

Mestrado em Línguas Aplicadas e Tradução

Trabalho de Projeto

**Histórias de Mulheres sobre Autodefesa
- Tradução e Transformação em Análise –**

VOL. II

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Julho 2012



The Women's Press Ltd *First British publication*

'An inspiring, thrilling book' *Ellen Bass*

Her Wits About Her offers the empowering message that women can fight back against physical violence, and do so effectively. The mass media often reinforce the myth that women are helpless, that our best defence is to stay at home. Yet current research shows that women who resist *do* get away and often escape injury. We don't have to put up with the image of woman as passive victim.

These positive, first-hand accounts tell for the first time how women, black and white, young and old, have successfully defended themselves. They describe a wide range of tactics, from the ordinary to the spectacular: Some women fight back using wits and commonsense – negotiating, talking, using humour. Others react physically – shouting, running, kicking, using teamwork or weapons to hand. An extensive resource section of self defence programmes and self help groups is provided to help put these ideas into practice.

Rich in advice and experience, this book will inspire every woman to believe she has the resources, courage and will to resist assault and survive to tell her own story.

ISBN 0-7043-4139-5



9 780704 341395

Cover design: Sarah John

WOMEN'S STUDIES
SELF DEFENCE

United Kingdom £5.95
0 7043 4139 5

The
Women's
Press



Denise Caignon &
Gail Groves, eds



Her wits about her

Self-Defence Success Stories by Women

Her wits about her

Edited by Denise Caignon & Gail Groves
Foreword by Anne Dickson

Publisher's Note

This is not a 'how to' book which sets out to define the 'right' means of resisting assault, nor does it prescribe a successful formula for fighting back. It is about surviving the experience of violence as a whole person, and there are as many ways of doing this as there are contributions in the pages which follow.

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these openings, having the faith that there will be one at some point, and then trying something, and not giving up.

The more I taught, the more self-defense stories I heard. Initially, I found that women in classes and workshops used me as a place to dump all the horror stories they had ever heard. After some workshops, I would need to go have a good cry, staggered by the ugly, brutal violence against women I heard about. I think my students assumed that because I was a self-defense teacher, it was all right to talk to me about all the terrible things they were afraid of, about all the stories they had heard on television. They thought I could handle it. More and more, I found I couldn't. The stories upset me and brought down the positive mood of an empowerment workshop. I found I had to shield myself from the stories, to cut myself off from the pain associated with them. My empathy was working against me.

In an effort to focus on the positive in these classes, I began to collect success stories informally. All self-defense teachers have them. These were stories of both the simplest and the most convoluted escapes. The woman who rolled out of a car going fifty miles per hour to escape a kidnapping. The woman who, hearing two men talking behind her about what they were going to do to her, began punching air, only to see them turn and run. The man who pulled his frightened face back from me when I stuck a fistful of keys in it to stop him from approaching. The woman who took care of her attacker with one hand and her knee while not breaking the cookies she was taking home for her children in the other hand. The woman at the bus stop who answered the man who said he was going to rape her with "No, you're not!" He turned away, mumbling vaguely, "I guess you're right."

These were not the kind of stories I saw on the nightly news. The crime report in the local paper abounded with stories of women brutally raped. Regional and national news were excruciating with their tales of horrors done to women. Santa Cruz itself had been named "Murder Capital of the World" by the media, for a series of rape-murders that Edmund Kemper committed here in 1971 and 1972. Later would come David Carpenter, the "Trailside Killer."

During the time I worked on the rape line, I stopped watching television and rarely learned about world events. When you hear the real stories on the phone every night, the sensationalized versions are overkill.

At best, the media would report on spectacular defenses, like the

woman in Berkeley, California, who pulled a bayonet out of her closet and stabbed her attacker with it. But these unusual stories did nothing to alleviate the fears of the average woman on the street.

Few people believed that women could protect themselves or stop an attacker. Instead, they believed that women lied about rape, that all men were stronger than all women, and that no woman ever got away. Gradually, through my involvement with self-defense and the rape hotline, the belief began to build in me that these ideas simply were not true. Women did get away before rapes were completed. They did fight back—and they did win. In fact, most of the women I talked to on the phone had done something to stop the rape, or to make the situation safer for themselves. They were not paralyzed by fear. They acted.

Most women who are attacked remember feeling a hunch, an intuition, a nonverbal perception before something physical happens—the feeling that something is wrong. The sooner women act on this intuition, the more likely they are to be safe in the end. Ninety percent of an effective defense is the recognition that yes, this person is attacking me. This feeling is especially important with people we have reason to trust, but who take advantage of that trust. Over 75 percent of all attacks on women are committed by men who know them, at least on a first-name basis. Acquaintance rape and rape in marriage are not uncommon.

One in three girls and one in six boys are attacked sexually in this country by the age of eighteen; the majority of these are attacked by a family member or friend. Yet even very small children, like those who have been trained by the Child Assault Prevention Program in Columbus, Ohio, can learn to defend themselves.

Dr. Pauline Bart, a renowned sociologist from the University of Illinois, began to publish the results of her studies about effective rape avoidance in 1980. Bart established that women who fight back get away more often than women who are passive. For the first time, a reputable scientist was contradicting the advice of the police "not to resist, you'll just get hurt." Too many women had gone into court after following that advice, only to be told that it was not rape if they didn't fight back.

Dr. Bart's results were extremely interesting. She found that the more strategies a woman uses, the more likely she is to escape with minimal injuries. Strategies include yelling, fleeing, reasoning with the attacker, pleading, and physically fighting back—kicking, hitting,

in my own country. Specifically, female bonding is very strong in India and Asia in general, so it was easy for the women to role-play about effective *group* defenses against assault.

There are also generational differences; see Marjorie French's "Hitchhiking in the Forties" for an interesting commentary on how the United States has changed in the past forty years. There are differences in physical ability, too. Sandi Collins, Suzette Garay, and Autumn are all women who are challenged by physical disabilities, yet claim their right to physically defend themselves. In every story, the way women defend themselves is influenced by the way they were brought up, their ethnic background, their unique life experiences.

Whatever past or potential self-defense situations you face, there are common threads that weave through all the stories: determination, a willingness to try more than one strategy, intuition. Certainly you will find something you can use in every one of these stories.

Dividing the book into the seven parts you see here was not an easy task. There are so many ways to look at these stories—in fact, we considered and discarded a number of different ways to organize this book. At various times, we thought of grouping stories by type of defense, type of attack, type of woman. . . . Finally, somewhat frustrated, we let the stories themselves suggest their categories, and settled on the mixed bag you see here.

Each section is prefaced by a detailed introduction. These introductions are full of tips and information about the aspect of self-defense that is highlighted. Also see the concluding essay, "So What Do I Do Now? Ways to Learn More About Self-Defense," as well as the compilation of Self-Defense Programs and the Selected Annotated Bibliography for further exploration.

The stories in Part I, "Loss of Innocence," are by women who were attacked during their childhood. Part II, "The Power of the Voice," contains stories in which women fight back with their vocal cords—using words, yells, or some other verbal techniques. In Part III, "Intuition and Willpower," women use these two fundamental tools to maneuver their way out of dangerous situations. The women in "Weapons at Hand" (Part IV) used objects—from a gun to a potted houseplant—to aid them in their self-protection.

Some of the most dangerous situations are dealt with in Part V, "Life-Threatening Assaults." Because of the seriousness of the attacks, some of these stories, although inspiring, are more difficult to

read, so you might want to start with some of the other chapters first. "Teamwork" (Part VI) would be a good place to start; here women talk in encouraging ways about how they have worked with others in self-defense—both during and after an assault. Finally, "Life Strategies and Self-Defense Tips" (Part VII) contains a cornucopia of self-defense tactics and experiences, from tips for bicyclists to a philosophy of self-defense for an entire culture.

This book is made to be browsed through. Though its subject is serious, *Her Wits About Her* is, after all, a storybook. As with any good stories, we hope you'll read them aloud, discuss them with friends, study them in school classes, enjoy them. These success stories are meant to inspire you and make you feel strong. *Her Wits About Her* is a celebration.

xlvi Newark–August 17, 1981

over and over.
“Run, run for your life,
they are all coming for you!”
Until, finally, he turns
throws open the door
bending its hinges
and runs
to no one
to nothing
leaving me
marked
forever
and spitting these bloody words,
“. . . and you ask us to love you?”

Part I

Loss of Innocence

Introduction

As young children, we are taught that some adults—primarily strangers—are not to be trusted. Yet we are also taught to respect our elders and those with authority—teachers, policemen, anyone older. On the one hand, this early training instills a healthy sense of caution in a child. On the other, it makes her suspicious of other people—the very people she is also taught to rely on for her every need.

At some point in a child's growing-up process, she must integrate and learn to live with this contradiction. This point—sometimes a moment of painful insight brought about by an adult betrayal—is often experienced or remembered later as a loss of innocence.

Many adults are left with a tremendous (and often unconscious) sense of guilt and responsibility for bad things that happened to them when they were children. The women who have written the stories in this section have broken the vicious circle of guilt simply by believing they have the right to tell those stories.

Since so much of what happens in childhood sets the stage for our adult feelings and behavior, it's important to reflect on your own childhood and the messages you were told about your right to take care of yourself. Some admonitions are healthy and necessary: "Don't open the door to strangers." "Don't take candy from strange men." "Hold Mommy's hand while we cross the street." Others teach us not to trust ourselves and our own resources, teach us that not only is it a dangerous world, but we are helpless to protect ourselves against it. But try as they might, parents cannot completely shield their children from the perils of the world. Children go to

Nota Explicativa:

Nas introduções, assinalámos com uma linha as partes que não foram alvo de tradução, por não serem pertinentes, ou por estarem relacionadas com histórias não traduzidas.

school on their own, come into contact with strangers, see frightening images on television that they must cope with the best they can. Parents rarely instruct children about what to do if something bad does happen to them.

Were you taught that your only recourse was to lock yourself up tight with deadbolts and burglar alarms? Did your mother feel confident about taking care of herself and you, or was it made clear that only Daddy could keep the family from danger?

What situations are particularly frightening to you? Are there times when you feel utterly powerless to have any impact on your environment at all? Since children are generally denied any sense of power and control over their own lives, feelings of powerlessness can be directly traced to what we were taught as children. Understanding the source of fears and limitations is a first step toward moving beyond them.

Assaults on children by known adults are far more common than is usually believed. Many of the women in this section were molested or attacked by "friends" or family members. An assault by a close family member is particularly devastating. Because a child is often forbidden to rebuff any touch from an uncle or a grandfather, she may experience confusion when a touch doesn't feel right. Even those of us who were taught important skills about protecting ourselves from strangers were never told that those close to us might betray our trust.

Current statistics indicate that one in three girls and one in six boys are sexually abused by the time they are eighteen. Professionals in the child abuse field are coming to realize, however, that boys may suffer abuse in far greater numbers than the statistics reflect.

It is the child's own gut reaction that can help her recognize that something is wrong. In "It's Worse When They Don't Mean To," Jeni Schreiber loves her grandfather. She even knows that when he touches her in an inappropriate way, he doesn't really "mean to." But she is able to talk to her mother about it—with much trepidation—because it simply doesn't feel right.

Whether or not a child can actually talk about what has happened to her is based on her family environment. If family members both express and discuss feelings in a constructive, supportive way, it will be easier for a child to speak her mind. That ability to talk about feelings is grounded in trust, since we don't open our minds and hearts to people we think will betray us. If it's difficult for you to

talk and express your feelings, think about your own childhood: Did the family really discuss things at the dinner table, or were real issues and feelings avoided? Did you eat in front of a blaring television set, or really talk with one another?

Do you trust your own children? There are many cases of child abuse that go untreated and undetected simply because the adults will not believe what the child is saying. It takes enormous courage for a child to speak up about being abused. She must fight through her own guilt and feeling of betraying someone she looks up to. There is a commonly held myth about children: that they enjoy making up stories about just about anything. If you believe that your child would lie just for the sake of lying, it will be hard to believe her when she comes to you with difficult news.

Alcohol can be a complicating factor in family abuse situations. Parents may drink to "unwind" at home, and their children often become the victims of the pent-up rage and frustration that have exploded. Because alcohol abuse tends to cause irrational behavior, a child may be doubly confused by the mistreatment she is receiving: not only is she being abused; she also sees her parent behaving in terrifying, unpredictable ways. Untangling the jumbled emotions that come from a childhood steeped in alcohol can take a lifetime: in "Crazymaking," twelve-year-old Andrea Sorenson stands up to her father and so begins her own long process of recovery.

It's important to give the child within you credit for the survival skills she learned as a child. Each of us has a unique repertoire of resources that are the result of our experiences. As an adult, Suzette Garay ("Deaf and Not Defeated") possesses a whole range of self-defense skills. She developed her resources in response to the abuse she has suffered since she was three years old, as well as the added trauma that comes from being deaf in a hearing world. Rachel Harwood, in "Journey to Confidence," grows from a shy and gawky child into a confident adult who teaches self-defense to others. Looking back on her experiences from an adult perspective, she can see how effective her self-defense strategies were—something she couldn't see at the time.

A wily child is a safe child—especially in a large city. "Streetwise" is an apt term for those who find their wisdom in the alleyways and avenues of urban America. Abby Bee's sophisticated delivery in "Going for the Throat" is a thin cover for an enraged, sensitive spirit learning to cope in a dangerous environment. Add the inherent dan-

gers of being a teenage girl in teeming New York City to the racial tensions seething just below the surface, and you've got a recipe for street-smarts. Jo Kenny ("The Shortcut Home") learns one of the hardest truths about urban attack situations: the level of violence in our cities is so acute that many people would prefer to turn their heads than come to the aid of someone in trouble.

There is a growing movement in the United States that concerns itself with empowering young people to take care of themselves. The child assault prevention movement challenges some of the most basic assumptions we all grow up with: that a child should not question an adult's authority, and that a child cannot and should not attempt to fight back against an attacker. One of the pioneer programs in this field, the Child Assault Prevention Project (CAPP), was started in Columbus, Ohio, and now has offshoots in all parts of the country. CAPP workers use role-playing and discussion to encourage *children themselves* to pay attention to their feelings when they receive unwanted advances from an adult—any adult—or another child. The program teaches children as young as kindergarten age new self-defense skills, and takes advantage of the natural exuberance and keen awareness most children possess.

For instance, yelling is a natural activity for most kids (and something that is often discouraged). The CAPP program provides an outlet for yelling, a positive way to release a child's boundless energy. Crying out "NO," or just making a loud noise, is one of the best ways for a child to defend herself and attract the attention of someone who may be able to help.

Child assault prevention is based on a fundamental belief: all human beings, including children, have the right to control what happens to their own bodies. If something doesn't feel good, it must stop. Whether it's Uncle Harry, the man in the toy store, or a stranger beckoning from a car, a child's right to say NO is as inalienable as the right to shelter, food, and love.

The CAPP training center in northern California has compiled a number of children's success stories in recent years. These stories come from follow-up data collected on children who have gone through the CAPP program. A sampler:

From Alameda County, California: A ten-year-old girl named Ginny had just finished going to the bathroom, when a strange man pushed open the door to the stall she was in and tried to grab her.

She immediately started her special self-defense yell and kicked him very hard in the shins. This stunned him long enough for her to be able to get past him and out into the hallway, where she called for help. The man fled the school with teachers in pursuit, but got away. Ginny, however, was safe.

Children trained in self-defense have a lot to teach adults. From Columbus, Ohio: Mrs. Green, an elementary-school teacher, was walking to her car when a man came up from behind and tried to steal her purse: "The first thing I did was the yell I had learned along with the children in the workshop. I didn't even think about it, it just came automatically. As I struggled to hold on to my purse, four children who had been playing four-square at the far side of the playground came running in my direction, all doing their yells together. You can imagine how surprised the thief was, and he got out of there as fast as he could."

From Shasta County, California: In the CAPP workshop, there is a role-play about an "Uncle Harry" who bribes his niece and makes her give him a kiss she doesn't want to give him. After a CAPP workshop, a sixth-grade girl came to the crisis counseling session and said to one of the staff, "I'm Uncle Harry." She was very upset and ashamed because she had been molesting her younger sister. The staff knew immediately that no child commits such abuse without learning it somewhere, without being a victim first. After a short discussion about getting help, this girl started crying and said that she had been molested by her uncle.

And from Alameda County, California, comes this letter from a kindergartner:

I used one of the Safe Strong and Free rules today. This boy he said are you in kindergarten or are you a baby. I said, I'm a human being, arnt I? He said yes, you're a human being. I said, I have rights, don't I? He said, Yes. He said, I beter not mess with you again.

I like you, CAPP.

Love, Becky R.
Kindergarten

Human Being

For more information, see Self-Defense Programs (page 263).

The Shortcut Home

Jo Kenny

Jo Kenny grew up in Brooklyn, New York. In 1974, she boarded a Greyhound bus, got off in Santa Cruz, California, and has lived there ever since. She currently works for a nonprofit organization that provides chemical-dependency recovery programs and youth counseling services. In her spare time she does community-based political work.

“I deliberately left out my adult analysis of this attack. My purpose was to truthfully tell what happened, and how, as a kid, I felt about it. It had been a long time since I had consciously thought about this attack, and it was difficult for me to admit that I wasn’t brave or tough but just a terrified young woman.”

My father told me to be home before dark that night. It was a weekend and I was pissed that he wouldn’t let me stay out later. After all—I was fourteen and bigger than my mom: five feet tall and a hundred pounds. Besides, I was a street-wise kid and already in high school. But arguing would only get me grounded, so I said okay.

When the streetlights went on, I knew I was asking for trouble with my dad, so I decided to take the shortcut home. My girlfriends walked me to the highway and from there it was only a five-minute walk across the back lots and up an alley to home.

I was walking up the alley when I heard running feet on the cobblestones behind me. My first thought was that it was my brother. It

sounded like his shoes and who else would be trying to catch up with me? I didn’t have time for a second thought. A hand clamped over my mouth and I saw the streetlight shine on a serrated kitchen knife as it went to my throat. I froze. I couldn’t believe what was happening.

He was pulling me back toward the empty lots. He kept repeating that he only wanted to know my name. I panicked and begged him to let me go, even though I knew he couldn’t understand my muffled words. I tried to get myself to think of how to break away, but it was as if my brain had split in two and I was having an argument with myself. The loudest voice was saying, “You sure blew it this time, kid. So where’s all that toughness you thought you had? He’s not much bigger than you and he even sounds scared. Besides, how sharp can a stupid serrated knife be? Do something!” The other voice was saying, “Okay, okay. Stop bugging me and shut up. I can’t think. I know I’m more scared than he is. It’s so quiet back here. Where is everybody anyway? How come no one’s walked by? Oh, shit, we’re almost in the back lots. I’d better think of something.”

My feet refused to move. Unconsciously, I started throwing my arms around and I hit him in the ribs with my elbow. I don’t know how hard I hit, but he began to loosen his hold on me. I broke away and started running. About halfway up the alley I looked around and saw that he was right behind, grabbing out at me. I jumped to the side, then froze again and started to scream. I just stood there and screamed and screamed. He turned away and ran into the darkness. I felt my screams bouncing off the walls and coming back to me, wave after wave, growing louder and louder. I finally stopped when I realized no one was coming to help.

Silence. I was alone. No one had heard me? They must have, but why wasn’t anyone there? I began to think I had made it all up. Maybe I had just stood there and screamed in my brain. Like in a nightmare when I try to scream and nothing comes out. That had to be it. I tried hard to make myself believe this, but my raw throat and shaking body told me that, yes, I had screamed, and, yes, people hadn’t responded.

I didn’t want to think anymore. I had to get out of there. It was over and I was okay. It was dumb standing there thinking that this was such a big deal. After all, I hadn’t been raped or even stabbed, so everything was fine. Right?

