sneak up on him.

Tactics go beyond cover and concealment, marksmanship and movement. My friend and graduate Cliff Stewart, the famed bodyguard whose clients have ranged from Muhammad Ali to Mr. T, tells his students that the first principle of tactics is *target denial*.

Don't be where the bad guys can jam you up. Be where you can see them in time to get yourself and other good guys away from them (assuming that you have no duty to interdict them), or at least go about your business in such a way that you will become aware of an impending attack in time to do something about it.

Let's consider a few typical situations.

## Public Phones

Walk past any bank of payphones and you can tell the street-smart people from the as yet unharvested prey. The latter will be facing the wall, talking to it as if it was the phone that would speak to them, their backs turned blindly toward anyone

behind them.

If and when the wrong predator comes up behind them, they'll learn too late. Such a predator will deliver a palm heel strike to the base of their skull, or grab them by the hair and smash their face into the telephone. Unless the payphone is set low for handicapped access, you will note that the hook-shaped receiver cradle is set about right for the height of, and distance between, an average size man's eyes. That cradle rushing toward your face may be the last thing your eyes ever see before they're hopelessly ruptured against the projections.

A streetwise person stands a bit edgewise to the phone while punching in the number, and then casually turns his or her back to the unit, so they now face away from the wall. They will be careful not to stand in such a way that the cord can be wrapped around their neck. Now they can see trouble coming in time to act. That probably won't be necessary, however; street predators make a point of

avoiding people who appear to be aware of their environment.

This doesn't make you look paranoid. On the contrary, the lightweight who uses a phone while facing the wall is the one who looks paranoid; his or her body language is closed in and defensive. One of us, on the other hand, is a person facing outward with nothing to hide, a kinder, gentler person who likes to watch the passing parade of mankind as he or she chats on the phone.

## Stairs and Escalators

When moving up or down a staircase, try to keep a hand on bannister, railing, or wall. This will give you much more balance and leverage. Muggers and rapists don't study anthropological body dynamics per se, but they are keen students of how and when victims can be taken off balance and off guard. Walking, the physiologists say, is a controlled fall. It follows that walking on stairs is a somewhat less controlled fall. Also, a person on a stair-



**Proper way to move on stairs. Body is balanced, head is up and scanning area. Walker bag can cease to be a target and become a shield or a weapon.**

way is enfiladed, that is, caught in the open without cover or hiding places or avenues of escape. That is a situation that appeals to predators. If the world was a Disney-like place where animals talked and lived in their own houses, the lions would stake out the staircases for the antelope.

If you have to stand still on a staircase, you're generally even more off balance. This can happen when, say, pausing for some reason or moving aside to allow someone else past. The most common situation, however, is being on an escalator.

Most people standing on an escalator will have both feet on the same step. See for yourself the next time you're riding on one. There is no balance here at all. The body is, in effect, on a pedestal; a little child who wanted to could topple you from there.

If you are on an escalator or must pause on a regular stairway, take two precautions. First, *stand edgewise*, and second and most important, *place the feet on different steps, ideally two steps apart, without crossing your legs*. This dramatically improves your balance.

This advice is critical to your safety even if you are never hit by an assailant. All you need is to stop on the stairs when someone inattentive behind you keeps moving; you'll be in for a nasty header down the rest of the flight. Or, you're on the escalator when the 300-pound guy above you with an armload of packages loses his balance and tumbles down toward you.

In the edgewise, balanced position described above, you'll be in such a strong

position you not only won't be knocked backward, but can even catch and rescue a falling person your own size or somewhat larger, without injury to either of you.

It can get worse. What if you are caught in a falling tide of humanity? I don't need imagination to picture that. I've seen it.

Some readers may recall the disastrous escalator failure at the Convention Center in Albuquerque, New Mexico in the late 1970s. It made national news. I recall it more vividly than most, because I was there along with a few thousand other cops attending the National Fraternal Order of Police Conference.

I'd just gotten onto the escalator from the basement level where the manufacturers had set up their displays, and was



**Wrong way to stand on escalator or pause on stairs. Feet are "on a pedestal," body has no balance.**

on my way up when it happened. Through the open atrium, I could see it all. I heard a roaring sound, like something out of a disaster movie but much louder, and then the din of the screams. I snapped my head up toward the noise.

