

## STREET WISDOM

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If you spend the first 25 years of your life as a ‘street kid’ living on the streets of the Bronx, you pick up a lot of wisdom and experience. This paper is a brief compilation of some of the different tactics that I observed and practiced which kept me alive.

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In the 60s, drug addiction became a major problem in the city of New York. Drug addicts would do anything to get a fix. At night, they would break into houses through the window or the door, and terrorize the people who lived there. One tactic recommended by the police, was to leave a \$10 bill out in clear view on a table near the door or window. The addicts, so driven by the need for a fix, would rush off and leave the apartment as soon as they found a \$10 bill. Therefore, there would be no confrontation with the occupants.

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If you got into a street fight with a mugger or a person you did not know, your life could be at risk. A little bit of Bronx, wisdom was preached to all the kids in the neighborhood so that they would know how to respond.

“It is far better to be judged by twelve, rather than carried by six”

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The construction rules in the city of New York are that if you had a five-story building or less you do not require an elevator. Once the building exceeded six stories in height, an elevator is required and children and young girls have to know how elevators operate and what to do to prevent an attack. If an elevator is going in one direction, it continues in that direction until it reaches a terminus. Muggers and rapists understand this idiosyncrasy of elevators and wait in the basement for any unwary young woman trying to take an elevator late at night up to her apartment. The mugger would wait in the basement and listen for a person walking in the hallway on the floor above. In 90% of the cases, the elevator had come down from an upper story to let somebody out in the lobby. Before the person would press the floor button, the criminal downstairs would hit their ‘up button’. Since the elevator had been coming down to stop at the ground floor, the criminal’s call

**from the basement is an override. The unwary woman, once the door closed, will be surprised to learn she was going down to meet a brutal felon.**

**The solution to this dilemma is as follows. The young woman entering a lobby late-at-night and going to an elevator should reach inside and press the basement button. Then step immediately out of the elevator. The elevator will then go down to the basement and reverse direction. She should then press the call button to go up and step back. If a person is in the elevator, run like hell. If no one is there, she can now safely step in the elevator and know that it will take her up.**

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**If you go into a local bar, restaurant or nightclub, the first thing you should do is check the ceiling. Look for bullet holes. If there are bullet holes turn around and leave. If there is a shooting or an altercation, they never repair the bullets holes in the ceiling. They replace the shot out glass and damaged woodwork but the ceiling is ignored. The more bullet holes, the more likely you will not get out of there alive.**

**A couple years ago, I got a call from Arizona from my nephew and godchild Patrick McKeon. He started the conversation,**

**“Pop Pop, I called you to tell you, you just saved my life “**

**“Patrick, what you talking about? I am up here New Hampshire. You are there in in Arizona. How could I save your life?”**

**“Pop Pop I’m a member of a jazz band playing the guitar. We play to raise money to cover our expenses while in graduate school. We applied for a gig at a roadhouse out in the middle of nowhere outside of Phoenix and the four of us went out there to talk to the owner. He showed us the place, which had chicken wire between the audience and the band to stop flying bottles. Then I checked the ceiling, following your advice, and counted more than 40 bullet holes. We respectfully turned down the gig. I had told the other members of the band about your warning a year ago, so they knew where I was coming from. Two weekends later, a different band accepted a gig at that location. Someone shot one of the band members to death on the stage. I called to thank you for saving my life.”**

**THE END**