I walked onto the street. Turning the corner, the first thing I saw

was my father putting out the garbage. I stopped. This was too crazy to believe. I almost got raped and screamed my guts out and my own father didn't respond. I wondered if maybe he hadn't heard it. I couldn't be sure. It seemed a long time had gone by since I first walked up the alley, but by the light still visible in the sky, I knew only a few minutes had passed.

I was shocked, but at the same time my normal way of dealing with my parents took over: if he didn't hear or wouldn't acknowledge the sound of that scream, I didn't have to tell him that anything had happened. After all, the cops would never catch the guy and the only way my parents could protect me would be to keep me in at night. That was the last thing I wanted.

My decision made, I walked up the block, said hi to my dad and went right up to my room. I was thankful that neither of my sisters were there because I knew my calmness was a very thin front. I sat and stared. My mind kept going back and forth between "It's no big deal. Forget it," and "Figure it out. What does all this mean?"

About five minutes later, I got a phone call. I didn't want to go downstairs with everyone sitting around. But I went anyway; my mom would know something was wrong if I didn't want to talk on the phone. Luckily, no one was in the kitchen so I at least had a little privacy.

I was surprised when I heard Patty's voice. She was an eight-year-old who lived across the street. She told me she had just come from her friend Kathleen's house, which overlooked the alley. They'd both been looking out the window and had seen the whole thing. Patty thought that maybe I was in trouble, but Kathleen said not to say anything because she didn't want to get her grandmother upset. I started to get mad. First my father and now Patty. What was going on? My world seemed to be falling apart. I asked Patty if she knew what the word "rape" meant. She didn't, so I told her to ask her mother and then decide if it would have been worth upsetting Kathleen's grandmother.

Somehow I made it through the rest of that night. I waited for my sisters to fall asleep and then I cried and cried into my pillow.

I never went into the back lots after dark again. And for a while I wouldn't walk home alone. Even if I had only a half a block to go alone, I ran the whole way. But that didn't last too long, and as my recollection of that night faded, a lot of my old confidence came back. Yet many years passed before I again learned to trust that people would come through for me when I needed them.

A Stable Tale

Elisavietta Ritchie

Elisavietta Ritchie, a writer, translator, teacher, and editor, has published six books of poetry, and her work has appeared in a variety of magazines. She is of Russian-American descent, has three cats, "occasional black snakes, pet squirrels, and wounded creatures," and three grown children.

Here is an excerpt from one of her poems, which speaks of self-defense:

*To kill a man when you have no
weapons: be tough, keep cool, maintain
surprise, pick up two sharp rocks and
like cymbals swing a wide curve at
his temples: he'll squash like a frog
You can also hug-break his ribs,
bite his neck, shark-kiss his throat, cut
his soft skin, drown him in the mud . . .*

By age five, I was already nuts about horses. They had tried to keep me away from the barns—"Honey, you might git kicked!"—but when it was finally my birthday, I was permitted to sit on the gray Percheron. I did not fall off. Every day, I walked two miles from the house just to hang around. That July, I got to ride every horse in Seven Oaks Stable except the stallion, Big Prince.

"But I don't like to be called Honey."

The stablehands laughed, and hugged me, and tugged at my honey

at the stoplight. Something snapped inside my head, my shaky nerves tightened. Goddamn it!

I approached that car with the winking man with my fist cocked.

“You motherfuckin’ cocksucker prick,” I screamed, pounding on his windshield, then kicking the passenger side of his car. My fist was at his face on the other side of the glass and I was screaming at the top of my lungs. Then the light changed. He stared at me in disbelief. No one on the street looked at me.

I don’t remember walking up the stairs to my apartment. But I must have gotten there, because I do remember sitting at the kitchen table—and crying.

Deaf and Not Defeated

Suzette V. Garay

Suzette Garay has a 110-decibel hearing loss, indicating profound deafness, yet she has an unusual ability to speak. She is extremely perceptive, an excellent lip-reader, and wears a special hearing aid to modulate her speech. She has recently taught herself sign language.

She is currently at work on her autobiography and is studying psychology at the University of California.

“I was born completely deaf, but nobody knew, not even myself, until I was thirteen years old. I was taken away by the social service people when I was two and a half because my mother was not taking care of me properly. From there on, I was in and out of different shelters and institutions for orphans and foster homes.”

As told to the editors in an interview: I was seventeen, a senior in high school waiting at a bus stop on my way home from school. Because I’m deaf, I didn’t know that a man was approaching me from behind, so there was no way for me to set up my defense, even though I had taken self-defense. I’m almost a black belt in karate, so I’m pretty sure of myself.

It had never occurred to me that my deafness would get in the way of my defending myself. When the man approached me and put his hand on my shoulder, I thought maybe it was someone asking for the time. A lot of times people will ask me what time it is, and if I

don't see them, they'll touch me and say, "What time is it?" When I turned around I recognized a man who had raped me three years before. The first thing that came to my mind was "I don't know what I'm going to do." I got really scared.

I remembered being raped by him three years before. Everything started rushing back.

He said, "Hi. It's been a long time since I've seen you." He was friendly because I had never allowed him to feel like what he did to me was wrong. At the time, I hadn't even realized it was wrong. Anyway, since I had never confronted him, I guess he didn't have a reason to be uneasy, and probably assumed he could get away with it again.

I knew I had to do something, something fast. I knew I couldn't run away fast enough. I didn't want to do anything to scare him, or make him feel a need to grip me really tight, because he still had his hand on my shoulder.

Then I got an idea. Another man was coming up on the other side of the street, and I figured, well, I could yell at this man and ask him for help, but I wanted to play it really cool. So I pretended that the man across the street was my dad. I said, "Hey, Dad. Hey, Dad, wait. Hey, Dad!" And the attacker started getting really shaky, and the other man turned around, and I just kept saying, "Hey, Dad, I forgot I have to tell you something, I'd like you to meet my friend." So the attacker let go his grip on my shoulder, and I was walking real fast across the street and saying, "Hey, Dad, I forgot, I forgot." I'm still talking to this total stranger I don't even know, and this man is looking at me really puzzled and I'm thinking, Keep still, don't move, just wait till I reach you. The next thing I know, the attacker split, and I got up to the other man and I said, "Oh, I'm sorry, I thought you were my dad."

I was really upset that the whole thing had happened, so I ran, and I couldn't call my parents, because I'm deaf, so the only thing I could do was take a bus to the other side of Santa Cruz. I felt that if I went to another bus stop across the street or in the area that he might get me again. So I took a bus across town and then rode the bus home from there.

I felt that what I did was really a good device to use in terms of my deafness. If there are other people around, I could perhaps use that device again. It has made me more aware of the fact that someone can approach from behind without me knowing, so I am more con-

scious about things that happen behind me. I don't tend to stay in one particular position very long, because I know that if I'm out on the street alone, especially at night, my vision is the only thing I have in terms of preparing myself for another incident.

At age nine, I knew some karate. I went into a two-year program in one of the best places in Chinatown in San Francisco. I've been in a variety of situations where I had to use my skills. I was not only concerned with physical defense, but also with *mind* defense. Sometimes I succeeded and sometimes I was defeated. I learned from each situation and I knew that the next situation could be like an earlier one. But nothing is ever guaranteed. You can't spend months practicing a certain defense because when you're actually in the situation, it's a totally different story.

Even though I have been raped, my body is not damaged and I'm alive. I call that being successful.

Another story: One summer my foster parents sent me to camp in Napa Valley. It was one of those places where there are lots of teenage counselors and they're all going after each other. All this sex stuff is happening and all the little kids are peeking on their counselors.

There was this one counselor, Joel, who was very dangerous. He had a reputation for being a pervert—he was always talking about sex and reading dirty magazines. I was about eight years old at that time, and because I was deaf, I never heard the stories about him. When I was eight, people didn't know I was deaf and neither did I. This was mainly because I talked so well, and I assumed that everybody was doing the same thing I was—lipreading—because you can't see hearing.

One day, he was supervising some of us kids at the lake. He was calling all the kids to come in, to go back to the cabins and prepare for dinner. I was fishing, and I figured, oh, it must be late, so I took my fishing pole, and this nice-size fish I had caught. I could hardly wait till I got back to camp to show I could actually fish.

I was walking back alongside the lake when I remembered that I had left some stones that I had found on top of the rock I had been fishing on. By this time, the kids had gone up to the cabins, and Joel went back to the lake to make sure he had everybody. He saw me, but I didn't think anything was wrong.

I was afraid to put my fishing pole on the ground because I was

afraid the fish would take off, and so I had the thing wrapped around my hand. As I swam up to the rock to get my stones, the fish came off my fishing pole. It was floating on the water. And I was scared, I didn't want to touch it, I didn't want to pick it up, so I swam back to where I was supposed to be, and Joel said, "Now, you go back in that water and you get that fish, you go get that fish." And I was scared. He got really violent, he was grabbing me and shaking me and swearing and everything and saying, "You get that fucking fish right now or I'll kill you right out here."

I was amazed that this guy was threatening to kill me if I didn't go out and get that fish. At eight years old, that upset me, so I started crying. So I said, "Okay, okay," and I walked a little way into the water, up to my knees, and I knew I couldn't do it, I didn't want to touch that fish. So he came up to me and he started drowning me, and the first thing I realized was that he wasn't kidding, he was serious.

He was dunking my head in the water, and I thought I was going to die. I was physically trying to use my defenses, but this man was three times bigger than me and I was only eight years old, so there's just no way, physically, that I could've defended myself. So I started to stand up in the water, and I was saying anything I could possibly say to get him off me. I said, "I promise I'll do anything you want me to do, but just don't make me go get that fish, please." He said, "Meet me here tonight." And of course I knew from the past that when they say, meet me here, or meet me there, I knew what was going to happen. So I said, "Sure." And I'm thinking I'll go up to camp and tell one of the counselors that he was going to try to hurt me.

But I wasn't sure about doing that. Other times when I had told people about being molested, they sometimes hadn't believed me. I also knew this guy was really violent, and if I didn't do what he wanted me to do, chances were he could get me the next time. So I promised him I would be there and at seven that night I showed up at the lake and he was there.

Before I went, I told one of my favorite counselors what had happened and what was going to happen. We were really close—I had told her about being molested in the past and she had believed me. And she had been wanting to kick Joel out for a long time.

So I met him down there at seven o'clock sharp and I acted like nothing was happening. He said, "Come here, I want you to sit

behind me." And he showed me disgusting books, with really violent pictures. I was scared. I was afraid the counselor might not believe me and people might not show up.

So we're looking through the books and I'm taking my time, just saying, "Yeah, that's interesting," and just stalling, just saying, "Well, I've never done it this way before, have you?" and just talking back and forth and trying to waste time. And he says, "Well, come here." He puts his arm around me and starts kissing me and I'm just going along with it, and he says, "Now take your clothes off," and I said, "Right now? It's cold out here. Why don't we do it during the day, it's better." But just when I'm starting to take my clothes off, the directors and the counselors came and he was kicked out of camp.

I never heard what happened after that, because I was also sent home, and I felt really bad because I enjoyed camp. I also felt like I was partly to blame for what happened. Now I'm starting to realize that most of the things that happened to me weren't my fault.

I was raised in many institutions and shelters. Lots of children are overlooked, and people don't pay attention to the kids that may have some kind of physical or mental problems. They're too busy with thousands of kids and big things and they don't take time to focus on each individual. For me, it was a really emotional time, those thirteen years of my life, because there were many, many times when they should have noticed I had a disability. But because those times didn't happen in a series, it always looked like I just wasn't paying attention—that I didn't care, or was being uncooperative.

One day, I was coming home from school and I was kicking a can out on the street. One of the neighbors happened to see me—she was driving behind me—and she honked the horn, and kept honking for a block or so. I was just kicking the can and she pulled off the road and she called my name, and she ran up and grabbed me. Later she talked to my foster parents and said I must have a hearing problem.

Back in those times, when you took a hearing test, it was in a bus, and all the little kids wore headphones. You're supposed to raise your hand every time you hear the sound. Now, remember I'm really perceptive and I'm thinking, this is a game—who can raise their hand fastest. So here I am raising my hand, playing around during this test. Crazy. So they think I'm being a jerk or a bad kid, not being cooperative, and I had to take the test every day for three months.

First I thought maybe I should count to ten, and raise my hand

every time I get to ten, but that didn't work. Then I found another way to cheat. The only way they know if you're raising your hand is if they look at you, so I figured out that it was an eye-to-eye thing. When the tester looked at me, she gave a nod, so I knew that when she moved her head, she was turning the dial, and just before she could turn her head to look at me, I raised my hand. And I didn't have to take the test after that.

It wasn't until later that I went to a professional place for a hearing test. Here they put me alone in a room, and the window's dark so you can't see what the people are doing. And they were just shocked when they found out. They said, well, maybe she had perfect hearing when she was little and then she lost it when she became this age. But they did X rays and a brain scan and they found out that my nerves were never developed, so I was born completely deaf.

I have been through a lot. I have lots of friends who are just amazed at what I have gone through. I'm a fighter and I'm a survivor and I have a lot to show for it. I say to people, everybody has a different way of dealing with a situation, but I know that giving up and letting it ruin your life is not the solution. The more I deal with it, the stronger I become and the better I can help others who aren't able to do that yet.

Crazymaking

Andrea Sorenson

Andrea Sorenson (a pseudonym) is a free-lance editor and writer living in the San Francisco Bay Area. She currently is attending graduate school and plans to pursue a career in social work. She is also working with a therapist to unravel the issues she faces as an adult child of an alcoholic.

"I hope that people reading this story, especially someone with an alcoholic parent, will realize that there are places to get help: Al-Anon, Alateen, and ACOA (Adult Children of Alcoholics) groups, or a therapist experienced with the issues surrounding alcohol abuse. There's a great sense of relief in realizing that you're not alone, you're not crazy, and you will heal."

"You get in here right now, young lady!" My father roughly grabs my arm and pulls me into the house, kicking and hitting me along the way. He pulls me over to the sink and lets go of me. "You get all these dishes done and then go in your room!" I cry silently, my teardrops falling in the dishwasher along with the Lux Liquid and dirty pots. Once again, I was doing something wrong. Once again, I was having fun. Once again, I was talking with the neighborhood boys, something my father couldn't handle.

This all-too-familiar scenario started when I entered puberty. My breasts, my interest in boys, their interest in me, my budding sex-

“It happened to a man in my neighborhood, Jen, when I was about your age. I was coming home from school with my friend Lisbeth, and he exposed himself to us. Do you know what that means?” Jen nods. “And I told my mother, and she explained to me—just as I’m explaining to you—that men who get that way don’t really mean to harm, or to frighten. I’m not talking about the real criminals, the violent ones. I’m talking about sad, scared, sick men, Jen. And I guess Grandpa Goldin is one of them.”

Rachel takes a shaky breath, runs her hands across her face. “But we can’t tell Grandma Goldin, because it would hurt her. And we can’t tell Dad, because it would hurt him. So you let me handle it, Jen, and I’ll make sure you’re never alone with Grandpa again.”

Jen shakes her head. “That’s not enough. We have to tell Aunt Laura. Because Cousin Anne sleeps over there sometimes, too, and she’s a year younger than I am.”

Rachel, amazed at her child’s sagacity, nods. “Okay. But let me tell Aunt Laura. And . . . well, you’re still going to have to see Grandpa sometimes, at family gatherings and so forth. Please be nice to him when you see him . . . because he doesn’t really mean to.”

Part II

The Power of the Voice

Introduction

The voice is a powerful weapon, not only when words are spoken, but when the full force of the will and the intensity of sound combine to repel the attacker. The voice has an intelligence of its own, often surprising even the woman who possesses it. Many women dream of not being able to scream, yet when attacked, they find a voice they never knew they could muster. Some of the best advice given to women by the police is to make a lot of noise. Self-defense courses often include instruction and practice on yelling like a banshee.

Effective verbal self-defense consists of knowing what you want in a given situation and expressing that as clearly as possible, sometimes repeatedly, until either the message gets across or the attacker gets bored. In "Like a Broken Record," Stella Moreno gives us one of the best examples of the broken-record technique, an actual practice exercise often taught in assertiveness training courses.

Sometimes verbal self-defense can be confusing because the woman has conflicting desires. This is most problematic in situations with a known attacker, who may even be a current or past sexual partner, or someone the woman is attracted to. She may feel uncertain about whether she wants to be sexual, but quite sure that she doesn't want to be forced. These ambiguous situations may also cause a woman to feel especially guilty afterward. She may judge herself as contributing to the attack, simply because she had sexual feelings at the time of the attack. "She Means No," by Pamela Morgan, concentrates on these complex issues.

Other verbal strategies include acting crazy, being creative, or us-

ing humor. Although an attack is a serious situation, who says self-defense can't be fun? Humor can be one of the most effective tools a woman has, because it tends to disarm an attacker who expects a passive, fearful victim. If a woman can make a joke while being threatened, she has already rejected the victim role. Victims don't make quips—they are frozen with fear. By finding the humor in a potentially serious situation, a woman shows her attacker that she is an individual with wit, intelligence, and the gumption to stick up for herself. This too surprises many would-be rapists, since the woman is no longer a faceless receptacle for his fantasies, but a real-live adult woman who has something to say for herself.

In many verbal attacks, the attacker relies on a "script." "Don't I know you from somewhere?" or "Hey, baby!" are examples of opening lines. Making a joke or a witty remark can disrupt that script. Kikanza Nuri Robins demonstrates this well in "What Mama Taught Me," when she and her companion are being harassed at a bar.

An obscene telephone call is a common way that an attacker feeds his fantasies. The woman on the other end of the line is—if anything—a frightened voice, a hint of a human being. After continued harassment by an anonymous caller, Nancy Rawles in "Insult for Insult" finally decides to give him a dose of his own medicine—to his stunned surprise and her triumph.

As with many other self-defense techniques, a woman often uses her creativity in an unpremeditated way. Indeed, the essence of imagination is spontaneity.

Pretending to go along with the person is known as the "passive" defense, and can be used to buy time or to get to a better physical location. In "I Just Want to Talk to You," Priscilla Prutzman uses elements of this strategy in a dialogue with her attacker that lasts several hours, as she convinces him that he should not proceed with his plans to physically assault her. In "Singing in the Rain," Irene van der Zande talks with her attacker all afternoon while they drink tea—until he leaves.

The one verbal strategy that is often associated with being raped is pleading, which may be an expected, and therefore less effective, way to deter an attack. If the attacker wants to intimidate or scare the woman, her attempts to plead may play into his gratification. In fact, Dr. Pauline Bart, in her research on women avoiding rape, found that pleading was associated with being raped, not with avoidance.

One verbal strategy is saying "No!" when you mean no and sticking to it, not only in attack situations, but in general practice. ~~Pamela Morgan also uses this strategy.~~

Ann Alberts, in "A Jog on the Beach," hears the voice of her self-defense instructor in her mind, advising her to "yell anything! Show him you're going to fight, that you're strong. That scares some men off." Nancy Miller verbally challenges an attacker who says he has a gun, and wins a struggle in the subway, in "Calling His Bluff."

The purpose of a yell is twofold: one, to frighten your attacker, and, two, to release yourself from the paralysis of fear by engaging your lungs in the physical act of expelling breath. In Japanese, the word for this is *kiai* (pronounced "key-eye"), literally meaning the release of spirit. This is also the word for the so-called judo or karate yell.

Yelling may also attract attention, and occasionally even some help. Many women have been told to shout "Fire!" rather than "Help!" This may be helpful in a building, where others will be more likely to get involved if they feel they are also in danger. Hollering "Fire!" may not be so useful in a field or on the street. Yelling outdoors requires persistence if you really want to attract help. At least three sustained bellows are needed to let others know something is going on, give them time to get outside, and help them figure out where you are. In "A Night Out Alone," Linda Forest uses vocal power to express how she feels about the attack and in the process attracts some reinforcements.

