

Celebrity bodyguard doles out words of advice

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Being a celebrity means never having to stand in line. It also means not being able to venture out alone.

Being Sharon Stone or Bruce Willis might be someone's ultimate fantasy, but the price of such high visibility can be harassment and risk.

What Stone and Willis have in common is that they both have been protected by Tom Muzila, one of the celebrity bodyguards paid to throw their martial expertise and, if necessary, their lives, between their clients and potential harm.

Muzila, a resident of Garden Grove, holds a Black Belt in Shotokan Karate and has spent the last 30 years of his life as a one-time Green Beret and graduate of elite military survival programs. He has also conducted weapons training programs for area police departments and

holds physical endurance records pertaining to Karate.

Muzila, 50, and in a shape that belies his years, has taught Karate and other forms of self-defense for more than 35 years.

For those of us, whose budget does not include a bodyguard, Muzila has a some relevant self-protection pointers.

"Attackers of any variety prey on the weak and the helpless. Many have an uncanny ability to spot weakness," he said. He remarked that through social conditioning, women all too often pre-cast themselves into the role of a victim. He advised to project an image of strength and purpose that includes visual awareness and determined movement. "If faced with a potential or real confrontation, make up your mind what you are going to do and then do it," he said. "Do not hesitate, because it is during that gray area that attackers successfully

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strike."

While self-defense training is a useful asset, he stressed that mental attitude is the first line of defense. "Positive self-awareness, awareness of surroundings and decisiveness are crucial," he said. Body language, facial expressions and eye contact also determine the outcome of encounters. He advised not to initiate eye contact with a potential adversary but if it occurs, not to flinch.

Regardless of his martial expertise, his own credo is to avoid confrontations whenever feasible. He admits to having become embroiled in enough brawls to support his stance. Both his observations and training have landed him minor roles or jobs as stunt consultant for action films ("Brilliant Disguise," "Deadfall," "Above the Law," among others.) But, if in film aggression reins, in reality the best offense is evasion. "If you think things might get rough, leave," he said.