An escalator coming down from one of the higher floors had let go. The people were flung into one another like dominoes in a downward rush so swift it looked like a video on fast forward. It was over in a few seconds, with all those people piled at the bottom of the escalator in a screaming, moaning, writhing mass. Many of them were seriously injured. It was a miracle none were killed.

If that should happen to you, an edgewise position at the edge of the escalator with the feet on different steps and with one step in between is your best chance. You can ride it down without being thrown

into the pile, still mobile enough to jump clear when you hit bottom, and with the ones above and behind you falling past you rather than *into* you.

In such a disastrous situation it would be hopeless to try to catch all those people falling in your direction, but you can at least save yourself. When it's over, you can help the rescuers give aid and comfort to the injured, as I and my brother officers, trained in first aid, responded first and subsequently assisted the swiftly-arriving Emergency Medical Service personnel in Albuquerque.

### **Dangers of the Line**

Did you see the movie "Godfather Part I"? Lessons lie therein. Sonny Coreleone wouldn't have been sandwiched and killed at the Jones Beach Tollbooth if he'd known how to drive out of an emergency. You can generally slam your gearshift into low or reverse and bulldoze a car out of your way when it tries to block you in.

Of course, evasion is always better than contact. Try to keep a half a car length or more between your vehicle and one in front of you. You now have a reactionary gap in which to do something about a car or human beings who start running in on you with hostile intent.

This is more important today than ever in America. The proliferation of steering wheel locks and auto theft alarms have so frustrated the car thieves that they are now dragging motorists out of running automobiles. This particular crime pattern seems to have begun in Detroit and spread rapidly across the country, and is seen mainly in the big cities.



**Ken Holt demonstrates correct way to pause on stairs or stand on escalator. Body is balanced, feet two steps apart, spine to side. An altogether better position to withstand a fall, a bump, or an assault.**



## Common Sense Tactics

Auto accessory stores can sell you wide-scan rearview mirrors. Invest in them. They'll prevent you from being blindsided by idiot drivers on the highway as well as giving you another new margin of safety against anyone who tries to assault you while your car is parked or stuck in traffic.

The same principles apply when you're on foot, standing in line at the bank or at the theater or where-ever. With lots of other citizens around, you're in more danger of pickpockets than muggers. However, if an armed robbery goes down, you have no way of knowing whether the guy behind you is another potential victim, or the "seeded backup" or "tailgunner" of the robbery team.

That is the robber who poses as a patron. Throughout the robbery, he'll pretend to be another victim. He may leave when the primary robbery team leaves, or he may stick around and give a statement to the police, still pretending to be a good guy.

This particularly dangerous offender has but a single function. He is the backup guard for the active thieves. If *anyone*—guard, cop, or armed citizen—attempts to interfere with the robbery team, this "layoff man" is there to shoot them in the back of the head to allow the primary team to escape unmolested.

Sometimes, his job description extends to staying behind to make sure none of the good guys draws a gun and goes after the fleeing robbers. Again, he'll shoot them in the back if they do. That's why the seeded backup man often stays at the scene and is still there, giving a realistic statement and a false address to the responding officers who question the victims.

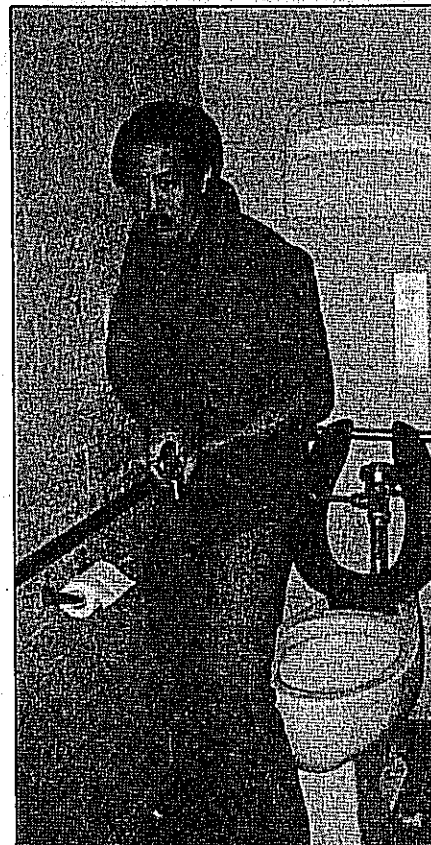
Whether they guy behind you is a pick-pocket or an armed layoff man, here's how you should stand in a queue. Position yourself at least somewhat *edge-ways*. When I'm in that situation, I'll stand at a minimum 45° angle to the other people in line. I will occasionally turn the opposite way. This draws no attention; you just appear to be restless at the long wait, and everyone else in line feels the same way. It's a natural positioning and movement that goes completely unnoticed.