One last note: shrieking in a high-pitched voice may not sound like serious distress and may hurt your throat. Making the sound lower will release more breath and allow you to roar like a lion in a most uncivilized fashion. Few attackers are willing to mess with a woman who is making a lot of noise.

footsteps behind me, a steady walk that kept pace just a few feet in back of me. I quickened my own gait a little, and prayed that my instincts were wrong; I could feel trouble coming.

As I crossed the next intersection, he joined me. He wasn't a large man, not what you would call muscular or imposing. In fact, he was hardly taller than I. He tried to start a conversation, and I tried to avoid giving any straight answers. When he asked for the second time where I lived, I replied, "Oh, just up there," and waved my hand ahead of us. Maybe I could talk my way out of this; maybe I could get close enough to home to get help from my husband.

At the head of an alley, he turned toward me. "We're going down there," he said, as he motioned with his left hand, deep in his coat pocket. "I've got a gun."

I tried to reason with him. "Look, I've had a long day, and I'm not interested. Okay?" Then I prayed out loud. "Lord, you've got to help me." And then I said something that amazed me. "You've got a gun? Okay, let me see it. I don't think you even have a gun."

He pulled his hand out of his pocket. There was no gun. He held a heavy piece of twine in his hand, and whipped it around my throat. "I'm gonna lay with you," he said.

I tried kicking him in the groin. It didn't faze him. In fact, he seemed amused by it. "Didn't work, did it?" he gloated.

He was pulling me into the alley by the twine, choking me. I couldn't reach him, couldn't bite or scratch or hit him. I concentrated on the piece of twine that was biting into my neck. I forced my thumbs up underneath it and took a long, deep breath.

It was a loud, clear scream. It was something he hadn't counted on.

"Okay, lady, okay. Lighten up. I'm leaving."

I watched him walk away, until he had disappeared from sight. He really was gone. I ran home, bruised and scared, but I had won.

A Night Out Alone

Linda Forest

Linda Forest was born in Bristol, Pennsylvania, in 1955, the youngest of three daughters. She earned an M.S. in counseling and human relations and is now a supervisor at a social service agency in suburban Philadelphia.

"Yes, I am furious that we as women in our society must feel the vulnerability we do, but instead of letting my anger and frustration cause me to behave carelessly and stupidly, it has provided me with more constructive energy. Also, it has inspired me to share my story with other women in hopes that it provides them with strength, and courage."

On that wintry Saturday evening, the Penn State campus was buzzing with activity. Some students were walking from their dorms into town, where most of the entertainment took place on weekends. Another rather large group of students was heading to and from the campus buildings where, on any given night, there would be two movie showings. A third, smaller group was headed for the campus library for a more productive, if less enjoyable, evening.

I lived on the town's main thoroughfare, across the street from campus. Having nothing to do that evening, I decided to attend *A Night at the Opera*, one of the few Marx Brothers films I had yet to see. It was being shown in the dorm closest to my apartment. I decided to go to the 8:00 P.M. showing, so that when the film ended, there would still be plenty of students around.

Bill, the man I lived with, was a disc jockey for the campus radio station. Since he was working that night, I thought I would walk across campus after the film was over and stay with him until his progressive rock show ended. I never went to movies or anywhere else at night alone, but I wanted very much to do something.

Bill and I had discussed my going to the film and then walking alone to the building where he worked. He was very concerned. I stood my ground, explaining that the walk would be short, others would be milling around on campus, and I would stay in well-lit areas. He finally succumbed to my pressure and agreed there should be no problem.

Just to be on the safe side, he suggested that I carry the wooden stick, which looked a lot like a billy club, that his father had recently made for me for self-defense. I chuckled and told him that his suggestion was absurd. But he persisted, so I eventually agreed.

Once on campus that night, I tried to stick close to groups of students until I jogged into the building where the film was. Going somewhere alone at night was a very unusual experience for me, and yet I felt good about it. I was tired of being paranoid about others. I was sick to death of feeling vulnerable and limiting my activities because I was a woman. I felt truly oppressed. Having successfully gotten to the movie gave me a feeling of accomplishment.

The film was even better than I had anticipated. As I left the theater, I chuckled to myself, remembering my favorite scene, in which the entire ship's passengers crowded into one minuscule room. I was anxious to see Bill. We would, undoubtedly, spend the time between his song introductions repeating hilarious lines and imitating Harpo's mannerisms.

I quickened my pace in the bitter cold air. Luckily, I had worn my new long johns, my parka, my overalls, and my thickest flannel shirt. I put my hood up as the air stung my ears. A slight young man was walking on the sidewalk across the street from me, but I gave his presence very little thought. I crossed the street and turned the corner.

Finally, I reached the mall area. I loved this part of campus, with its tree-lined walkway. Looking up at the bare but still beautiful trees, I noticed that the sky was clear. The Little Dipper sparkled above. As I neared the building where Bill was working, I looked up and saw a lit window. He was in that room and I was glad to have arrived safely.

At that moment, I felt a body jump on my back and shove a hand into my mouth. I gagged and bit down on the fingers. The hand lowered to my neck. Before I could think, I let out a bloodcurdling scream. "GET THE FUCK OFF ME YOU SON OF A BITCH!" The volume of my voice surprised me. Bill was so close, and yet he did not come to my rescue. I screamed again. "HELP! HELP!" Why didn't Bill hear me?

After my second scream, the hand released my throat. I squeezed harder on the stick in my pocket, which I had been clutching throughout my walk. The body was still pressed against my back and I thrashed my elbows into its stomach. I screamed again and then saw two men running to help me. As the man on my back released me, I clobbered him with my stick.

The two men approached and I pointed toward the now running figure that had been pressed against my body. The thought made me shiver with disgust. I looked at the attacker as he fled. It was the same man who had been watching me from across the street when I left the movie.

The men chasing him were too far behind and finally gave up. In the meantime, two women ran over and I told them what had happened. They insisted on walking me to the building. I tried the front door; it was locked. I went to the side door and it too was locked. How could Bill do this to me? I started to cry harder. The women walked me to their apartment. Once there, I called Bill. He was there in five minutes.

As we walked back to the radio station together, my tears turned to anger. Why was I locked out of the building? Why hadn't he heard my cries for help? He answered that he had been in a soundproof booth. He made me telephone the campus police—something I was reluctant to do. They met us at the station and I told them what had happened. After they left, I saw my gentle, pacifist boyfriend turn into a wild man after revenge. "If you ever see that fucker," he said, "point him out to me and I'll kill him!"

We finally got home. I didn't sleep at all that night. I couldn't believe how close I had come to . . . to what? To being raped or hurt or killed? My imagination ran wild. Bill caressed my face and his touch made me shiver. Would I ever enjoy being touched again? And what if I had been raped? How could I ever be physically close to someone again?

I recuperated from this episode quickly, feeling fortunate, not only because I was not seriously damaged physically or emotionally, but because I saw how I reacted to an attack. Though the experience taught me to be extremely cautious, I know how I would react if this were to happen again. I would scream, louder than I ever would have thought possible. And I would, again, fight like a tiger.

I Just Want to Talk to You

Priscilla Prutzman

Priscilla Prutzman is the program coordinator for the Children's Creative Response to Conflict Program in Nyack, New York, the co-author of *The Friendly Classroom for a Small Planet*, and has written articles about non-violence for several publications. At the time of the incident she describes here, she had led several workshops in personal nonviolence and had facilitated role-plays about creative responses to street hassles.

"I have thought about what happened many times and described the scenario to many people. Some have said it was luck or chance that I escaped a potentially fatal situation with no harm at all. I still believe that I was using whatever skills I had to try to transform the violence of the man. I tried to get to know him as a person and to humanize the situation. I think I projected nonviolent strength. I would try the same thing again."

One day, while bicycling north on an isolated viaduct in New York City, I was stopped by a tall, athletic-looking young man. The following dialogue took place during the next forty-five minutes.

MAN: Hey, can you tell me where Broadway and Amsterdam meet?

ME: As far as I know, they run parallel up here. *I continued riding my bike.*

MAN: Hey, give me a ride on the back of your bike.

ME: You're too big, and I'm in a hurry.

not to look back, thinking that I would lose control and show fear. I had to appear strong, or everything I had done so far would be lost. I walked briskly up to a black woman and told her I had been held at knife-point for forty-five minutes by the man following me. I asked her if she could help me. She walked me very quickly to a group of construction workers, who turned the man around. I didn't see where he went.

The woman walked me three more blocks. I thanked her, got into a cab with my bicycle, and headed toward my mother's house.

Like a Broken Record

Stella Moreno

Stella Moreno is a Latina, the second of five daughters from Fresno, California. She is a kindergarten teacher who has been in education for ten years.

"I grew up in a family where the mother had more control. In my family, the daughters—including myself—have followed the independent part of my mom: that stubborn, strong part.

"In Hispanic families, it may look like Dad has the last say, but it's Mom who's doing it under wraps. But when I look at my male cousins, the machismo ethic is definitely there. When it comes to conversation within the family, they get listened to more than women in our family.

"It's hard for us to defend ourselves at all. We grow up learning to be caretakers, to take care of everybody but ourselves."

As told to the editors in an interview: I was a member of a group that was giving a retreat. Seven of us had gone ahead to open up the facility and get it ready for the high school girls who were coming for the retreat. It was twilight, and I had just finished sweeping and doing some things in the cabins where the girls were going to be sleeping. One of the priests from the church that ran this facility came out to give us the keys and he brought a helper with him.

I went into the bathrooms, which were behind the main part of the facility. I was in a middle stall and I heard somebody come in, and I thought, Oh, somebody's come in to go to the bathroom. Then the

footsteps stopped, and the person didn't go into any of the bathroom stalls.

I heard breathing, but nobody moved, nobody said anything and finally I said, "Who's there? Is somebody in here?" Nobody answered, and I thought, Well, there's somebody there.

"I know you're there," I said. "I hear you." The person took a step and was just standing there breathing, and I thought, Well, somebody's here, and they're not talking, and I'm in here and they're out there, and what do I want to do about that?

A male voice said, "Are you scared?"

I thought a second and said, "Should I be?"

"Are you?" the voice said.

"Well, not unless—I don't know, do I have reason to be?"

By this time, I'm deciding that I just have to get out of here, and I'm just going to flush the toilet and walk out of the stall, and I don't know what I'm going to see or who it is going to be or what is going to happen. Yeah—I was scared. I thought he was there to rape, it was my first thought, rape, here we go, this is it. Nobody around, it was dark, I knew I was the only one in that part of the retreat center and I thought, I guess I'm going to fight.

I couldn't anticipate what was coming next. All these things were running through my head: violence, how am I going to protect myself, how big a person could I get away from, how fast do I run, could I beat him up?—you know, that stuff.

So I flushed the toilet and just walked out of the stall and the guy looks at me. It was the "helper" the priest brought.

"Well? Are you scared?"

"No, I've got some things to do and you don't belong in here. This is a women's bathroom."

He just looked at me and started laughing.

"So you need to get out of here, this is a women's bathroom."

By this time, I'm just washing my hands, being very cool, like I'm not scared. I'm dying inside, but I'm acting cool. I go wash my hands, and he walks toward me.

I looked him in the eye. "You don't belong in here, this is a women's bathroom and you need to get out."

I kept repeating the same thing, like a broken record. It was a monotone, *I* was a monotone. It was a clear, direct message that had no emotion attached to it. I meant what I said. I know it works with children, especially kids who are really out of line and really playing

the game. You just stand firm and be a broken record, be unaffected, don't have any emotion. The tone of voice is really important.

And I just pushed him to the side, stepped past him, and walked out. He was laughing, and then he took off. I went directly to my friends and then to the priest and said, "Look, this guy you brought, this is what happened and get him out of here, because I don't want him around here with high school girls and I don't want him around us. Get him out of here!" And they took him out.

There was a point during the confrontation with the man when there was a standoff, a point when I felt, this is the moment and either it's going to happen or it's not. It was when I was washing my hands, standing there looking at him and he was looking at me. I felt like he was deciding, too, and I just thought I should be fearless and act like I belonged there and was in total control. I walked out and he split.

This experience made me more careful about people knowing where I am, especially in places I'm not familiar with. At the retreat, nobody knew where I was. I never thought of saying, "I'm going over there, there isn't anybody over there, I'm the only one that's going to be there, somebody come and check in on me at such-and-such a time." Now I think it's important to make some agreements about a checking-in time, so there's some built-in way of looking out for each other when you're in a remote place.

I now have a reasonable fear, and that makes me more self-protective. Making sure people know what, when, and where. I still go places alone, I don't stay out of adventure as a result of fear, but I'm just more careful and cautious.

What Mama Taught Me

Kikanza Nuri Robins

Kikanza Nuri Robins lives in Southern California, where she runs her own business.

“If you are going to live and grow in this world, you will always find yourself struggling to win battles. Being black and female has caused me to struggle against racism and sexism. Being a feminist has caused me to wage battles to assert my new self in the presence of my old self’s fears, prejudices, and values. For me that makes the difference between surviving a battle and winning one. When I respond to a crisis with my best self, I feel I have won the battle.

“If, however, I don’t win by this standard, but I modify my behavior for a future, stronger response, then I have survived. I am proud that I fought back, and feel lucky and relieved that I survived. When I win, sometimes I’m a little surprised, but I definitely feel victorious.”

Going out for a drink was a relatively new activity for me, so I gave little thought to selecting the place. Victoria and I had just finished taping a television talk show. The topic was “To Have or Have Not”; the issue was children. We made up the black and brown contingent of child-free women. Having just met on the show, we decided to talk over a drink at one of my favorite restaurants. I learned a lesson about restaurants and bars that night.

The restaurant was cozy, had good food and good service. I as-

sumed the lounge would have the same atmosphere. Was I wrong! The bar was a “meet market”—jam-packed with people out to meet people while trying very hard to look cool and available at the same time. As we arrived, it began to rain. Since Victoria had a date later that evening and we couldn’t think of another place nearby, we decided to stay.

A few moments after we had settled in our booth, one of the lounge regulars came over to greet us. Now one of the greatest problems I have in social interactions of this kind is that my mother has ingrained in me the need to be a lady at all times. Ladies are polite. They speak when they are spoken to. And they raise neither their arms nor their voices in public. On the other hand, the lesson Victoria learned from her mother is not to speak to strangers. As Victoria and I talked, the intruder extended his hand to her. She looked at him as if he were offering a social disease. When he asked her name, she replied coolly, “Lisa.”

Don’t know why I have to be so polite. Probably because I just assume that people are going to act right, especially in public. That was the second lesson I learned that night. Everyone who is in public doesn’t know how to act. I shook the hand that was extended to me, but drew back from the kiss that was offered with the handshake.

“We just met. You don’t know me well enough to kiss me,” was my explanation. Third lesson: You don’t owe explanations to fools.

“I was just trying to be a gentleman.”

“Then be one—and leave.”

“What kind of way is that to talk, sister?” Why is it, the only time I’m called “sister” is when I’m being insulted?

“It’s the way I talk when I’m trying to have a private conversation.”

At this point, Victoria and I decided to try the you-are-invisible strategy. Ignoring him, we plunged back into our discussion about interracial relationships.

Still standing by our table, Mr. Invisible was undaunted. “My mama lets me kiss her,” he announced as he reached across us to bring the ashtray on our table closer to him.

“Well, ahm not yo momma.” My tone of voice and my switch to ethnic dialect indicated that if I were standing, both hands would be on my hips. This change of tactics put the man on the defensive. He knew he had better shoot his best shot at that point, because he couldn’t predict what was coming.

The dude put his finger in my face. And shook it. That was tantamount to saying, "What's wrong with you, bitch?" He opened his mouth to begin a tirade, but I jumped in.

Pounding the table with my fist, I rose as well as one can in a booth, aligned my nose with his, and screamed in my best Standard English, "Muthafucker, will you get out of my face?"

You know the commercial where everyone stops to listen to E. F. Hutton? People really do that. The bar was silenced by my outburst. Everyone turned to see who this mutha was. Moreover, the manager, three hostesses, and two bartenders were at my side before I could catch my breath.

I really didn't know I had it in me, but when pushed to the wall, I had fought back. And I had won. But I did not forget my mother's admonition to always be a lady. As the man was escorted out into the rain, I sat back in my seat, returned my attention to Victoria, and said, "Excuse me for interrupting . . ."

In the War Zone

Linda Weltner

Linda Weltner's column "Ever So Humble" appears every Friday in the At Home section of the *Boston Globe*. She is the author of two books for young adults, and in 1985 was named Best Columnist by the New England Women's Press Association. The mother of two grown daughters, she lives in Marblehead, Massachusetts, with her husband, a psychiatrist.

The first thing I see as the subway car pulls out of the Kendall Station is the patch on the soldier's arm.

"Vietcong Hunters Club" is embroidered around the outside of the circle. Inside, framed in the cross hairs of a soldier's rifle, is the face of an Oriental in a yellow coolie's hat. The narrow black lines meet right between his eyes.

The patch is sewn onto a khaki sleeve that extends into the aisle in front of me. My eyes trace their way down to the cuff. Emerging from the sleeve is a powerful black hand.

I close my eyes.

Good Lord. This is the seventies. I thought the war was over.

I feel helpless, sick to my stomach. The racism of that damn war rides my subway on a Wednesday afternoon, floating like bacteria through the bloodstream of this country, but it is my blood that begins to pump faster with fear and anger. I wish I had the nerve to say something. I'd like to talk sense into him, but he is very big and I know better than to go looking for trouble.

Part III

Intuition and Willpower

Introduction

Women's intuition—it is joked about, trusted in, scoffed at. Men are supposed to be logical, rational, straightforward, and linear, while women are said to operate through their emotions and vague hunches. The stories in this chapter show what a practical tool intuition—fueled by willpower—can be for a woman under attack.

Intuition is not a mysterious power unrelated to everyday reality. In fact, it is just the opposite: intuition has its roots in what is happening from minute to minute. It is pure *awareness*, when the senses are finely tuned to every sound and sight and movement. A woman who is using, who is *listening to*, her intuition is like an animal in the forest, mindful of its surroundings, and ready to act when the time is right.

It is this combination of awareness—intuition—and the ability to act at just the right moment—willpower—that is at the heart of any successful self-defense effort. No matter what strategies a woman tries when she fights back, she can't really do without these fundamental resources. What is exciting is that we *all* possess these tools. Although they can be sharpened and exercised through self-defense or other kinds of training, they are available to us at any time. Intuition and willpower are what literally keep us alive from day to day. They allow us to understand and to act intelligently in every area of life.

But it isn't always easy to listen to the voice of intuition. We often talk ourselves out of our perceptions when we have no solid proof that they are real. In American society, "making a scene" is a social

offense, so many of us want to be absolutely sure something is really going on before we act. But we are often reluctant to verify our feelings about a scary situation. Have you ever walked down the street, aware that someone is walking behind you, yet not turned to face the person because then it would be obvious that you were concerned? Yet, in many instances, simply turning and directly facing a potential attacker is enough to deter him. By literally standing your ground and looking someone straight in the eye, you are saying, "I am here. I have a right to this piece of sidewalk. I know you are following me. Stay away."

Intuition and willpower sometimes come into play without a woman's conscious awareness. A woman will sometimes literally "find herself" acting in self-protective ways, without consciously knowing what she's doing. In "Southern Intuition," Denise Caignon finds herself acting a role she hadn't planned as she tries to outwit her taxi driver. It is as if some wise, instinctual part of her, deeper than her conscious mind, has taken over the controls.

