

The Overlooked Aspect Of Fighting

By Louis Awerbuck

"Old Man, how is it that you see all these things?"

Vision, or more precisely visual perception, constitutes a huge percentage of the marksman/tactician's faculties—and resultantly, his ability to perform in a firefight. Though this may seem like overstating the obvious, therein lies the rub.

So much emphasis is placed on the gun during firearms training that it is prioritized almost to the exclusion of everything else. And while a gun is a relatively important piece of equipment for a gunfight, you can run and fight without a gun—but you can't run and gun if you don't have any fight in you. Fighting is older than guns, and the ability to be a top-notch fighter is based on the primary requisite of being able to utilize one's senses to the utmost.

Proactive and reactive movement is essential during a sustained attack and, apart from prior knowledge of terrain, tactics and movement are primarily reliant on information relayed to the brain by one's eyes. The bad news is that Modern Man—primarily the urbanite—has lost the ability to use his vision correctly, either because of reliance on replacement computerized technology, or through lack of use. (For "lack of use" read "doesn't need to use".)

In other words, in today's society, most of the time you don't have to use your eyes as they were intended to be used, because most of the time objects and situations are repetitive, and it doesn't require conscious thought to make it through the day. Then it comes to Fight Night. All of a sudden you have to use your vision to facilitate movement and counter-attack, and you haven't used your eyes to their potential since you were an adolescent—and now it's too little too late to relearn the technique in a ten second crash course.

Eyes work like a camera—they send a billion pieces of information to the brain per second. The problem is that the brain has to assimilate and process all this data and then transmit a few select commands which it requires the body extremities to perform. If you train with your eyes as rigorously as you train, for example, to attain a quick, consistent pistol drawstroke; if you don't let the old China Blues become lazy and complacent over the years, you'll be way ahead of the game when you need your God-given senses.

Most people accept tunnel vision as an absolute—but then most people will answer the phone when a village calls, looking for its missing idiot. Yes, you'll get tunnel vision and auditory exclusion if your pulse rate hits 140-plus, but there are ways of training to slow down your pulse. Tunnel vision isn't mandatory—it's a function of the Pavlov's Dog syndrome. The louder the bell rings, the faster the dog runs; the bigger the knife, the more you soil your foundation garments.

Several centuries ago, martial artists trained to counter a three-pronged attack, which meant that they had to maintain as wide a field of vision as possible, even when under duress. Today, the urban dweller buys a wide screen TV. This is what is euphemistically referred to as progress. The trick is not to have an enlarged or split-screen television set—the trick is to be able to watch three different programs on three adjacent TV screens—and to be able

to assimilate the treble information simultaneously.

Several years ago someone decided to regurgitate the principle of visually checking a full 360 degrees as best as possible after downing an adversary. A couple of years later it became "fashionable" as a training technique, and as is so often the case, some of the initial concept became lost in the translation. The trickle-down effect has resulted in legions of people now dumping a couple of rounds into a single cardboard target, then immediately swiveling their heads around like something from the *Exorcist*.

With your head rotating at this speed, all you'll be able to see is a six-ton elephant ten feet behind you—a human adversary probably won't be seen because the brain is being overcrowded with input when the eyes are working at this pace. The lens and shutter are working, but there's no film in the camera.

For example, if you've lived in a two-story house for ten years and don't know how many vertical struts support the staircase banister rail, you're not using your eyes. Let's face it, you've looked at the same scene for a decade, your eyes have photographed the scene, but the brain has cast out the information as inconsequential. While there's nothing wrong with that in itself, soon everything becomes inconsequential and you wind up not seeing objects at which you're looking.

Looking doesn't necessarily mean *seeing*, and to have a full fighting toolbox, one has to be able to see *and* diagnose to be a winner, even under stress. There's a reason most people turn to optical correction on their 40th birthday. At that age many urbanites' lives have become a humdrum rat race, there is no desire to open up one's eyes to new worlds and to learn, and we don't exercise and/or utilize our eyes beyond the daily level of complacency. The eye muscles become lazy and the primary organ of vision—the brain—is not used to full potential.

A rural dweller or a warrior will use his eyes—and consequently his brain—to the best of his ability *automatically*, because his very existence depends on it.

It shouldn't take a sniper training session before an adult has to be taught observation techniques. If you don't keep your senses honed, you may as well exist in Condition White and never see trouble coming, realize that you'll be unnecessarily punched, kicked, stabbed or shot in a fight, or hit from behind when switching traffic lanes; because you can't expect your vision to work and set up mental reaction under duress when it hasn't been refined and exercised to work under low-stress, everyday mundane conditions.

It's nice to have a gun for a gunfight, but it's even better to literally see the trouble coming and avoid the encounter, if at all possible.

"Old Man, how is it that you see all these things?"

"Young Man, how is it that you do not?" ●

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