However, it does several good things.



*Trained, armed men don't use public urinals. By entering cubicle, Mike Izumi will have a metal door between him and any assailant...*

*...and a buffer zone or "reactionary gap" in which to draw his Ruger SP-101 .357 Magnum in time to engage an armed mugger.*



The guy behind you will now have a dramatically more difficult time picking your pocket. You will have a much more panoramic view of what is going on around you.

Because the human body is wider side to side than it is thick front to back, it also about doubles your space in line, doing for the person on foot what stopping half a car length behind the vehicle in front of him does for at the red light. Because people will instinctively keep a certain space away from someone else's body, you now have at least twice as much room within which to move. You will also be much more aware of, and defensible against, anyone behind you. You will have significantly increased your reactionary gap, and vastly improved your options if something bad happens. And again, you've done it without the expense of "looking paranoid."

A caveat needs to be inserted here. When an armed robbery goes down, it is generally best to let it happen and simply be a good witness. Most armed robberies don't end in bloodshed. However, if you trigger a gunfight, this one most certainly will, and you may be one of the victims. It's also going to be hard to tell whether the guy next to you who reaches for a gun when the holdup goes down is a bad guy, or an off-duty cop or armed citizen trying to do the same thing you are.

If, however, the bad guys have definitely identified themselves and are obviously about to start killing the innocent, a starting posture like the one recommended will give you a running start on containing and correcting the problem.

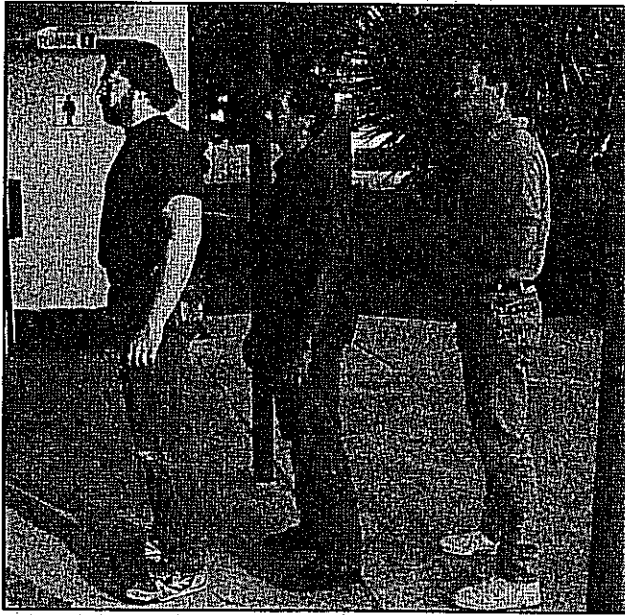
### Rest Room Recoveries

Rest rooms in public places are a prime location for assaults. Where else can the victims *literally* be caught with their pants down?

In the early 1980s, I learned an important lesson from now-Captain Rich Wemmer of the LAPD. Ray Chapman and I were teaching an advanced police officer survival seminar for the Police Marksman Association at the Los Angeles Airport Holiday Inn at Century and La Cienega. I'd asked Wemmer, the officer survival guru of California, to give a lecture to our packed hall of in-service police. After Wemmer finished his spellbinding presentation on recent officer murders, it was Ray's turn to teach a bloc. Wemmer and I both found it a strategic time to head for the men's room.

The big public john was empty except for us. I went to the urinal and did my thing, and thought nothing of the fact that Rich went into a stall. However, as I zipped up and flushed and went to wash my hands, I became aware that Wemmer was standing and urinating in the enclosed toilet.