Although we didn't plan it that way, this section contains a number of stories about attacks in automobiles. Many of us think of our cars as extensions of ourselves, like little secondary homes on wheels. When a woman is attacked in her own car, it may be easier for her to summon her will and sense of outrage, since there is no question that her personal space is being violated. Any car is a small, enclosed space. A woman under attack in a car is likely to feel cornered, and that sense of being trapped seems to bring out an intuitive, highly focused escape strategy.

An intuitive response is also a flexible one, since (like everything in life) an attack/defense situation can shift course from moment to moment. The attacker may change strategies any number of times. To fight back, a woman must be adaptable enough to change her own tactics as many times as it takes to get away.

The way some of these stories were remembered and written is the most obvious testament to the power of awareness. Subtle shifts in the attacker's behavior, a sudden opening, an escape route—all the details of the situation are taken into account. Lane Polansky, in "A Woman of Common Sense and Courage," remembers the dice tattooed on her attacker's arm—down to the number of dots on each die. Some women carry on a running internal dialogue that helps them determine when to act. "Uh-oh, what's happening now? He let

go of my arm, so now I can move away." These internal conversations often take place in split seconds.

Intuition often points the way to an opening. When Pat Deer ("I Let Him Have It Right in the Eyes") is accosted by a stranger on the beach, she removes his glasses "without any conscious plan." When he demands them back, she hands them to him, and seeing that his hands are both engaged, decides it is now her "move," and she makes it. Kathleen Zundell in "The Lesson of Three Billy Goats Gruff" recognizes an "instinct for self-preservation—a feeling centered around my navel" that enables her to escape two assailants.

Sheer willpower can see a woman through a situation even when she is up against incredible odds. In "The Spirit Fights Back," Hallie Iglehart is faced with an armed attacker who says he will kill her if she moves. Instead of fear, what she feels is fury and defiance—a raw will to get away. Jerilyn Munyon ("The Will to Survive") is moved by a "strength beyond the physical"—the same legendary strength mothers have used to pull impossibly heavy objects off their children.

There is a natural sense of outrage that arises when we are attacked. This sense of outrage is something a woman can use to fuel her defense of herself, to bring her will to the surface. The feeling of being violated sometimes expresses itself as a sudden, explosive response that may surprise the attacker. Surprise is one of the most effective self-defense techniques. When a woman suddenly screams, as Kitty Geneva does in "Fighting Back in the Park," "I hate you! Get away from me!" or pulls away at the right moment, the attacker may be so dumbfounded that he simply turns and walks (or runs) away.

It is our hope that the next time you "just have the feeling" or "get a hunch out of nowhere," you pay close attention. Those hunches and feelings—and how you act on them—are some of the best self-defense tools you have.

possible, including problems with sex, walking alone, trying to decide if the clothes I wear will stand up in court if I'm attacked again and have to testify to my good faith. And yet I know that women can resist, not be raped, and live. That means a lot to me.

In September of 1985 my attacker (convicted of attempted rape in May 1983) won his appeal on a technicality. The case came to trial again in January 1986, when I was four months pregnant. The old strategy was that I was a prostitute, or he thought I was, and that he ran away when I screamed. The new strategy was consent—that the guy had thought I agreed to sex and that he ran away as soon as I screamed. Bullshit!

The cross-examination was brutal, with no gentleness because of my evident condition. But we won anyway, with a super assistant District Attorney named Amanda Kaufman, part of Philadelphia's Rape Unit. He was convicted in a jury trial on all counts. The attacker was sentenced to 5–10 years, mandatory sentence with no chance of parole. Let's hear it for fighting back—both on the street and in the court!

The Will to Survive

Jerilyn Munyon

Jerilyn Munyon, born in 1947, lives in the Santa Cruz mountains with her teenage son, three cats, and a dog. She owns a small business, teaches Model Mugging, a women's self-defense and empowerment course, and has practiced aikido, a Japanese nonviolent martial art, for the past seven years. She has a second-degree black belt.

“As a survivor of childhood sexual abuse and two attacks on the street as an adult, I have spent a lot of time thinking about what it is to be a victim and how I can learn not to be one. As I move from victim to survivor to peaceful warrior, I want to share my experiences and participate in the empowerment of women.”

Twelve years later: I am walking around my therapist's room. She is following me very close. She keeps getting closer and closer. I am getting very uptight. She comes even closer. Suddenly, I fall to the floor and scream in terror. Terror is coming out of every pore of my body, every muscle, my entire being. I scream for forty-five minutes.

Later, she takes my hand and says, “What happened?”

“I was attacked by a man with a knife when I was eighteen,” I answer. “I got away.”

“Do you know how courageous you are? You are a survivor.”

I was coming back from the store around 9:00 P.M. As I turned the corner of my street, a car behind me bumped lightly into the back

of my car. I was only a block from my house, so I continued until I reached the parking lot in front. As soon as I stopped, a man came over to my car and knocked on the window. I rolled it down and asked what he wanted. It was so dark that I couldn't see him. He said he was sorry for running into me and that he wanted to give me the name of his insurance company. I got out of the car as he stayed out of view behind me. As I walked around the back of my car to see what had happened, he grabbed me from behind and stuck a knife in my side. His gloved hand was across my mouth so I couldn't scream.

"If you try to get away, I'll kill you," he said. "I have a knife in your side."

He started to drag me to his car. At first, I was frozen with fear. I couldn't believe this was happening to me. But then I realized that if I submitted to him, I would be raped and possibly murdered. At that moment, I made the decision that I would rather be murdered while trying to get away than to find out what awaited me once in that car.

My will to live filled me with an incredible energy. It was a kind of strength that was beyond the physical. Effortlessly, I pulled away from my attacker and ran to my house screaming. He must have been very shocked. Later, the police didn't believe me. "How do you know it was a knife?" they asked. My parents felt my pain and their own helplessness.

For six months, I woke up every night screaming. I couldn't drive my car. I couldn't be alone. I realized I was becoming paralyzed just as I had when my attacker first grabbed me. I told myself that if I didn't force myself to overcome my fear, I would be paralyzed for the rest of my life. Slowly, I made myself get into my car and drive alone—only in the day at first, and then, later, at night. I began to stay alone for short periods and then longer ones. There was never a time when I drove in my car alone at night for the next twelve years that I did not look into my rearview mirror and remember that terrible night.

Many years, and many more therapy sessions, have led me back to the whole person I was before I was attacked. It has taken me twenty years to travel from victim to survivor.

It is important to bring the issue of self-defense inside myself, to look for understanding. What is my role in the cycle of violence?

How do I step out of the victim role without moving into the role of aggressor? How can I actively define my boundaries both spiritually and physically without having to use "power over" others? How do I carry the "victim within" into the rest of my life and how do I change that concept for myself?

I don't think that nonviolence comes by separating ourselves from or denying violence. It comes through understanding how we all participate in the cycle of violence. With self-defense, we have an extraordinary opportunity to create a whole new language for women, a language that benefits all people. We take responsibility for protecting ourselves and take ourselves out of the victim role. When we say NO to an attack we are really saying YES to ourselves and our right to live in safety. We can define power as integrity, equality, self-knowledge, inner strength—not domination, aggression, or escalation. My dream is to someday live in a world where there are no victims, to speak a language in which violence does not exist.

The Lesson of Three Billy Goats Gruff

Kathleen Zundell

Kathleen Zundell is a storyteller who specializes in Chumash Indian tales, children's stories, and stories of heroines and strong women. She does workshops for women entitled "In Search of the Wise Women," "Finding the Goddess Within," and "The Real Cinderella Story" and has co-organized several Women's Storytelling Festivals in Los Angeles. One of her favorite stories is "Little Golden Hood," a seldom-told version of "Little Red Riding Hood," wherein the grandmother, who is a wise woman, protects and rescues her granddaughter.

"Stories work deeply on the unconscious mind; they prepare us for life, for difficult situations. It's essential to our growth and healing as women to read and hear stories about women who are active and heroic. We are constantly bombarded by images and stories of women as helpless victims. I want to hear the old stories about the wise women and the goddesses and I want to read new stories about other strong women who have won."

As a professional storyteller, I have told the story of "The Three Billy Goats Gruff" many times. Although my child audiences have always responded with enthusiasm, I've secretly worried about the true meaning of the story. The little Billy Goat Gruff and the middle-sized Billy Goat Gruff, when confronted by the Troll who wants to eat them, say, "Please don't eat me . . . you don't want me, I'm too

small. . . . Eat my brother instead." Isn't that betrayal? And when the big Billy Goat Gruff butts the Troll off the bridge, isn't that too violent for young children?

Psychologist Bruno Bettelheim, in his book *The Uses of Enchantment*, helped quell my worries. He says that a young child, when confronted by a big bully, should not try to take on the bully directly, but should get out of the situation by some more subtle means, just like the two smaller Billy Goats Gruff. He believes that children will model themselves after the Billy Goats and that they understand that the evil Troll will get the punishment he deserves.

Late one night, I sat in my car with a male friend. Since I was dropping him off at his car, the engine was still running. Suddenly, a strange man swung my car door open, indicated that he had a gun, and ordered us out of the car. Frozen, I got out and wondered how I'd gotten myself into this situation. My stomach twisted and my brain scrambled to find a rational reason for what was happening. I prayed fast. The car engine was still running and I expected the man to jump in and drive off in my 1966 Mustang, but he backed us into the darkness of the street. I sensed that my friend, an ex-Marine, was in a state of shock and could not be counted on for any kind of action.

Another man appeared and mumbled something about taking me into the alley. Suddenly, my instinct for self-preservation—a feeling centered around my navel—said, "Get out of here fast. These men mean to do you harm. They won't touch your friend; they're after you."

As this realization flashed before me, I found myself handing my purse to the attackers, saying, "Here, take this." Then I ran to my car, jumped inside, and stepped on the gas.

The surprised attackers jumped on top of the car to try to stop me, but my determination was too strong . . . and my car fast. I drove around the block with a racing heart and gathered my sense of self. Driving back to see if my friend needed help, I saw that the two attackers had left and my friend was okay. He was just stunned and confused, but glad I had gotten away.

I think of the notion that had been ingrained in me, that a man would protect me in case of attack. But I learned that the only person I can depend on is me. My clever thinking and quick action saved me. I rescued myself. I said, "You don't want me . . . take my purse instead." By doing that, I had found a means of escape—just like those three Billy Goats Gruff.

“Shit. If it’s not there, I’m going to have to call over to Camden and see if I left it with my folks there. It’s got my plane ticket in it. How could I be so stupid?” The lies are simply rolling off my tongue. It’s working and I’m actually beginning to enjoy this. I feel I’m in a secret race that I must win. Will win.

We pull up in front of the station and I jump out. Free. I could disappear now, not come back to the car. But I still need to get out of here, to the airport, and all the cabs are parked companionably together. They’re buddies, and I have no allies here.

I go to the pay phone, drop in a coin, listen to the dial tone become a recording become a blank become a beeping. I try to collect my thoughts, which, now that I am free, have come strangely unstrung. I see him walking toward me, and my thoughts snap back together like magnets and steel.

“It’s not in Camden,” I lilt drearily. “So I’ve gotta call some friends in Little Rock to come pick me up. I can’t go anywhere without my ticket.” I know no one in Little Rock, and my ticket is burning a hole in my pants pocket.

“Well, you try them and I’ll wait for you.” Mercifully, he wanders off to a video game. Why am I still caught up in this charade?

I make my fake call. I go and tell him someone is picking me up. I sit on my suitcase outside the station, waiting impatiently for my fantasy ride. Meanwhile, he has gone mysteriously off-duty, and is loitering around the front of the station as though waiting for someone himself. I wait endless minutes for him to go away, then I slip to a cab driven by what looks like an innocuous, elderly man, who takes me to the airport by the same back-street route. I feel like I’m riding with my grandfather, and even enjoy the pungent Camel smoke that fills the car.

As we glide down the same deserted streets, I ask myself: was I just being paranoid? Nothing really happened, did it? Then I think of his eyes leering at me coldly, his relentless baiting—and I simply feel relieved to be out of his presence. Why should I question my instincts just because I wasn’t brutally assaulted?

Later, in my hotel room in Memphis, I realize why I continued the game instead of telling him, simply and loudly, to get lost. I wanted to win. I didn’t want him to enjoy my fear—whatever his motives. I couldn’t drop my Southern-girl-home-for-Thanksgiving demeanor to reveal a woman who had been swayed in any way by his taunts. I had to play that scene to the end.

Part IV

Weapons at Hand

Introduction

The idea of using weapons at hand has long been advocated by self-defense educators. Indeed, many women use objects they happen to have with them to defend themselves.

Some self-defense instructors also teach women to carry and use intentional weapons, such as tear-gas canisters, key rings with sharp points, or even knives or guns.

One problem with any intentional weapon is that no one plans when they are going to be attacked, and most women are attacked by known people or family members, in their own homes. As a friend flippantly remarks, "How often do you carry your Mace canister into your own bathroom?"

In self-defense success stories, weapons at hand are most often grasped intuitively, when the attack begins, although, as you will see, some women have learned to include intentional weapons in their personal strategy also.

The weapons in this chapter vary widely. One woman thinks about using a comb with a sharp edge, another uses a rock she stumbles over. One woman carries a knife tucked into her boot for just such an occasion. One woman grabs a potted plant and beats her attacker with the pot. Another woman uses a wet paintbrush. Two women in this chapter use a gun as an integral part of their personal self-defense strategy.

All these women use their wits in reaching for the nearest helpful object to stave off an attack. Their focus, even if they were feeling fear, was on what they could do to stop the other person from continuing the attack.

“Found” weapons can be very helpful, as you will see, but rummaging in your purse or backpack and attempting to use objects that are not easy to reach or get out has its limitations.

Tear gas, Mace, or other sprays have been hailed by some as perfect weapons, and instructors who teach how to use sprays have made great amounts of money doing it. But members of the Los Angeles Commission on Assaults Against Women ran some tests, spraying each other full on in the face with the tear-gas preparation legal in California. They were still able to advance and continue to attack. They predicted that if the attacker’s adrenaline was stimulated, the gas might have even less effect.

Weapons such as these can give their owners a false sense of security. A woman carrying a tear-gas canister might think she needn’t bother to learn effective physical or verbal self-defense techniques. If a gas canister makes you feel safer, by all means carry it. But don’t rely on it—learn some basic self-defense as well.

If you are going to carry a weapon, make sure you know how to use it. Dangerous weapons like guns and knives also have their limitations. Although guns have great scare value, they may limit your response to only two options: shooting or not shooting. Many situations are not so serious that you would have to shoot, and a loaded weapon can be dangerous to you.

Many gun owners don’t know how to use their weapons properly. Most shootings in this country happen by accident—someone is not observing gun safety rules, or is just fooling around. If you are going to have a gun around, know how to load and unload it, and practice aiming and shooting it regularly at a firing range.

And by all means learn and follow the gun safety rules listed below. Use them at all times to protect yourself and your family and friends.

- Store gun and ammunition separately, in locked containers.
- Never assume a gun is unloaded, even if it was not loaded when you had it in your hands a few minutes ago. If you pick up or get handed a gun, open the gun and check to see if it’s loaded before you do anything else.
- Never point a gun at someone, unless you are considering shooting him. Never point a gun in fun.
- Know how to operate the safety latch—how to lock and unlock the gun.

- Clean and oil the gun regularly so it will work well when you need it.
- Never let children handle a gun, unless you are in the process of teaching them how to use it properly, under close supervision.
- If someone is not handling a gun safely, attempt to get it away, or leave the area as soon as possible.
- Practice aiming and shooting regularly, to keep your accuracy high.

Keeping a gun (particularly a loaded gun) in a drawer and not knowing how it works could endanger your life, especially if your attacker also happens to be a burglar. He could find the gun before you do.

However, a gun in the hand of an experienced woman can prevent violence, as Ellen Jean Zoltak illustrates in her story, “Have Gun, Will Travel.” Ellen carries a firearm as part of her overall self-defense strategy, but has never needed to fire it. Although this is not a choice many women will make, Ellen handles gun use with intelligence and caution. She also points out that there are times when having a gun and thinking about it all the time is definitely a burden.

Whatever choices you make about intentional weapons as part of your self-defense plan, be aware of the general rationale behind self-defense laws, which could be applied if you use a weapon or otherwise injure your attacker.

Laws of self-defense vary from state to state. You can read the law for your state in the Penal Code, available in most libraries. But, in general, you have the right to defend yourself, and this is defined as doing what a “reasonable” person would do in similar circumstances.

What “reasonable” means here is that you are allowed to use as much, but not more, force as the other person has used, or as you believe him *capable* of using. This may be tricky to prove in situations where you have a weapon and your attacker does not.

Retaliation is also taboo. If your attacker walks away, you generally are not allowed to injure him then. Once he stops attacking, you cannot attack him.

If you injure your attacker, if at all possible get legal advice from a lawyer or rape crisis center before you contact the police. You may need to report the attack made on you to police, to establish that you

needed to defend yourself. It may be advisable to report what happened even if you don't follow through, just in case your attacker tries to take you to court on assault, battery, assault with a deadly weapon, or attempted murder charges, as has happened to some women who fought back. To report, you need to call your local police or sheriff's office. Since the "reasonable person" defense is based on the idea of two people with equal bodies, training, and experience, it may not always apply to women, who may have radically different bodies, and often have little experience fighting. Such inequities are being taken into account in some court cases in which it is argued that if a woman in an attack situation uses a weapon, she is compensating only for her lack of training or lack of physical strength.

In any case, get legal advice if you injure your attacker. And if you are going to carry a weapon, know how to use it well. Otherwise, grab what you can, and make it a "weapon at hand."

The Comb in My Purse

Lynda Steele

Lynda Steele manages residential care facilities for the retarded in Kent, England, and lives with her husband, an American.

"Writing [this story] was helpful to me—a kind of exorcism. That might be the greatest achievement of the Success Story Project: that women recall and face those situations on the page in front of them."

Until I was twenty-two years old, I believed I was a pacifist, and that I could never hurt or kill another human being. That all changed the night I was assaulted.

I had just left a group of friends and was walking the last three hundred yards to my home alone. It was a dark street with bushes and trees on both sides. I had walked home that way many times and I had never been afraid.

Suddenly, a man grabbed me from behind. He was shorter than me, but a lot stronger. He pulled me off my feet and down to the ground, into the bushes. He was so strong that I was unable to move; his weight on top of me was suffocating. I remember thinking that there were houses nearby and that I should scream. I opened my mouth to scream and no sound came out. My mouth was empty and dry and my jaws locked.

As he pinned my body and legs into the ground and began to tear my jacket, I tried to move, wriggle, slide away—anything—but my

limbs felt like lead. Heavy lead legs that would not do, could not do, what my mind was telling them to. Something instinctive made me go limp, motionless. In that one second of lifelessness, my left arm came free. It rebounded elastically above my head and came down on my purse.

As I opened my mouth, my mind was shouting. Get the steel comb from your purse, get the comb, it's got a sharp-pointed end like a knife. Get the comb! It was as if all of my body was frozen in cement, except one flailing left arm and the left hand that clutched the comb.

I held the comb ready to stab him. All I could think of was plunging it into the black jacket on top of me again and again and again. I did not think it was a person on top of me. I did not think about injuring someone. I just thought of piercing the jacket so that I would be able to breathe again.

As I clutched the comb, the scream finally came out of my mouth. The sound of fear and rage filled the darkness. Distantly, I heard a voice say, "What was that? Someone is over there."

Suddenly, he was no longer tearing at my clothes. He was running through the bushes and I was lying there ready to kill. I looked at the comb, at my hand, at my clothes, and as the distant voices came closer, I began to shake with anger and relief and tears. Tears for him, tears for me, and tears because I could have killed, would have killed. Above all, tears of grief for an ideal that had just been destroyed.

