

A LITTLE BLOOD SHOULDN'T SLOW YOU DOWN

BY JIM WAGNER

Throughout my career, military and police instructors have ingrained in me the idea that even if I'm wounded, I must never give up until victory is achieved. It has been a recurrent theme, whether I was participating in firearms training or a defensive-tactics refresher.

Unfortunately, when I watch civilian martial arts classes today, I see little, if any, consideration given to teaching

have never had to fight a criminal, so getting injured may not be part of their experience base. Second, they may be afraid of discouraging their students, so they choose instead to give them a false sense of security. Third, they may have convinced themselves that their system will defeat all foes, just like they see in the movies. Fourth, they know injuries can be sustained during an altercation but elect to advise their

niques and coping mechanisms to help you survive. Merely saying, "I'm going to keep on fighting no matter what!" is a good attitude to have, but you need practical training to make it work. Just like you have to hit a heavy bag or sparring partner to learn how to develop good punches, you must simulate various injuries to learn how to compensate for them.

One of the best aids for learning to fight when you're injured is stage blood. Its purpose is twofold: You discover how to deal with the physical properties of blood, which is slippery when wet and sticky when drying; and you get used to the sight of it, which reduces the shock factor when you see it all over yourself in a real conflict. I started using it in 1991 to train

A variety of plastic weapons and severed limbs can be combined with stage blood to create a more realistic training environment, says Jim Wagner.

law-enforcement and military personnel, and I've since had excellent results using it with civilians.

Everyone who's attended my Knife Survival course knows what kind of physical and mental impact stage blood has on training. One of the drills starts with a student standing in a corner. I pour the fluid over his hands, after which an "attacker" traps him against the wall and unleashes a series of simulated thrusts using a soft training knife—just like a criminal does with a shank. The student is usually shocked to discover how difficult it is to grab the assailant's wrists and arms when blood is present. Of course, that's exactly what it's like in a real knife fight. Blood will be present—and most likely it will be yours.

One of my New York instructors taught me another drill that I now use

students the adaptations they need to make to continue fighting while injured. Rarely do I even hear an instructor admit, "There's a strong possibility you'll get badly hurt in a self-defense situation, and here's how you should handle that."

There can be several reasons they don't share this reality with their students. First, the instructors probably

students to keep fighting without providing practical training in how to do it.

Time for a reality check. If you ever have to defend yourself against a real threat on the street, plan on getting hurt. Admitting that to yourself isn't a sign of weakness; it's a matter of accepting the likely outcome of a modern conflict. Consequently, you'd better make sure your training includes tech-

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