When he emerged, I jokingly said, "Geez, Rich, all that time you've spent on the Central Area Vice Unit has made you



**Mike Izumi stands in line between Larry Hickman, left, and Mike Morningstar. He has more room than most strangers in a line would give him, but still not enough, and he has his back to any incoming danger.**



**Simply by standing sideways, Mike nearly doubles his reactionary gap, and greatly enhances his ability to discreetly see what is happening around him.**

paranoid. Whatsamatter, ya' think some of your buddies are up there in the vent over the urinals, counting helmets and anteaters?"

Wemmer wasn't amused. "Mas," he answered solemnly, "if you'd seen half of what I've seen happen in public men's rooms, you'd never turn your back unless you had a steel door locked behind you."

Rich was right and I was wrong, but I've followed and preached his advice ever since. I realized that if I was following someone with the intent of arresting him, there'd be no more off-guard time for him than when he was standing at a urinal.

An incident happened very shortly after that in Los Angeles that served to underscore the importance of Wemmer's wisdom. Ron Hayes, the actor who had starred in the movie "Superfly," apparently ticked off the wrong woman's boyfriend. Hayes went into the men's room of the club in question and, as he stood at the urinal, the boyfriend came up behind him and opened his knife. He smashed Hayes into the wall and stabbed him in the back, pumping the blade. Hayes lost a kidney and very nearly bled to death, according to reports.

Let us remember this simple lesson. There are very few creatures in this world as helpless as a man with his face to the wall and his thing in his gun hand.

Today, I make a point of waiting for a stall and locking it behind me before urinating. I have barricade, a warning, and a reactionary gap, none of which I'd have "doing it the old fashioned way."

If it's the kind of nature call that requires you to drop your drawers, be sure to sit with your feet back behind your knees instead of forward of them. A popular mug-

ger's tactic that began in the New York/New Jersey area is for two muggers to loiter in a public men's room until one victim is in there alone, sitting on a toilet. The stronger of the two criminals will dive under the open part of the door, grab the victim's ankles, and jerk him off the toilet. The dynamics are such that the lower spine of the victim will be smashed against the edge of the toilet seat, with painful and sometimes crippling results. The other member of the team will place a knife blade against the victim's exposed scrotum. This is called "bargaining posture."

If your legs are flexed as you are seated, heels behind knees, you have only to lean forward and your entire body weight is driven down so strongly that the world weightlifting champion would have a tough job pulling you out of position. You can now continue to lean forward, take the individual by the hair, and it's up to you whether you snap his neck or put a gun to his forehead; either way you've recaptured the bargaining position.

For those who carry guns, remember the following: NEVER leave the weapon on the door coathook or on the floor! It can be grabbed by someone outside the door or in the next stall. Some toilet paper rollers are so positioned that a gun will fit nicely there. Never put the gun on the back of a toilet seat; they have a nasty tendency to slip off. And don't be one of those people who spend the rest of their lives living down the fact that they left their gun in the men's room!

Gunsite instructors have suggested slipping your .45 down inside your pants leg when you're in that situation. If my gun is in a belt holster, I just leave it in the leather and widen my knees, now holding the gun in its inside-waistband holster taut against my leg, out of reach of everyone else but instantly accessible to me. That won't work as well with an outside-belt holster. If I've got intestinal flu or the

runs, I'll wear a shoulder holster that day and solve the problem. A belly band solves it too, with a small gun; so does an ankle holster if you adjust the trousers when you sit so the fabric isn't bunched up in a way that will block your draw.

The same concerns affect women, though the pattern of assault is now more likely to involve all-female gangs since men are much more likely to be noticed when loitering outside ladies' rooms. Don't forget, just because a risk is statistically reduced doesn't mean it isn't still there.

### **Awareness Factor**

The single biggest factor in street safety is awareness. Be alert to everything around you. Don't become preoccupied with your thoughts about something else. There are places in this country where getting through the streets safely is a full-time job that requires your constant and complete attention.

Like everything else we've been talking about, this doesn't make you paranoid, or mean that you are. My LFI students from the civilian sector tell me that the awareness they learn at our academy benefits them in pleasant and unexpected ways. They spot dangers they wouldn't have picked up on before...but they also see good things that previously would have gone unnoticed. The mother's interaction with her child, the warmth of the secret glances between young lovers...when you see everything around you, you experience more good than bad. It doesn't poison your life, it affirms it.

And, in the last analysis, that awareness keeps you alive that much longer, to enjoy that much more of the goodness of the world you want to survive and continue to share.