I would kill in self-defense.

A Stone in the Sand

Marla J. Calico

Marla Calico was raised on a large farm in southwest Missouri. Her life revolved around the animals and the farm work. She could throw a bale of hay or sack of feed with the best of the guys, and she thinks this, more than anything, made her feel she could fight back when attacked. Today, she is operations manager for one of the top one hundred fairs in the United States.

"When I was attacked, I had no thoughts other than to fight back. For me, there was no other choice. Had I given in to my attackers, my life would have been lost. It is my sincere desire that this book convey to our sisters that there are those of us who have fought, and fought successfully—that to fight back is an option."

I'll never forget the date—Friday, October 13, 1978. I was visiting my lover on an extended vacation in his home country, Ecuador. We had taken a long, hot, and dusty bus ride to the beach to camp overnight. By the time we had the tent set up, it was nearly dark, and he decided to walk into town to find something for us for dinner. No problem, I thought, I'll have a nice fire going in no time and we'll have a cozy little dinner. It would be a prelude to the night I was anxiously awaiting. Who could miss with a night of love on a moonlit beach in South America?

After I had gathered sufficient firewood, I returned to a small wall near the end of the beach to urinate. As I was in that ridiculous

position, shorts around my ankles, five men jumped from behind the wall and grabbed me.

My initial reaction was to scream—I knew there was a group just down the beach partying beside a bonfire—but the scream only reverberated in my ears. The wind was from the wrong direction, the surf was too loud.

In the next seconds, it became clear that there was a ringleader in the group, two strong followers, and two younger ones, only boys, that lagged behind the others. Struggling with the three in the sand was futile—I kicked my shorts free of my ankles, and found myself backed into the corner of the wall. To silence my screams, the leader tried to choke me—I carried the bruises from his fingers for several days.

The wall probably saved my life. With something to brace myself against, I could now push and make a few kicks. The ringleader kept shouting, “*Cuchillo, cuchillo!*” I knew enough Spanish to realize he wanted the younger one to get him a knife. Luckily, none appeared.

The struggle lasted only minutes, but it seemed an eternity. My legs gave way in the sand. They were dragging me up the steps by the wall. As my head bumped against the stairs, and my bare hips and legs were scraped by the sand and stones, I managed to grab a baseball-sized stone beneath me. I used that to hit blindly behind me, catching my captor in the head. In the next few seconds of confusion, I made a desperate kick and caught one of them in the groin. This gave me the time to jump and run.

Once back at the tent, I spent the next hour in utter terror, sitting in the dark, clutching my pocketknife. I soon realized they wouldn’t bother me any more that night, and was able to start a small fire. When my boyfriend at last returned, I poured out the story to him—and saw his frustration and feeling of helplessness. He is an understanding man, and did all the right things to comfort me through the night and the next few weeks of fear.

The experience left definite scars—a certain fear that had never been present before. The one positive thing that came out of it was knowing I had used my head, and had successfully defended myself. Most of it, though, was luck: lucky to have been brought up on a farm and be a bit stronger than most women; lucky to have had that wall to my back; lucky to have been dragged across that small stone.

With the Help of a Houseplant

Marie Steinmetz, M.D.

Marie Steinmetz is a physician in private family practice in a Maryland suburb of Washington, D.C. The incident she describes occurred while she was doing her residency training in Asheville, North Carolina. Her work interests include wellness promotion and working with battered women.

It was a rainy May night in the mountains of North Carolina. I had been asleep about an hour when I heard a scratching sound. I thought it was my cat and got up to quiet her down. I took two steps into the living room and was stopped short by the reality of someone climbing into my window. A shadowy figure was outlined by the streetlight outside. I felt a cold wave of terror rise from my toes to my head. My mouth opened and I was surprised to hear a scream come out.

I walked closer to the window, still not sure the figure was real. It was. He was in the window up to his waist. The sound I heard was the window sticking. He couldn’t get his body completely inside.

He said, “I have a knife. Be quiet!” Every ounce of my being wanted that knife away from me. My hands reached for anything and grabbed the stem of a potted plant in front of the window. I began beating him with the pot and screaming. I soon realized no one was coming to help me.

I turned into a madwoman. I hit him with everything my hands could grab. He finally pulled himself from the window and started to run away. I stuck my head out of the window and screamed at him

was a perpetual troublemaker. He was being hauled in for drunk and disorderly every night and frankly I think they were glad somebody finally stood up to him.

Three or four days later, I went into a filling station that was run by a local justice of the peace and I wrote a check out for the gas. He looked at the check and then he looked at me. My eyes were bloodshot and I had big black circles under my eyes. He said, "Are you . . . ?" and I said, "Yes." He said, "I hear you had a little trouble out at your place the other night." I said, "Well, yes sir, I did." He said, "Well, I just wanted to tell you," and all this time he's patting my hand, "I wanted to tell you that I think you did a real fine job and I'm proud of you." I knew right then it was going to be okay.

Nobody knew for several days whether or not this fella was going to live. They told me later that he had died once in the ambulance on the way to the hospital and twice on the operating table, but they revived him. I didn't want him to die because I knew I'd have to go to court if he did. It was another couple of months before the grand jury considered the case and I found out from an insider that they just couldn't decide whether to indict him or me, so they didn't indict either one of us.

This experience has made me a lot more radical about self-defense. I grew up in the late sixties, early seventies, believing in peace, love, you don't strike back, you turn the other cheek, there's no excuse for war and violence. But I decided that if somebody was going to threaten my well-being, I had a right to put a stop to it. This attitude helped me fit into the community a lot better than I ever had before. This is an old county—it's very "country," and here I came from a big city. They weren't too sure about me at first.

After the man who had attacked me had been in the hospital for three weeks, the fellas in the sheriff's office went up to see if they could get a statement from him, and he corroborated everything I'd told them. He didn't have to do that. He could have lied and made it a lot harder on me. But he backed up the story I told and even dictated a letter of apology to me. He said, "I called your bluff and I shouldn't have and you did the right thing and I'm sorry I made you do it." I have only had to speak to him once or twice since then. And he's never been back out to the property.

Part V

Life-Threatening Assaults

Introduction

Some of our worst fears involve weapons, attacks by groups, and situations that require a physical response to escape safely. The stories in this section deal not only with extreme violence, but also with correspondingly strong defenses.

In working with women who have been raped, one hears stories over and over again that involve death threats. "If you don't do this, I will kill you." Women are forced to participate in their own violation for fear of something worse. The greatest fear of the rapist or attacker is that someone will find him out, therefore his most common threat is "If you tell anyone this happened, I will kill you." Or "I will harm your family," or "I'll tell everyone you know that you loved it."

We know of a woman who opened the door of her trailer and was faced by an attacker with a gun. He said, "If you don't do what I want, I will kill you." She just looked at him, and said, "Well, then you will have to shoot me right now, because I'm not going to do what you want." Her will to defend herself was stronger than his will to hurt her, and he left.

We are misled by what we see on television and in the movies. The use of weapons, the frequency of group attack, and actual murders of women are all greatly exaggerated by the media, both in fictional accounts and in the news. Weapons are present in less than 10 percent of all situations reported to rape crisis centers. When a weapon is involved, it is often only used as a means of inducing fear, as a threat. In effect, the attacker is saying, "I have to have something

in my hand with which I could kill you, in order to even get near you." This is an interesting psychological statement: the attacker clearly credits his intended "victim" with a good deal of power.

A threat of a weapon does not mean one is really there. Some women have challenged attackers, saying boldly that they do not believe there is a weapon. Having something stuck in your back does not necessarily mean it is a gun; it may be a screwdriver, or a finger.

You may ask, "Well, what about the crazies?" Although there certainly is a percentage of attackers who are psychotic, we venture to suggest that it may not be higher than that in the general population. Mass murders sell papers, but your chances of running into someone who truly is crazy are pretty slim, but not unheard of; sometimes survival means fighting with every ounce of strength and will you possess, using every skill you have ever learned, physically, emotionally, mentally, just to stay alive. Py Bateman tells one such story. A black belt in karate, a fit woman, Py Bateman ("Coming Out Alive") ran into one of the crazier attackers we have heard of, who seemed genuinely interested in taking her life, and who had no previous acquaintance with her. Despite his obviously planned attack and his perseverance in trying to hurt her, she showed great courage and skill and is alive to tell about it. ~~Kimberly Rosa uses willpower and fights just to stay alive in "Adrenaline: A Hitchhiking Story."~~

Keep in mind that most women are attacked by men whom they know, and who are mostly sane. This, of course, does not mean their actions make sense. ~~Men in this country grow up with a horrible burden of negative ideas about themselves and about women, some of which they may act out in a rape. Some of these ideas are fostered by the multi-billion-dollar violent pornography industry—which makes more money than the record and concert industries put together—from the idea that women enjoy sexual humiliation and pain.~~

In reality, many women attacked by people with weapons do escape, although if the weapon is used, the degree of injury is sometimes greater. Yet even women who are injured get away with their lives. Survival does not always mean beating your attacker into the ground. Sometimes it means running. Or hiding until he goes away. Often it means verbally negotiating yourself into a safer position: "If you just put the gun down, I'll do anything you want." After he puts it down, you can make your move.

We recommend that women take classes specifically labeled "self-defense" to learn practical, immediately useful skills. ~~Please see "So~~

What Do I Do Now?" or "Self-Defense Programs," pages 255–292, ~~for more information.~~

Half of defending yourself is sizing up the situation at the outset. How dangerous is it? Is there more than one person? Is a weapon visible? Or is the person who you think is following you just another woman or man hurrying home from work? Many women don't want to look. We are afraid to acknowledge that an attack might really be happening to us, not just to some actress on television. We try to ignore the potential danger, in the hope it will go away. Unfortunately, this sometimes means ignoring vital information in life-threatening situations.

All the women in this section use finely attuned assessment skills to size up the situation, and to prepare an appropriate defense to meet it. Sometimes there seems to be no time at all to see what is going on, yet there is enough to effectively fight back. There is often more than one chance, or opening, and it is important to stay calm enough to see it and take it when it comes.

In "Testimony of a Welfare Mother," Juana Maria Paz flees a life-threatening assault by her husband to build a new life for herself and her children. Over the past ten years, women's shelters have made escape for battered women more possible, although not easy. The dynamics of love and violence are complex, and, as in other attacks by known people, make "defense" more difficult. Often the dependence is financial and emotional, and the ties include common children. The recovery of self-esteem by a woman who has been battered is a major triumph.

Cindy Nakazawa's story, "Asian, Female, and Fierce," shows how a small woman learns to overcome what the police describe to her as a particular vulnerability in appearance. Asian women have often been stereotyped as fragile and exotic, but Cindy has a fierce fighting spirit, and years of aikido training to back her up. She has been attacked several times, and shows wit and understanding of the psychology behind the attacks, as well as physical prowess.

Claire Trensky, the national judo champion in "Does He Know Who I Am?," actually thinks of martial arts techniques during the attack. But it is her determination to protect her sister and nephew that impressed us as well. Many women say that they feel they would do anything to protect a child—but each of us is someone's child.

Marsha Hamm ("If at First You Don't Succeed . . .") ~~uses her weight to her advantage and summons help, even while her attacker~~

holds a jagged piece of window glass at her throat. Her sense of humor definitely helps her survive.

Group attacks may be planned, but are less likely to come from organized gangs than from impromptu groups of boys or men who are friends out drinking, perhaps daring each other to “go get a woman.” In “Here Comes the Macho Woman . . .” Dora Gonzalez is confronted by a group of buddies at a party, who are totally floored by her physical defense.

In another group attack, Rashida, in “Battle in the Cemetery,” uses a tremendous physical defense, first stunning the man closest to her, and then the next closest one, effectively dealing with the most dangerous threats first. She explodes into action and then flees, faster and more determined than her would-be kidnappers.

“Waiting for a Chance” by Leslie Bandle is difficult to read for several reasons: the attack is protracted and terrifying, and the story involves the issue of racism and feelings about race. Leslie is a survivor, and ultimately uses her wits and senses to avoid being killed.

Despite the severity of the situations you’ll read about in this section, all of these women are alive to tell the tale. The key to their successes was often the variety of defenses they tried—from verbal, to physical, to wielding weapons themselves. Even the most confirmed skeptic will find these stories inspiring.

Here Comes the Macho Woman . . .

Dora Gonzalez

Dora Gonzalez is a Spanish-English bilingual teacher who works with four-year-olds, mostly from low-income families in California. One of her goals as a teacher is to try to be a model of a strong woman.

“There was a little boy in one of my classes who was really angry with me because I went swimming in the ocean. He said women aren’t supposed to be swimmers, they aren’t supposed to do anything like that. He told me that when he grew up he was going to cut my arms and legs off, and then he was going to swim out further than I had. This was a four-year-old boy.

“That’s the attitude some children have about women, but then they learn differently as they observe me and what I do within my job. I run and I race with them; that’s showing that there are women who can speak Spanish, who can also swim, who can also run, and who can be very loving and nurturing at the same time.”

As told to the editors in an interview: Santa Paula is a small town in Ventura County, California, where I went to high school. It’s a town known for high-schoolers—all the action happens around the school and the kids. There are a lot of parties, where people get drunk and rowdy. It’s the kind of town where kids like to fight.

One night, my cousin Victor and I went to my friend’s house for

Coming Out Alive

Py Bateman

Py Bateman is one of the best-known women in the United States self-defense movement. She is the founder of the Feminist Karate Union (FKU) in Seattle, Washington, and was chief instructor there from 1971 until 1984. She is the director of Alternatives to Fear, a nationally known self-defense organization, and is the author of the self-defense manual *Fear into Anger*. She has dedicated sixteen years of her life to fighting violence against women.

On May 26, 1984, Py Bateman was assaulted in her home by a man who tried to kill her. What follows are two letters she wrote to her former students at the Feminist Karate Union, and to other women in the martial arts after the attack. Since the time of the first letter, her attacker was convicted.

12 June 1984

Dear Sisters,

As many of you have already heard, I was assaulted in my home some time ago. I am recovering rapidly, and am now out of the hospital. Let me just go over the events of the assault for those of you who have not heard, or who have heard rumors.

It was Saturday afternoon, May 26, around 1:30 P.M. I was on my way home after running an errand. As I walked up the back stairs to my house, a man who had been hiding in a corner of my porch grabbed me by the hair and immediately began to cut around my eyes with a knife. (Luckily, there has been no injury to my eyes themselves

and my vision has returned to normal.) He forced me to unlock the door and let him in.

Once we were inside, his level of violence escalated. He tried to put the knife to my throat. I caught the knife as it was coming toward me and took it away from him. The knife fell to the floor at that time. Then I kned him in the groin. He doubled over and fell on top of me, then got me by the neck and dragged me upstairs. I became concerned because he was not leaving, and began to be less conservative in my defense; I hit him. He hit back, and we fought all over the house. He outweighed me by ninety pounds and was fourteen inches taller than me. Many injuries were sustained during this fight—the cumulative effect of repeated blows, rather than one good blow.

A friend came to my house about thirty minutes after the assault began, and I now believe that he left because she scared him away. Due to her clear thinking and fast action by police and aid units, I was taken very quickly to the hospital. There I underwent plastic surgery for the damage to my face and brain surgery for a subdural hematoma, or swelling under the skin over the brain.

In addition to the fantastic support network that sprang up here in Seattle to take care of not only the practical details but also to give support to me as I'm recovering, there have also been cards and letters from around the country. It has been tremendously heart-warming to hear people's good wishes and concerns—and their own experiences and struggles.

My recovery is going very well and there is no expected permanent damage, to my eyes or my brain. In the time that I've been recuperating, I've done a lot of thinking about what happened and what it means for women in the martial arts and the concepts of self-defense.

At first I was sorry that I hadn't defended myself to the point that I had no injuries, as in my favorite fantasies. But then I thought about how he used the knife, so deliberately and quickly. And how I responded with some pretty risky moves when he put the knife to my throat. So I decided that I had done pretty well—in fact, saved my life by fighting.

My training—and the years I've spent teaching—served me well during the assault. There were a few seconds at the beginning when my mind was simply coping with the reality of what was happening. But after that, my mind was busy with plans for ending the attack. I was thinking the whole time, never overcome by fear. That has to be a result of my training.

Also important was a commitment to our approach to self-defense. We have always stressed determination as important, and it was determination that kept me fighting—and thinking—when he didn't give up, when he escalated the violence. Another factor, one that we didn't know so much about, was biology. I never felt any pain while I was fighting. Not even when I cut my hand grabbing the knife by the blade. My consciousness was dominated by the determination to come out alive and my plans for how to do that.

In addition to coming to grips with the difference between my hopes for myself standing over an assailant's inert body and the reality of the grim struggle, I had to think of whether we had been wrong to say that most attackers are easily scared off by an effective resistance.

I had to remind myself that one individual's personal experience, no matter how powerful, does not change what we know about violence against women. This man's level of violence was at the extreme end of the scale, as was the extent to which he was willing to continue despite my calls for help and my fighting back.

We have not been wrong in predicting that most assailants would give up in a struggle; we have the research that proves that beyond any individual experience. Even the police, who in many ways are not the most enthusiastic proponents of self-defense for women, are convinced that my assailant was one of a minority of criminals whose main goal is to hurt or kill someone, and who don't respond the way "normal" criminals do.

This realization, plus the cards and letters I've had from women who have successfully defended themselves after taking a self-defense class or taking karate for some time, has brought me full circle from doubt to a renewed commitment to the work I've done over the past thirteen years. [Letter ends.]

Spring 1986

Dear Sisters,

My assailant was captured two months later. He was apparently inactive for about six months. I hope it was to recover from getting hurt fighting with me. But then he started going after elderly people, attacking an eighty-six-year-old woman and her son, one other woman, and finally a woman in her mid-seventies.

It was this last woman who set him up for capture. She awoke one

morning to find him sitting on her chest, strangling her with a nylon stocking. She somehow got the stocking off her neck. She couldn't tell me just how, but she did. Then he began to beat her and gouge at her eyes with his fingers. She kept her head in the course of this.

Then she gave him her bank card and told him that he could get cash if he went to the bank machine. She told him which branch to go to. When he left with her card, she called the police. They staked out the banks in the area, and when he turned up at the one she had sent him to, they arrested him. What presence of mind she had!

The man pled guilty just before I was to go on the stand to testify, saving me that grief. He got twenty years for two first-degree assaults and three first-degree burglary charges. I found out later he was a heroin addict, and I feel I interrupted him in a burglary attempt. I feel he tried to kill me so I could not identify him, as he lived just beyond my back fence with his girlfriend.

I've become much more passionate about self-defense now. I realize that self-defense is more than just one other choice that a woman might have in response to an assault. It's a necessity. If I had not known how to defend myself last year, I would not be here this year. The level of violence this man presented me with is rare, but in some situations, if you don't have fighting back as a choice, you don't have any choices.

I used to be afraid of pushing self-defense too hard. Now I see it as the bottom line. I tried a fairly conservative approach, allowing the man a lot of time to give up and leave before I started attacking aggressively. I yelled for help, and tried to escape, until it became clear that there was nothing else I could do to stay alive. If I had it to do over, I would have started hitting much sooner.

I am no longer as conservative in what I teach. The techniques are the same, but my strategy has changed to no longer give the man so many chances.

Self-defense training is a vital survival skill. My training brought me many things—the excitement of competition, the striving for excellence, the fun of working out to the maximum, the friendships I developed with others. It is important for those things alone, but it also saved my life.

In strength and dignity,
Py Bateman

weapon (iron and knife). They did not convict him of assault with intent to kill or armed rape. The jury foreman stated to Leslie after the trial that they had believed her story, but did not want to put a young black man in prison for life.*

Mark has never been sentenced and is presently free due to technical problems in the criminal justice process preceding the trial.

*This verdict and the foreman's comment make us face troubling issues of race and racism in our society. The jury's decision must be understood against the backdrop of the racism inherent in the criminal justice system. In fact, we know from statistics that non-white men are convicted of rape at much higher rates than white men. See the Note on Racism (page xxvii) for more detailed treatment of this subject.

Asian, Female, and Fierce

Cindy Nakazawa

Cindy Nakazawa (a pseudonym) is a Japanese-American woman in her thirties, living in northern California. She holds a third-degree black belt in aikido, and teaches in several aikido schools in the San Francisco Bay Area.

"You don't have to learn a martial art in order to defend yourself. What's important is knowing when to fight and learning how to keep your mind calm in case of an attack. A lot of women can get that just from psychological training. Martial arts training is ideal because it trains both your body and your mind."

As told to the editors in an interview: The first time I was attacked I was about fifteen. I got off the bus and I was wondering if I should go to aikido training, or go home and take a nap because I was so wiped out. Then, bammo, all of a sudden this guy (I didn't even hear him, he had sneakers on) ran up and bear-hugged me from behind.

I was so tired that I just relaxed and bent over as soon as he hit me and he went flying right over me. I thought it was a practical joke, maybe my brother or somebody I knew. So I looked and I saw this guy on the street and I thought, That's weird, that wasn't my brother. He was looking up; I think he was just as surprised as I was. Then out of the corner of my eye, I saw another person coming and I thought, Jesus, I'm getting attacked. It's six o'clock in the afternoon and I'm getting attacked.

I was on a street corner, and nobody was getting out of their cars to say, "Hey, leave that lady alone." So I thought, Well, fight like hell.

The first guy was on the ground and I figured that he wasn't going to get up real soon, so I turned around and kicked the other guy in the stomach, which worked pretty well. I had a shoulder bag, and luckily that's all they wanted. The second guy yanked it away and they both started running and I figured they must not want to hang around and fight with somebody.

I had on platform shoes and I started running after them, using every foul word in the book. I was so mad that I started running to catch them, and that's when my better senses said, That's really stupid, for a purse. So I turned around and asked myself, Where are all the concerned citizens in this neighborhood? They're all just kind of driving by and watching, to see what happened.

When the police came, they said that two men who fit that description, about seventeen or eighteen years old, had attacked three other women that morning, but the men had beaten most of them up before they took their purses. Two of them were elderly, and were hurt and in the hospital. The other was another small Oriental like me. The policemen were wondering why I wasn't hurt and asked why I didn't get beat up.

I went back and told my teacher about it the next day and he said, "In two-person attacks, you have to use better sense. You should have taken the guy out on the street and then you would have had just one on your back." But he was real proud of me because I had not been hurt and I had used my judgment instead of running in there after my purse. That's when I decided not to wear high heels anymore, because I couldn't run or get my balance very well. I threw them away after that. I didn't like wearing them in the first place. In case I do get attacked again, at least I'll be able to do something other than just clomp along.

A couple years after that, I was working graveyard shift as an X-ray technician in a large hospital. I had always felt it was a little on the dangerous side, because the X-ray floor is totally isolated. It's open, people can walk in from maybe six or seven different entrances without ever being seen, and it's got all kinds of weird places and unlit rooms. I had to do everything in a darkroom, developing and running the film. The only other person on the whole floor was the radiologist, who slept in a locked room.

One night, I had just finished a case and sent the patient downstairs to the emergency room. I went back in to do my paperwork in the file room, and was sitting on a chair with other chairs right next to it. This guy, who must have been waiting in the file room, dropped a blanket on my head, grabbed my throat, and pushed me down on the chairs. The first thing that came to mind was, This is not Sid, the messenger, 'cause he wouldn't do that to me. And I heard this guy say, "Put your hands down by your sides." My natural reaction was to get my hands up to my throat because he was closing my airway, but he said to put my hands down by my sides.

So I said, "Fuck you, I'm not going to do that." I just grabbed his little finger and bent it all the way back to get him to let go. And I knew that I couldn't come up, because of the pressure coming down on my throat, so I'd have to go down. I kicked the chairs out from under me, fell onto the floor and rolled up in a ball. I was right in front of his groin, so I figured, I'm going for it. I punched him right in the balls, and he flew back about four feet into my wooden aikido practice weapons. I usually brought my wooden staff and my wooden sword to work because there was nothing to do except practice.

When he fell, the nearest thing that came sliding down was my sword, so I picked it up and started knocking at him. I went after him and he saw me coming with a stick, so he made a beeline out of the file room and I ran after him. He went behind a curtain into an emergency exit that no one would know about unless they had worked there. So I thought, This guy knows something about this hospital. I called security, and I was lucky that they were nearby; they got there within seconds. I showed them the exit he had gone through. Later, I found out that he had run all the way down through the emergency room and out.

This is what makes me mad—they did not catch the guy; he outran them. He just ran straight into Golden Gate Park. The security guards had city police helping them, but he just lost them in the park.

When the police were taking my report, they said, "Well, do you want to go to the emergency room to get checked out?" because they thought I might have been hurt. And I didn't even feel anything because I had been knocked around in training much more than this before. I thought, Well, my neck kind of hurts but it's fine, and I said, "I have to do the rest of my work. I have to finish my shift, it's only five o'clock and I have three more hours to go."

I didn't realize that there's a lot of psychological junk that happens

after an attack, until the police said, “We want to take down your report, so tell us what happened.” I . . . it’s really weird. I just started getting real shaky about telling people about it. Afterward, I thought, If he did have a knife, I would have been dead, or if he had had a gun, I might have been dead. I didn’t really want to talk about it for about a year.

My teachers said, “You can’t think about what might have happened, you have to think about what did happen and how you handled it and that, thank God, you’re not hurt.” It was just a very hard thing to go through. Not as much as if he’d gotten away with rape or something like that. I do have friends who’ve been raped and I thought, Thank God that has never happened to me. I get really angry, sometimes I think I would just kill the guy if I had a chance.

The police told me that I was in one of the very high-risk categories: small, Asian, and female. People kind of feed on that, because they associate Oriental with being submissive, and they look at small, that’s another check, and they look at female, that’s another check. So they automatically think, Easy. So if you are in that category of a small Asian female, I would suggest taking some kind of training, because it’s a hard world. I hate to say it, but we get preyed on, and unless you’ve trained your mind and your body to deal with that, then chances are one day you’re going to have to face some type of aggressive energy.

The police told me I probably have never been hurt because I’ve been very aggressive in my actions. When the attacker came in, all of a sudden he was faced with somebody who wasn’t going to give in. Attackers would much rather go for an easier mark, so they’ll just give up on you because they figure they might lose a body part.

There’s a woman who’s training with me now in San Francisco—she’s very small, a Puerto Rican girl—and the first time I saw her, she walked into the school and said, “Show me something that I can use on the street right now.” And I just looked at her and I said, “You know, there are women who have trained for seventeen years in martial arts and have not been able to handle themselves because within the first few seconds of an attack they froze. And if you don’t react immediately, chances are you’re not going to get away with anything. I can’t show you any tricks. All I can say is, if you train with me or with any good instructor, you’ll train your mind to react within a few seconds.” Martial arts are good for small people because they work on timing and on learning to keep control.

Aikido is a part of my life now, it’s something that I have to do to be satisfied with myself. That’s really the only competition there is in aikido—the one that you wage with yourself about what your goals are and what you want to get out of it. That’s another thing that I really enjoy about aikido, that there is no competition between persons.

You learn who you are and how strong you can actually be psychologically. When attackers feel that piercing quality in response to whatever they’ve put out, that makes them think a lot about coming back in. I used to be a real quiet person, very meek and very shy, and I think aikido has changed me quite a bit. Especially at work, I’m in much more command of myself and I know exactly what I do best and how to do it efficiently, so when doctors are being total jerks, when they come in and pull their trips and try to be dominant in my area, I just give it right back to them because I’m in control of the situation.

when it wasn't really necessary. But I didn't count on the plainclothes cop who came to the door the next morning. He told us that a young man had come to the emergency room with a severe human bite that required stitches on his right arm. Would my mother care to press charges?

My mother was angry at the whole situation, and at me for not telling her, but she decided not to press charges. She did not want to "make things worse." Although I never saw those men again, I am still angry that they got away with what they tried to do to me. I would never allow anyone to take my dignity and my control away from me now.

Does He Know Who I Am?

Claire Trensky

Claire Trensky (a pseudonym) grew up in Los Angeles. She holds a second-degree black belt in judo and has worked as a city bus driver for eight years.

"I never have any trouble on the bus, because I'm so tuned in to who's getting on. But I have had some vivid pictures in my mind of some guy reaching around to touch my breast and me breaking his fingers.

"The attack I describe changed my Pollyanna approach to life—always loving people and having so much good feeling for everybody. Knowing that I could have died was startling. It showed that I need to be more alert and maybe not so trusting. I need to be more centered and watchful when I'm in public."

As told to the editors in an interview: I was with my sister and her four-year-old son, Stuart, who was strapped in the car seat in the back. It was a Sunday afternoon, and we were parked in the Home Savings parking lot on Hollywood Boulevard and Edgemont. To use the automatic teller you have to park along the side street, shut off from the main street. Susan went off to get some money, and I was just sitting there in the passenger seat, singing and playing and chit-chatting with Stuart. We were playing this game where one person says "Yes" and the other person says "No," and you go yes, no, yes, no, and then trade.

A minute later, I saw this guy walking up to the car, casually, yet

with an aggressive manner. I wondered, What's this guy want? He walked right up to the door, which was partly open to let air in. He didn't stand back a few feet and say "Excuse me," as if asking for help. I thought, What's going on? Maybe somebody's hurt and he needs some help. He was holding a paper folded over, and I could see this black handle sticking out, like an umbrella handle. He came right up to the door and said, "Don't do anything, I've got a gun."

My initial thought was, Well, show it to me. I didn't see a gun, only this sinister-looking black handle. The guy was looking around, giving off these terrible evil vibes, and I thought, This guy really means business and I'd better pay attention to what's happening here.

So I said, "What do you want?" in a small voice. And he said, "What do you think?," making fun of me. I thought, What are the alternatives here? What do I have to give this guy? Sex? Money? So I thought, Money, that's better. I reached in my pocket, and happened to have two twenties. I was glad because I thought, Well, forty bucks, that's pretty good, so I looked at him and said, "Here's some money." And he took it.

Just then my sister came walking around the front of the building, probably twenty feet from the car, and I looked over and he looked over. Then he opened the door, and took out a knife, and it was big—about a five-inch handle, a six- or seven-inch blade, serrated on the top with a silver shiny point. It looked really scary. He said, "Move over," and held it against my kidney on the right side. I moved over into the driver's seat and he sat down in the passenger seat with the knife in his left hand. I instinctively looked down to see how he was gripping the knife, because I thought, I have to get out of this, but when and how?

Technically, I knew how to get the knife away. That's because I've been two times national champion in judo kata (prearranged forms), and have nine years of judo training. So I was thinking, This guy is nuts. Does he know who I am? But I was also really scared and thought, This isn't like the martial arts practice hall. I decided it would be better to hang out, because my sister was there and my nephew was strapped in his car seat. I didn't want to do anything wrong. What felt right, especially with the point of the knife sticking in my side, was to do exactly what he wanted at that point.

There was some doubt in my mind whether I would survive. Then my sister came out. By this time, the situation felt really serious, and I thought, This is life or death. His eyes were shifting around. I tried

to look him in the eye and he would not meet my gaze. I was trying to contact him as a fellow human, but he wouldn't look at me. He was speaking with slurred speech, so I thought he might be on drugs. But he had pretty good coordination when he got in the car.

Then my sister came walking up and I tried to tell her something with my face—to calm her. She said, "Hey, what's going on?" Later she said she thought it was some friend of mine from high school. Then she looked in and saw the knife sticking in my side. She's an RN, so she was thinking about my perforated liver. He seemed to know where to put it, right under my ribs. It wasn't under the skin but poking, constant pressure, enough so that my entire focus was on it. Her face was totally drained, and she almost screamed, but she said softly, "Don't hurt my sister, don't hurt my son," sounding lost and real scared.

"Give me the money," he said, gesturing. She had seven twenty-dollar bills in her hand from the automatic teller machine. "Here. Don't hurt my sister and my son." He took it and said, "How much is it?"

"A hundred and forty."

Then he told her, "Go around to the other side of the car." When she started walking around the front of the car, he increased the pressure on the knife. I thought he might leave when he had the money, but all of a sudden he was pushing harder. And suddenly I thought, Oh my God, my sacred body, and my fear turned to rage. Something clicked inside me and everything slowed down, like underwater, slow motion. Time stood still and I felt I could live or I could die right then.

I was lucky that the handle of the knife was about five inches long, and his hand took up maybe three and a half or four inches, so there was that extra handle sticking out from his hand for me to grab. His ring finger and his pinky were semirelaxed on the knife—he wasn't gripping it tightly. The way the handle was situated I knew I could get my hand on it and pry it out from between his fingers. That's a pretty common self-defense technique, and I'm glad I know it. So when that click happened, I shifted my body to get a little bit away from the point, and at the same instant I reached with my right hand onto the part of the knife that was sticking out past his pinky. It wasn't much grip, but it was better than nothing. I pulled, then I tried with both hands. He then pulled back and fought for a second. He didn't just let me take it away, although I used quite a bit of force.

When I went for that knife, I just focused on the handle—I hardly noticed the blade. He pulled it in front of himself, with both of his hands, and I yanked it with the thought, This is it, I've got to get it, there's no choice. So I got it. I don't think he got cut, and I know I didn't. Then there was a slight pause and I had this elated feeling—this really worked and I'm free, I'm safe now.

He opened the car door and ran fast. Meanwhile Susan was screaming, "Claire, Claire." She saw this struggle going on in the car and she thought he was stabbing me, so she freaked out.

I was so pissed off and so enraged, I opened my door and started after him. I dropped the knife on the floor of the car. There's no way I would have thought of using it on him.

I yelled, "Fuck you, you piece of shit, fuck you, leave us alone," to release all those feelings.

I thought, Well, maybe he does have a gun, maybe he's got some friends around the corner, maybe I shouldn't chase him too far. Then I thought, Let me go back and take care of the living, not take care of this jerk.

I went back to the car, and calmed down my sister, who was getting hysterical. I was still pissed off, though, and jumped in the driver's seat and said, "Let's go get our money." We went up the street where he went and drove really fast trying to find him, but it had been a couple of minutes and he was gone. We saw one guy get in a car and drive off and we thought, There he is, and we chased him for a few blocks and then lost him.

Susan said, "Well, let's not report it, it probably happens every day, it's no big deal," and I said, "No way, we're going to call this in. We've got to do whatever we can to get our feeling of power back, and maybe catch the guy, who knows?"

So I called 911 and told the story and the dispatcher said, "Now, let me understand this, you got the knife away? Is this a kid who attacked you?" I said he was probably twenty-eight years old, about five feet nine, 165 pounds. She said, "How did you do that?" And I said, "Well, I have a black belt in judo so I know technically what to do in that situation." She said, "Oh, I see."

My nephew was completely calm and silent through the whole thing. When he talks about it now he says, "Oh, the bad man, we got the knife away and he ran."

Part VI

Teamwork

Introduction

*We gotta fight back
In large numbers
Fight back
I can't make it alone
Fight back
In large numbers
Together we can make a safe home.*

Holly Near, "Fight Back"

One of the myths about being attacked is that it is necessarily an isolating experience. The classic TV or movie image depicts a lone woman, clicking down a dark alley in high heels and a dress that restricts her movement. Suddenly, she is attacked by a masked stranger, who more than likely is holding a knife to her throat. If she does manage to scream, no one hears her cry. Or if people are nearby, they are only indifferent bystanders.

The stories in this section are by women who called on the resources of other people to help them defend themselves or actively deal with the aftermath of an attack. ~~In the "Weapons at Hand" section, women used "found" weapons—ones that happened to be nearby—as well as intentional weapons that they consciously kept for use in a possible attack. Similarly, the women who use teamwork call on people who happen to be nearby, as well as friends and supporters.~~

An attack is always unexpected; but that doesn't mean your potential responses need be unrehearsed. Nobody wants to think about being assaulted. Violence is an awful reality of contemporary society, and it's understandable that we'd rather close our eyes to it. Yet, do you know what you and your best friend would do should you be attacked while walking down the street together? Certainly, you would want to present a united front to an attacker. Not that your responses can be mapped out and followed like a script when the moment arrives; your best defense is a flexible mind and body, armed with a repertoire of possible responses. Still, self-defense is also about being prepared. When you're with another person, there are two or more sets of possible responses—as well as two sets of limitations.

For instance, some women believe in nonviolence, while others would be willing to seriously injure or even kill in self-defense. It's important to talk about strategies with the people you spend time with. For instance, what would you do if a man walked up to you and tried to punch you? Maybe you would back up and then run away, while your friend would stand her ground, block the punch and punch back. If you live with other people, you may want to develop a strategy for self-defense in your home, too. For example, you can figure out together what might be the best escape routes, or how the various aspects of each room might be used to your advantage.

As in all areas of self-defense, there is no right or wrong answer. What is important is that you communicate with others and find out what your strengths and limitations are. Share your fears. Perhaps you fear attacks by gangs the most, while your friend is terrified by weapons. Not only can such discussions give you a good idea about what you can expect from each other; they also can break through the terrible fears we have about even imagining an attack. By visualizing an attack and your effective response to it, the attack loses some of its power. By imagining yourself and your loved ones actively resisting an assault, you can see a way out. Also, strategizing with another person can help you face your deepest fears and think of ways to work with and around them. Fear is a healthy response to danger, and can also be a powerful energizer—as long as it is *used* and doesn't freeze the mind and muscles. And even the most fear-inducing situations can be handled successfully. In 1985, two women in Placerville, California, "bit, choked and battered a rifle-toting man who robbed their campsite," according to Placer County sheriff's officials. There is safety and power in numbers.

What about bystanders? It's true that some people—particularly in

cities where they may see an enormous amount of violence in their daily lives—may not want to get involved if they witness an assault. You can't *expect* to be rescued by anyone who may be in the vicinity. But there are also modern-day hero stories about bystanders who leap to the aid of someone in trouble. ~~For instance, in January of 1985, the San Jose Mercury News reported that Monica Jones faced off an attacker who was about to rape a twelve-year-old neighbor in her St. Louis apartment building. "You don't think about getting hurt," she said. "If someone is getting hurt, I can't close my door."~~

There are also ways to encourage others to get involved. ~~D. P. and her friend in "Rounding Up the Campers" manage to mobilize an entire campground to pursue a man. They were direct in their appeal to other people; they simply said they had been assaulted and asked for help, and then gave others clear directions about what to do. In "Two Gutsy Women," Chris Weir and her friend don't get a response at first from their neighbors when they are assaulted at knife point on the street. Porch lights begin to go on, however, when they actually call their neighbors by name. That, of course, means that they took the time and effort to get to know who their neighbors were—an important community self-defense tactic.~~

If you are attacked, think about other women and how you can help protect them from assault. This may mean reporting to the police, or calling your local rape hotline and giving a description. Some organizations post "street sheets"—descriptions of attackers in the area that include the man's identity and address (if known), what he did, physical description, and typical "hangouts." The sheet may include a drawing or photograph of the man, and must be carefully worded so as not to include any information that might identify women he has assaulted.

In "Elevator Escape," Tamar Hosansky gets away from her would-be rapist, but realizes quickly that other women are at risk and takes steps to see that he doesn't escape from her apartment building.

There are other ways to get help from others:

- Yell "FIRE!" instead of "HELP!" or "RAPE!" Some people might be too afraid to get involved when one human being attacks another, but most people are willing to do whatever they can in a fire—especially if it's in their building. It doesn't matter what you yell—just get their attention, then tell them what you need them to do.
- If you're in trouble on the street, run to the nearest house or place

of business. Bang on the door and let the people inside know you need their help. Again—say and do whatever works to get you in the door. If the people inside are reluctant to let you in, encourage them to call the police.

- Make a scene. Your life may be at stake, and this is no time to observe the rules of polite society. If you're on the highway, you could run into the street and flag down a car.
- Make a house self-defense plan with the people you live with. Plan your escape routes, talk about what you would do if you got separated, think about your potential weapons and whom you might go to for help in the neighborhood. Keep a list of important phone numbers in an accessible place.
- If your attacker is someone you know, or even a member of your family, talk about it with others afterward. Tell your family, your friends, his friends. Let them know you won't tolerate what's happened, and ask their help in supporting you. If you're being harassed at work, talk with your co-workers. You may not be the only one who's experiencing trouble.

The last tactic mentioned above strikes at the very heart of an attack. Men who assault women don't want attention from other people; they want to do their dirty deeds in isolation, hidden from the eyes of society. That's why *confrontations*—a type of *planned* teamwork—are so effective.

A confrontation, simply explained, is a time for a woman to go with a group of supporters and tell the man who attacked her how she feels about it, and what she expects from him in the future. She tells him he will not get away with this again, that the community knows who he is and that he is being watched. The point is to empower the woman who has been attacked, and to deter the man from raping or assaulting again.

Anti-rape groups who help women organize confrontations often notice that they don't get repeat calls on men who have been confronted. In fact, in one case in Santa Cruz, the man's lawyer called the rape hotline to see if his client was behaving himself. The lawyer reported that the man said the confrontation had been one of the most profound experiences of his life, and that he intended never to do it again.

A typical confrontation works like this: A woman who has been attacked gets together with a group of friends, family members, co-workers, and/or other supporters. Together, they plan a way to con-

front her assailant. As in Nikki's story, "~~The Confrontation,~~" it may take place in public—say in a restaurant or at his workplace. The power of a confrontation is twofold: it allows the woman to express her rage in a safe context, and it makes the man publicly accountable for his actions to his community—his peers. Ideally, the man should be confronted by people who know him, and to whom he feels responsible. ~~Young children can confront adults. Women can confront attackers on the telephone, in their workplace, or at school.~~

Peer approval and disapproval are powerful behavior modifiers. In some other societies, such as China, community involvement in crime prevention is commonplace. In some parts of West Africa, women were and are the hut builders. If a man raped a woman, the women of the community would tear down the hut of the offending male. In our society, in which people are less involved with their communities on a day-to-day level, confrontations are a way to break down the isolation that helps make our lives so dangerous.

A confrontation is planned down to the minutest detail, all with the approval of the woman who was attacked. Before the confrontation takes place, everyone in the group decides how they will act and what they will say. It's very important that everyone understand what to do if, for example, the man tries to flee or becomes violent. One person needs to be responsible for grabbing his left arm, one for his right arm, one for his left leg, right leg, and one for his head, in case he threatens to hit or grab someone.

But confrontations generally involve little or no physical contact; most men who are confronted are too surprised and chagrined to react. And because a confrontation is brief—usually ranging from a few minutes to a half hour—the group is gone before he can formulate a plan to escape or hurt someone.

In most confrontations, the "confronters" are all women. This counters the myth that an assault on a woman can only be avenged by a gang of vigilante men—while the wronged woman stays at home, unable to contribute to her own defense. Supportive men can wait in the wings, perhaps distributing leaflets with the man's name, address, physical description, and the nature of his crime. The purpose of a confrontation is to empower the woman; it is *not* meant to be an argument between the attacker and the survivor. Nor should it be a forum for the man to rationalize his behavior. In fact, it's usually best not to let the man speak at all. The most powerful confrontations are brief and to the point.

An important result of a confrontation is that the attacker is no longer anonymous; he has been recognized, and he won't be able to get away with this kind of behavior again. ~~Bring this information home with concise, pointed statements: "We know who you are. We know where to find you. You can't treat women this way. We won't stand for this anymore."~~

~~Although you don't need an organization to plan a confrontation, you may want to talk to your local rape crisis group to get ideas.~~

There are many ways we women can band together to help take care of ourselves and each other. Some of those ways are discussed in the essay "So What Do I Do Now?," page 257. Take Back the Night marches (marches that happen at night to protest and draw attention to the fact that women feel particularly unsafe after dark), safe houses, and self-defense classes are all ways of breaking the traditional isolation surrounding women who've been assaulted. If you want to do something in your community and there are no organized groups, take the initiative and start something yourself.

There is another aspect to self-defense besides the actual response to the attack itself: the aftermath. When a woman is raped or assaulted, she must live with the scars for the rest of her life. But it's never too late to get help in healing the wounds. ~~In "Facing My Demons," Ann Simonton chose a self-defense class that would help her confront the residual pain and fear from her rape experience. She courageously chose teamwork over continued isolation.~~

We want to inspire you to break your isolation, too. Like the women in this anthology, you can share your stories with others. Get to know your neighbors. Talk about self-defense with your family and friends.

Here is one of the most popular Take Back the Night march chants:

*Mujeres unidas
jamás serán vencidas*

*Women united
will never be defeated*

Rounding Up the Campers

D. P.

D. P. has been working in the anti-rape movement for over twelve years. Recently, she has been involved in presenting the Child Assault Prevention Project to elementary school children.

The incident described here occurred the first time D. P. had been camping in almost ten years. It was also the first time in six years that her dog had gone swimming.

"There were two things I did that I didn't know I could do. One is yell. I'd been practicing it, but many years ago there was a situation where I really wanted to yell and hadn't been able to. So now I know I can yell. I also didn't think I was very good at running, but I was barefoot and I ran great, I ran really fast and I didn't run out of breath until after I was finished talking to the cops. Then I was exhausted."

As told to the editors in an interview: J. and I and my old dog had gone camping, and we were down at the river. I wanted to take the dog swimming, so I decided I would go back to our campsite and change into my swimsuit, which meant that I left J. watching the dog at the river. As I was leaving the beach area, I noticed a man standing back from there drinking beer. He seemed to be watching the women on the beach, so I was paying attention to where he was going and what he was doing. He started walking up the path behind me and I

Elevator Escape

Tamar Hosansky

Tamar Hosansky was born and raised in New York City. She took her first self-defense course when she was eighteen. Now thirty, she has been training in the martial arts ever since. She co-founded, along with two other women, the New York-based Safety and Fitness Exchange (SAFE). SAFE travels throughout the United States, doing personal safety programs for women and children. Along with Flora Calao, Tamar is the author of a children's self-defense book, *Your Children Should Know*.

“That’s really been my life commitment: to help people be safer and to help them recover if they’ve been attacked. Martial arts study helps keep me healthy and sane and helps me continue the work I’m doing. I don’t think I could hear the thousands of abuse stories I hear without letting it out on a punching bag.”

I was riding the elevator in my office building with one other person who was a messenger in the building. Somewhere in the middle of the ride, he just lunged at me. He screwed up his face like he was going for a kiss, but his expression was totally cold. I was wearing a skirt and heels and makeup, so I’m sure he thought that I was an easy mark and had no idea what he was getting into. I hit him in the chest to back him off so he wouldn’t grab me. I assumed that I was going to have to really take him out because we were trapped in a little tiny elevator. But he backed right off and said, “I’m sorry, I’m

sorry, don’t hit me.” I took a fighter stance and yelled, “Get off the elevator!” I kept pressing buttons on the control panel, and he kept saying, “Don’t hit me, don’t hit me.” I kept looking at him, thinking, You make one move and I’m going to really have to hurt you.

He got off the elevator and I rode up to my floor and got off. I became extremely worried that he was going to attack someone else who didn’t know how to defend herself. I ran into my office and sort of fell apart. My partner said, “We have to call security, we have to call the police,” and sort of got me functioning again. I called downstairs to building security. They locked the building and they asked me to come downstairs and identify him on the way out, which I did. They held him there until the police came. The police really couldn’t do anything because he hadn’t put his hands on me. I hit him before he touched me, and he hadn’t said anything like “I’m going to rape you, I’m going to kill you.” But they did tell me later that he was on parole for something, so I asked that they tell his parole officer what had happened.

There was a series of elevator attacks in midtown-Manhattan office buildings a couple of years ago. It really scared people because a lot of people have this idea that midtown is safe; if you’re in a business area, you’re in some kind of safety bubble. I think the man had a knife and he was raping women. A number of the women got away by screaming. When they screamed and they made a scene, he apparently took off. There were a number of media reports about these women getting away—which is unusual, with New York media, anyway. A similar situation for suburban women is parking garages, which are trapped spaces similar to elevators.

It was an extraordinarily dangerous situation, being inside the elevator with somebody who could be armed. A friend told me not to underestimate the effects of the attack. Even though I defended myself, there were some traumatic effects afterward.

I had defended myself before verbally, but I had never had to hit anybody. It certainly helped me believe in what I was teaching. I responded without fear and with the certainty that I was going to handle the situation no matter what it took—that I wasn’t going to let him rape me.

Two Gutsy Women

Chris Weir

Chris Weir was born in New Jersey in 1952, the second daughter in a blue-collar family. After college, she worked as an elementary school teacher and a community organizer. Chris has recently begun a new career in computer science and is active in local politics and gay rights issues. She says she may be "the only lesbian who doesn't like cats, but I am partial to chickens."

"My self-defense experience is minimal: a few one-day workshops and a summer of judo lessons. Learning to say no was the most important lesson I learned. Whether it's asking the person at the next table to stop smoking, or confronting verbal harassment on the street, saying no is the best first step we can take."

It had been a fine afternoon Christmas party—warm with friends and laughter and good food. Sally and I declined a ride home. By six o'clock, the rain had slowed to a light drizzle and we wanted to walk the three blocks to our house.

After crossing the busy main street, we linked arms and continued our walk through the dark and deserted medical complex that flanks the access street to our block. Stepping out from the lighted walkway to a dark stretch of road, we saw a figure walking toward us silhouetted in the streetlight at the end of the block. Continuing our talk, I speculated vaguely about which of our neighbors the person might

be, and started to veer to one side of the street so he could pass on the other side. He didn't veer away. He came directly up to us. I thought, Oh no, this guy's going to hassle us for being lesbian and walking arm in arm. What will I say now?

Instead of delivering the expected insult, he suddenly grasped my arm, brought something up to my stomach, and said, "I have a knife." Sally let go of my other arm and jumped a few feet away. While part of my mind was trying to figure out a way to reverse time and do this walk a different way, another was deciding this must be a robbery, and the way to handle it at this point was to treat his actions as something short of ridiculous.

"We don't have any money," I stated, in a tone that implied he wasn't too bright to have chosen us, that we were too poor to be worth robbing.

"I don't care. Get over there," he said quietly, motioning with his head to the overgrown bank of ivy that bordered the road. Oh, I thought, as I felt my body go still with fear, it's rape. What do I do now? Do I go along and hope I don't get too badly hurt? NO! I emphatically rejected the idea. In the back of my mind, I could hear snatches of a talk given by a woman from Women Against Rape, saying that resistance works most of the time, that fighting back is usually successful. I thought he just might stab me right here in the street for resisting, but I knew I'd be hurt if I went anywhere with him. I was not going to let him take me into the bushes without a fight.

I took a deep breath. "No," I said. Summoning up my best authoritative schoolteacher tone, I continued. "I won't do anything you want me to do. I am not going anywhere with you. This is my neighborhood and you can't get away with this. I'm going to yell and people are going to come out. You'd better get out of here right now. Go away! Leave us alone!"

Sally picked up my cue and joined in the assertion that he had better leave. I knew Sally was probably considering running for help, just as I was considering asking her to do so. But I needed her there to help me continue my offensive. She was a part of my strength, and a touchstone for the reality that we were going to get out of this. In the five years we had been together, we had gotten through some tough times. Our trust in each other, and familiarity with each other's responses and attitudes, made us good partners. We would get out of this.

He motioned with the knife and told Sally to move over with us, but she kept away and circled behind him, continuing to talk, distracting him. He tried to pull me to the side of the road, but I refused to go. He didn't seem to know what to do. I decided it was my turn to move. I wanted to get near the streetlight I could see over his shoulder.

"I'm not taking any more of this," I told him. "I'm leaving." And I moved toward the light, and into the knife. He backed away, and let go of my arm.

But it was not over. Moving to my side, he took hold of my other arm to walk beside me, and transferred the knife to his other hand. That was the first time I really saw the knife—a six-inch hunter's blade. I kept walking, kept telling him to leave.

When I got close to the lighted area, I again said, "I won't take it anymore," and jerked my arm out of his grasp. This time he stepped back several feet, and now that we had some space between us, I was ready to raise my voice and really yell. While he was so close to me, I hadn't wanted to startle him with loud shouts or quick moves. But now Sally and I both started to call loudly for neighbors to come out, that there was a man out here with a knife. He started walking quickly down the street, and we followed, shouting after him. We never did call out for help. We both kept on the offensive, choosing to snarl at him rather than show vulnerability.

Now he was looking like he wanted to get away very quickly. When Sally yelled, "There's a man with a knife out here!" he turned and lunged back toward us with the knife pointed at us again. We decided we needed to approach the neighbors more directly, since no one had showed up yet. We yelled the names of specific people, and porch lights began to go on. The man took off running. We ran screaming after.

When people came out, I slowed down, overwhelmed with relief that it was over. It was over, he was almost gone. But Sally was still chasing after him, angry now that he was going to get away. She finally stopped and came back when he turned a corner and headed into a deserted warehouse district. People were out on the street, and now the fear and tears started pouring out as we told what had happened.

Sally and I held on to each other, terrified of what could have happened, and amazed at how we had saved ourselves. We had done

it well, we had fought back, we had chased him out of the neighborhood. We said no, and it worked.

As a postscript to this account, I'd like to add that the man was caught, and convicted to fourteen years in prison. He had been out of jail only months when he attacked us, having served six years for multiple rape charges. When his defense lawyer argued for the minimum sentence, since he had not actually committed rape, the judge snapped back that he should hardly be rewarded for failing in his attempt just because he had "run into two gutsy and determined women that night."

Part VII

Life Strategies and Self-Defense Tips

Introduction

In this last section of *Her Wits About Her*, women share what they have learned about self-defense from a variety of life experiences. The tips they give will be useful to any woman, not only in violent attacks, but in everyday life. Their courage in choosing strategies that help them survive extends to more situations than sexual assault.

These stories range from the practical to the philosophical. Joan Joesting gives us "Ten Commandments: How Not to Get Raped When Bicycling Alone" from her years on the roads of the United States and Australia. Donna Sirutis, in "A Groundhog with Gumption," reflects on general principles to keep in mind when faced with danger. As an "older woman," she encourages others to study self-defense and martial arts.

Patricia Searles, in "Showdown in the Corridor," shares a wonderful tale about using intuition. Her self-defense instructor's tips and strategies echo in her head as she faces a potentially dangerous attack on campus.

Life experience comes from many sources, and every woman who has been attacked has learned something unique about survival. Most women have experienced powerlessness or have been warned by well-meaning friends to take precautions that limit their freedom. But humans are risk-taking animals, and in order to live a fully human life, women act in free ways.

Women who take risks and are raped are accused of provoking or even wanting attack. Yet even women who do all the "right" things, wear the "right" clothes, stay indoors at night, and depend on men

to protect them, get attacked. The truth is that no woman, no matter what her life-style or sexual activities, wants to be brutalized or to live in constant fear.

Some women are at higher risk because attackers view them as less able to defend themselves. Two women who fall into this category are Sandi Collins ("Self-Defense on Wheels"), who lives in a wheelchair and has defended herself while sitting in it, and Autumn ("The Getaway Bike"), who has cerebral palsy and is differently abled as a result. They share ideas about learning self-defense for women with disabilities.

In "A Test of Faith," Barbara Richmond is attacked by a mob that sees her as an outsider and an enemy. This is not a sexual assault, but one that happens because of a clash in ideas. The calmness that Barbara musters typifies the "eye of the storm" feeling many women in this book have experienced when their intuition starts working.

Women in this section did not turn away from suspected dangers, but took concrete steps before and during the assaults. Tips and strategies can be picked up from friends who have used them, from self-defense or assertiveness classes, and from the authors in this book. One can never learn too much about stopping an attack—the more options open in your mind, the more likely you will be to find the most useful one when the time comes.

You can rehearse successful self-defense with your eyes closed or with your friends, so that strategies will come as second nature. Many women defend themselves using good common sense, but there's no law against improving our common sense. The resource section and bibliography of this book can give you additional ideas.

Her Wits About Her was written not only to be good reading, but to directly improve your chances to escape if you are attacked. We believe that there is always an opening, always a chance for escape, from even the most threatening situations. We hope all of you will use your wits, and the ideas here, to devise creative responses that will keep you strong and safe and free. Remember that self-defense is a flexible, living set of choices, not one or even ten techniques. Keep your choices open and do whatever works. Good luck! Fight back!

Showdown in the Corridor

Patricia Searles

Patricia Searles is an associate professor of sociology and women's studies. She is also a certified self-defense instructor. Her most recent research has focused on sexual assault, rape law reform, the self-defense movement, and pornography. In the spring of 1980 she decided to begin self-defense training. She wanted to reduce the daily fear and insecurity she felt living as a woman in a violent society. She also thought that self-defense training would improve her skills as an educator.

"I had no idea, however, how significantly the study of self-defense would transform my concept of self and my sense of personal power, strength, and independence.

"I had been working for years to help women understand how traditional education has devalued and obscured women's history and experience, but what self-defense taught me in a very personal, firsthand way is that I have 'learned the lessons of patriarchy in my muscles and sinews, as well as in my mind and soul' (Emily Culpepper, Womanspirit, Summer, 1976)."

After attending a lecture on campus one evening, I decided to drop in on a friend of mine who was working late at the office. I was excited by the lecture I had heard—a feminist interpretation of some Biblical passages—and I couldn't wait to tell Nan about my discovery. Nan and I had offices in a long mazelike building that was

Self-Defense on Wheels

Sandi Collins

Sandi Collins contracted polio when she was three years old. She uses a wheelchair. Sandi took a self-defense class for physically challenged women in 1986.

"I'm not a stick-in-the-mud stay-at-home, that's for sure. I'm a mother even though they said I could never be one. I live in the country even though it's a lot easier in the city, because I have more fun out here in the country. I'm a lousy housekeeper, but it's not because of my disability, it's because I hate housekeeping.

"My best defense has been a good story line. I enjoyed the self-defense class I took. I had thought about some of the techniques before, but I wasn't sure exactly how to do them. I used to read books about self-defense, but it helps if you actually have somebody there showing you that it really does work, even in a wheelchair.

"I ran into one of the other girls who took the class in the grocery store. She asked if I'd been attacked. I said, 'No, have you?' and she said, 'No, darn it!'"

As told to the editors in an interview: I had polio when I was three, so I grew up with a disability. My legs are very weak. I can use my right leg very little, mostly just for steering my chair. My arms are weaker than an average person's, except for certain muscles that I use all the time. There's a lot of people that I know who don't have

any use at all from the waist down, but they're really beefy from the waist up.

The first time I ever had trouble was with a guy who decided he was going to go a little farther than I wanted to go. I was really in need of love right then, but I didn't want that kind of love.

We were in his trailer, and he offered me a drink. I said no; at seventeen I didn't drink. He just kept talking and the next thing I knew he was behind me with his hands down my shirt. I started talking a lot.

I pretended to be very well experienced, like I was really a girl about town. I said I had gotten an infection from the last guy I was with, darn him, he was just such a louse, and I talked and talked and talked. And I said you don't want this infection, I'm broke out right now so you don't want any part of this.

I told him he was really a neat guy but I just didn't want him to get any of this thing that I had, and I sort of flattered him up a bit like I didn't really want to leave but I didn't think he really wanted to have my problem. And he let me go.

I didn't really know anything at all about herpes or VD, but I sure faked it a lot. That got me out of that one. I learned a little about men and what you say and what you don't say.

The other time that I really had a problem I was at the store where I worked. It was really early, like seven in the morning, and I was trying to catch up on some paperwork. The boss had been gone and it was about time for her to get back, so I had to get caught up.

I was in the front of the store behind this tall counter when I heard the back door unlock. I assumed it was the other girl who worked with us, and so I didn't pay much attention. I was wearing a scarf at the time, a bandanna, and the next thing I knew somebody had a hold of the scarf and was choking me. He shoved me out of my chair, and put my arm in an armlock. My right arm is double-jointed, so when he put me in the armlock, I just let him do it and then I grabbed hold of his *gasmachis*.

He let go of the scarf for a little while and I thought I'd finally gotten loose, but then he grabbed my scarf again and got into a different position so that I couldn't reach him. But all he was interested in was cash or whatever he could find.

The worst part was that he stuck an old, dirty, yucky paint rag in my mouth, so I couldn't holler for anybody. I was spitting paint chips for days after that.

Since then, the only person who's ever tried to pull my wheelchair over is my husband. When we get in a good knock-down, drag-out fight about once every four or five years, he tends to turtle-ize me; he takes my wheelchair and tips it back on the back wheels, and from that position I'm sort of stuck. I can get out of the wheelchair, but I'm definitely down on the floor at that point. I've also had friends turtle-ize me just for the heck of it, you know, just being smart. It's a very vulnerable position.

If I've got my feet straight up in the air and I'm on my back, I can't use my legs to kick, unless I'm on my side. If they're just holding on to my feet, I can't get out of the wheelchair by turning one way or the other, I'm stuck. That is a really good way of corralling me. It definitely gets my attention. I do have the use of my arms, though.

Recently, I took a self-defense class for disabled women. It gave me a lot of ideas about things I could do. Before I took the class, I always wondered about what would work. Now I know what's effective. Like from down on the floor, I now know different ways of disabling somebody. If I get in that position again, I know how to get them down on my level. Once they're down at my level, I'm on more even terms with them. As long as they're up above me and taller than me, I feel considerably at a disadvantage.

If I had to give advice to other women in a wheelchair, I'd say: Take a self-defense class so you have some confidence, and then think about it ahead of time. If you were in a dangerous situation, what would you do? Become a good liar, a convincing liar. In the situation when I was a teenager, he wasn't sure whether I was lying or not, but he sure didn't want to take the chance. It was very effective. But if I were to be in a situation where there would be a need for physical self-defense, lying wouldn't be adequate.

For instance, in January I had a run-in with a neighbor lady who was being very obnoxious; she had my car blocked down at the bottom of the hill and she kept reaching in the car and I just kept pushing her hand out. At least I knew I wasn't going to get in trouble. She couldn't say I had started anything. So I left the area and drove to the nearest safe place, which just happened to be the church. I saw one of the head deacons down there. Otherwise, I would have headed to the fire station. I figured there was no way she was going to be able to start something in front of a bunch of big burly firemen.

Afterward, I thought of all these things I could have done. I could

have just stuck her head through my steering wheel and been through with it.

I don't take a lot of chances. Like I don't go shopping downtown with a purse hanging over my wheelchair. I usually have my credit cards tucked in a shoe or somewhere that isn't too visible. There have been times when I've been working at night and I've had to park the car someplace and go in my wheelchair; I'm very conscious of where people are. I'm very aware of where every crack is, where every curb is, where every rock is, you know, what's available as far as curbs. If you're trying to get away from somebody, it's a lot better to have a ramp handy than a curb, because a ramp will pick up your speed for you. And I watch for lights in windows in case I need help.

When I was a teenager, I used to do a lot of stuff just for the heck of it. Like go out at night and park as far away as possible from where I was going to be working. I used to take all sorts of chances like that that I don't take anymore. That little lesson there with the guy in the trailer really brought things home. I thought I was immune, you know, that in a wheelchair nobody would bother me.

believe this is happening, somebody is really taking me seriously and wanting to teach me this important thing. I took the class knowing that it was probably going to change my life. It was one of the hardest things I ever did, staying in there and feeling weak when I was punching the foam against the wall, but knowing that I needed to keep on with it until I felt strong.

On the street, I depend more on psychic energy than my physical body. I feel lucky that I haven't been attacked more than I have. I think it has to do with not focusing so much on my physical strength all these years and being spiritually or mentally oriented. My advice to another woman with a similar disability who wanted to learn self-defense would be just to do it and stick with it, using the methods that she usually learns anything else by. I had to go through the class step by step and break everything down. Like with the wrist escape, which is the only thing that I feel I learned well in the class, I had to first think about learning what to do with the arm and then, when I got that right, I had to just do the body movement and then the legs. That takes a long time. Usually, I think a disabled woman's process takes more time.

The special challenges I face because of the cerebral palsy include new situations and situations where I'm not sure how much comfort there is between me and someone I don't know very well. For instance, when I take a new class, especially if it's a physical class, I'm not sure how comfortable the teacher is with me and that usually makes me nervous. I feel responsible, as if I should be the one to make her comfortable with me. Last week, I started a T'ai Chi class, and I was really insecure and thinking, What am I going to do in here? I'm so incredibly ungraceful and you're supposed to move like everybody else and of course I don't and I'm really sad about it. I was just about to walk out the door when the teacher came up behind me and said, "You're doing really well and I hope you stay."

A Test of Faith

Barbara Richmond

Barbara was born in New York. Her journey has taken her throughout Latin America, where she lived for eight years. Her interests, concerns, and commitments revolve around peace and justice issues, with particular focus on Central America.

"Now when I hear about violence and beatings and forced confessions in Latin America, it's part of my own story. And it changed who I am.

"I have a sense now of the strength that is available to all of us, whoever we are and whatever situation we happen to be in. It's almost like the strength of all people's struggles are available to us, whenever we need to call on it."

As told to the editors in an interview: I had been in Mexico since 1966, and in 1974, when this incident happened, I started working near Temisco, not far from Acapulco. I was working with a movement called *comunidades de base*—basic Christian communities. It's a community-organizing tool that was started through the Catholic church in Brazil; the movement has spread throughout Latin America. Traditionally, the church in Latin American countries has been allied with the powerful, and the message a lot of people got was "You're poor now, but you'll get your reward in heaven." People used to be very much resigned to their fate in life. *Comunidad* is a way to create a kingdom of justice and love now.

We worked in the villages and got to know people, talked about what was going on in their lives, in the factories and in the fields.

I was there with a Chicana friend, Lola. Crisoforo was another friend—my *compadre*—and his two daughters were my godchildren. We were working with the priest in the area, Padre Morfim. There had just been some changes in the diocese. The priest who had been there before Morfim, Padre Cornello, had been there for twenty-seven years, and had been in cahoots with the local authorities and landowners in milking the people. If it was Holy Week, or a fiesta or Christmas, Cornello would go around collecting money, then just pocket it.

Padre Morfim was very supportive of *comunidades de base*. One of the first things he did was tell the people at Mass that during Holy Week, he did not authorize anyone to go collecting from door to door for flowers or anything else.

The *caciques*—the big landowners—were all furious, because they had done this for years and had collected a lot of money. They were determined to get Padre Morfim out and Cornello back there again so they could continue the way things had been for the last twenty-odd years. They started telling rumors that Padre Morfim was bringing outsiders into Temisco to take away the people's religion—that he wanted to destroy their way of being and their saints, that he was a Communist.

One night we were having a meeting in the church in Temisco. We were almost finished with the meeting when we heard a knock at the door. Before any of the five of us at the meeting could get up, someone burst in wearing a white shirt and a straw hat. I could see people milling around outside—men with this very serious look on their faces.

“What are you doing here?” the guy asked.

We told him we were having a meeting.

“Well, we're Catholics here,” he said, “and we don't want any of this stuff, we like our faith. We like our religion, and you're going to get in trouble.”

He was so strong about what he was saying. I didn't know him and I hadn't seen him before. It was very scary, because I didn't know what he was talking about.

“We don't want to run you out,” he added. “But . . .” And he went out and closed the door.

I thought, That's strange. I had a terrible feeling. I looked over at Padre Morfim.

“Who was that?” I said.

“Jorge Sanchez.”

At the time I didn't know who Jorge Sanchez was, but as it turned out, he was the head *cacique* in Temisco.

Padre Morfim said, “I think we better stop this meeting.” As we said a prayer that ended our meetings, I heard the church bell ringing. Jorge Sanchez had gone into the bell tower, and the bell was ringing, bang bang bang bang.

It was getting dark, and my heart was pounding. We walked into the street, and suddenly people started running. I could see people running down the nearby streets. There was a kind of buzz. I heard people talking, everybody was talking at once and coming toward us.

There was a crowd, but I couldn't tell how many people were in it. Later on, they calculated there were about five hundred people against the five of us. I really and truly didn't know what the hell was going on, but the feeling I had was just terrible.

There were crowds of people milling everywhere. We were about a half block from the road that goes to Acapulco. Buses went on that road. So I said, “Let's walk down.” I thought maybe we could get on a bus and get out of there.

A woman came toward me. “We're Catholic and we like our faith, and you can't take our faith away.”

I thought, What is she talking about? I had a Bible in my hand at that moment, and a notebook. I tried to talk to her, tried to ask her what did she mean, could she tell me what was going on? She was just so furious. There was an absolute rage going on among this group of people. As more people gathered, the anger escalated and then exploded. I started to feel rocks hitting me, and people were hitting me with sticks.

Right before we turned the corner, I saw Padre Morfim maybe ten feet in front of me. On one side of him there was a *campesino*, a man with *huaraches* and a straw hat, with one of those big machetes they cut sugar cane with, holding the machete over his head, and on the other side someone was sticking a gun into his side.

We went around the corner. My friend Don Lupe was sticking up close to Padre Morfim, and Lola and Crisoforo were next to me. As we got to the corner, I saw a store across the street with a light on,

and I said, "Let's go across the street." In other words, get away from the mob.

I thought I was walking across the street with Lola and Crisoforo, but as I walked across the street, I realized that only Crisoforo was with me. I turned around and looked and Lola was still across the street, walking with the mob, *in* the mob. We called her to come across the street. "Lolita, Lolita, *vente acá, vente acá!*" She wasn't that far away from us and we were screaming at her. She was just walking, walking, walking. It was like she couldn't hear or see. It was too much for her to face. Crisoforo and I looked at each other and just went back across the street, into the mob.

Up ahead we heard a gunshot. Someone came running back toward us, saying, "The priest shot against the people." Someone else said, "*Ustedes van a pagar.*" You're going to pay for it. People really started hitting and punching and grabbing us. They were knocking me off balance. We just tried to take people's hands off us. I tried to take people's hands off Lola. She looked totally dumbfounded, she didn't have any expression on her face. People were twisting her arm around up near her neck, and I took their hands and tried to pull them off. At one point, several people were choking me, and I distinctly remember opening my mouth to bite the person who was choking me, but then stopping. It was almost like there was something in me that said, Don't do it, because you're going to give them more reason to strike out. I remember that very clearly.

Suddenly, the realization hit me that they wanted to kill us. I wasn't sure why or how this had happened, but they were so angry that they were going to pull us apart right there on the street.

Then I saw a bus coming down the road. Someone yelled, "Get out of the way, a bus is coming." And one of the people who had me said, "*Qué bueno.*" How good that a bus is coming. Then they threw me down in the road in front of the bus.

I remember going down, then looking up and seeing headlights. I heard people gasp in the background. I was just trying to get my balance again and get myself up. The bus stopped about a foot away from me, and I know it was very close because when I went to get up, I put my hand on it to steady myself. I pounded on the door of the bus and yelled, "Let me in, let me in, they're trying to kill us." But the driver wouldn't open the door because he saw what was going on, and there were passengers in there.

All of these things happened in a split second. It was the kind of

situation where you don't have time to think, but there's just something that happens from within you. You just act, you just do what you have to do at that moment. I kept pounding at the door, and with my right eye I saw someone in a white car coming from the other direction, looking at this mob and hearing the shouts, going slowly. I started to run to my left to go around the back of the bus, hoping I would be able to meet that white car that was coming from the other direction. Just as I started to do that, I heard people saying, "*Mátenla, mátenla.* Get her, get her, kill her, don't let her get away."

For a very split second, I had that bus between me and the mob as I ran toward that car. The one thing I remember thinking at that point was, I hope the back door isn't locked. I ran over to the car, opened up the back door, threw myself in, closed the door and locked it, then told the driver, "Get out of here, step on it, get out of here."

I heard the thud of people landing on the car who had been running right behind me, to get me. The driver put his foot on the gas and took off, and as I turned around, I felt a surge of anxiety. I had left Lola behind, Lola and Crisoforo. I didn't know where they were.

As the car pulled off, I heard more gunshots and I saw, I actually saw, the explosion of guns going off. Here I was getting away, but I had left my friends. I didn't want to leave them, but I had to get some kind of help.

So here I am in the car and I'm talking and talking and talking and trying to think out loud, trying to center myself somehow. The driver was saying, "What happened, what happened?" and I was going over what had happened.

I saw a patrol car and I stuck my head outside the window and screamed at them to stop. Then I told the driver not to leave me alone until I knew the police were going to go back with me, and he said okay.

So I got in the car with the police, and they drove with me to a gas station. Time just seemed eternal. They had to have a Coca-Cola, they made a telephone call, they put gas in the car, all the time telling me to calm down. Finally, we went down near the government office. Sure enough, there was this whole mob of people down there. We pulled in, and when people saw this police car pull in with me in the back, they circled the car, still holding those clubs. They wanted to take me out and finish me off.

Then I heard a siren. I turned around and saw the Red Cross ambulance.

I wanted to go see what was going on and who was being put in the ambulance, but I couldn't get out of the car, because there were people right there with clubs wanting to get at me. Someone was being put into the ambulance, and people were shouting. I found out later that it was the priest, and the mob was still trying to finish him off. The ambulance pulled out, and so did the car I was in.

I realized at that time that I was holding my left arm. It turned out that my elbow was dislocated and my arm was broken. But I wasn't aware of it. When I look back on it, I was holding my arm like that the whole time, but I didn't feel pain, and it didn't stop me from running and doing the stuff I had to do.

Then one of the policemen said, "You're being accused by the people."

"Of *what*?"

"You are being accused of celebrating a Black Mass. These people said they went into your meeting and you were celebrating a Black Mass, and you were having sex with the priest, and there were drugs involved."

"Well, that's not true, that's not what we were doing."

"You have to tell the truth."

"I *am* telling you the truth."

"Well, I don't know, I've been told to come and get a confession out of you."

I had been in Mexico for eight years, and by that time I knew what that meant. That means you get beaten until you say what they want you to say. He pulled over to the side of the road, and we were at a place called Puerto de la Muerte—Bridge of Death. I don't know how it got that name and I don't want to know. We were on a mountain road in the middle of nowhere at ten or ten-thirty at night, it was dark, nothing else around. He stopped the car. I thought, I know I'm going to get beaten. In the front seat one of the police had this big piece of wood, a club. He got out of the car, came around the side, and opened the door in the backseat on my side.

It was an incredible thing, but at that moment I became calm. And I can pinpoint it to that moment, because I knew there was nothing I could do to get out of that situation physically. Up to that point, there was always something I could do. I could talk to someone, I could run, there was a car coming, I could get away, I could do this or that. But now there was no place I could go, nothing I could do.

My heart stopped pounding and this calm just came over me. I had the conviction inside me that I was *not* going to say we were celebrating a Black Mass and doing all those other things. I was not going to do it.

He told me to get out of the car, and I started talking again, but differently this time. Before, it had been this kind of frantic talking about what had happened. This time, I started talking in a much calmer way about the experience I had had in Mexico, that my experience had been so deep and so beautiful, people had been so good to me, and I had learned so much, that I had so many *compadres* and *comadres*. And I realized as I was talking that he was listening. He wasn't hitting me. So I kept talking.

After all this, I still had the Bible and my notebook in my hand.

"What's that book?" he asked me.

"It's the Bible." I opened it, started showing him that it really was a Bible.

He was looking at the Bible and he wasn't hitting me. So I kept talking. I was just groping at that point for things to say.

I was talking about the *comunidades*, and at one point I said, "*Muy pronto voy a regresar a mi tierra.*" Very soon I am going back to my land, my country.

"Where are you from?"

"I'm from New York."

"You're from the United States?"

"Yes."

It hadn't occurred to me to say that. You would have thought they would have known, but they didn't—maybe because of the dark, the confusion, and, sometimes to my credit and sometimes not, I spoke Spanish with the accent of the people from that area and even from that village.

"Do you have a passport?"

I had my visitor's permit with me, and I showed it to him. He stepped back, closed the door, went around to the front, sat in the driver's seat again, and said, "I didn't know. You'll have to forgive us. My people are fanatics." He apologized.

Right then a car came along the road, another police car. They opened the door and a little light went on inside, and I saw Lola and Crisoforo in the backseat. I grabbed a flashlight that was in the backseat and turned it on in my face so my friends could see I was okay

in that car. As it turned out, they thought I was dead, because the last time they had seen me was when I had been thrown in front of the bus.

Then they were put into the car with me. Crisoforo was badly beaten. Lola looked scared, but she didn't look beaten to me. They took us to police headquarters in the city, and they put us in a cell. I asked Crisoforo about Padre Morfim, and he said he had been shot and beaten. Don Lupe's head had been broken open with big rocks. They let us out of jail later that night.

A lot of good came out of all this. The priest is alive; he still limps, but he's okay. Two years ago, he left Temisco. He could have left right away, but he said he was going to stay. If he had left, it would have been admitting he was doing something wrong, and he knows he wasn't.

The bishop canceled Mass in the village; there was no religious service or Eucharist allowed. That had a tremendous impact on the people. He said, "It would be hypocritical to celebrate the Mass here. Mass is a living symbol of communion, of community and love among people, and that's not here in Temisco. When you show me that what you seek is community and love in the kingdom of God, then I myself will come and celebrate Mass with you again."

One of the things he required of the people was that they find out what our meetings were about. They had been told the meetings were Black Masses, but he said people should go and see for themselves.

Some people were advising me to call the American Embassy and try to get some protection, or try to get Jorge Sanchez thrown in jail. But I thought: Suppose we throw Jorge Sanchez in jail. Suppose we call on the American Embassy. I can call on the American Embassy to protect me, but what kind of example is that going to be for the people in that village? Who are they going to call on in time of need? Can they go to the American Embassy? Can they even go to their own local authorities? No. We have to give them the example that there are other ways to be powerful and that we don't have to always call on some big shot to help and protect us. If we throw Jorge Sanchez in jail and the people in Temisco remain ignorant about what was going on, any old Jorge Sanchez can come back and the people will believe him.

When I left, there were about four different meetings going on every week. Within a year, there were twenty-five. This whole event

sparked a lot of awareness. People realized how they had been exploited, how they had been lied to—for generations.

This episode wasn't something I would choose to have happen, but when I look back, it was an honor to have been part of something that was going to make people more aware of the oppression they had lived in and take some real control over their lives. My sense of faith in the struggle I'm involved in deepened a whole lot. I think it's one of those kinds of things where you either feel, Forget this, this is too scary and I don't want to do it anymore, or you just get totally convinced that this is what you want your life to be about. That's what happened to me.