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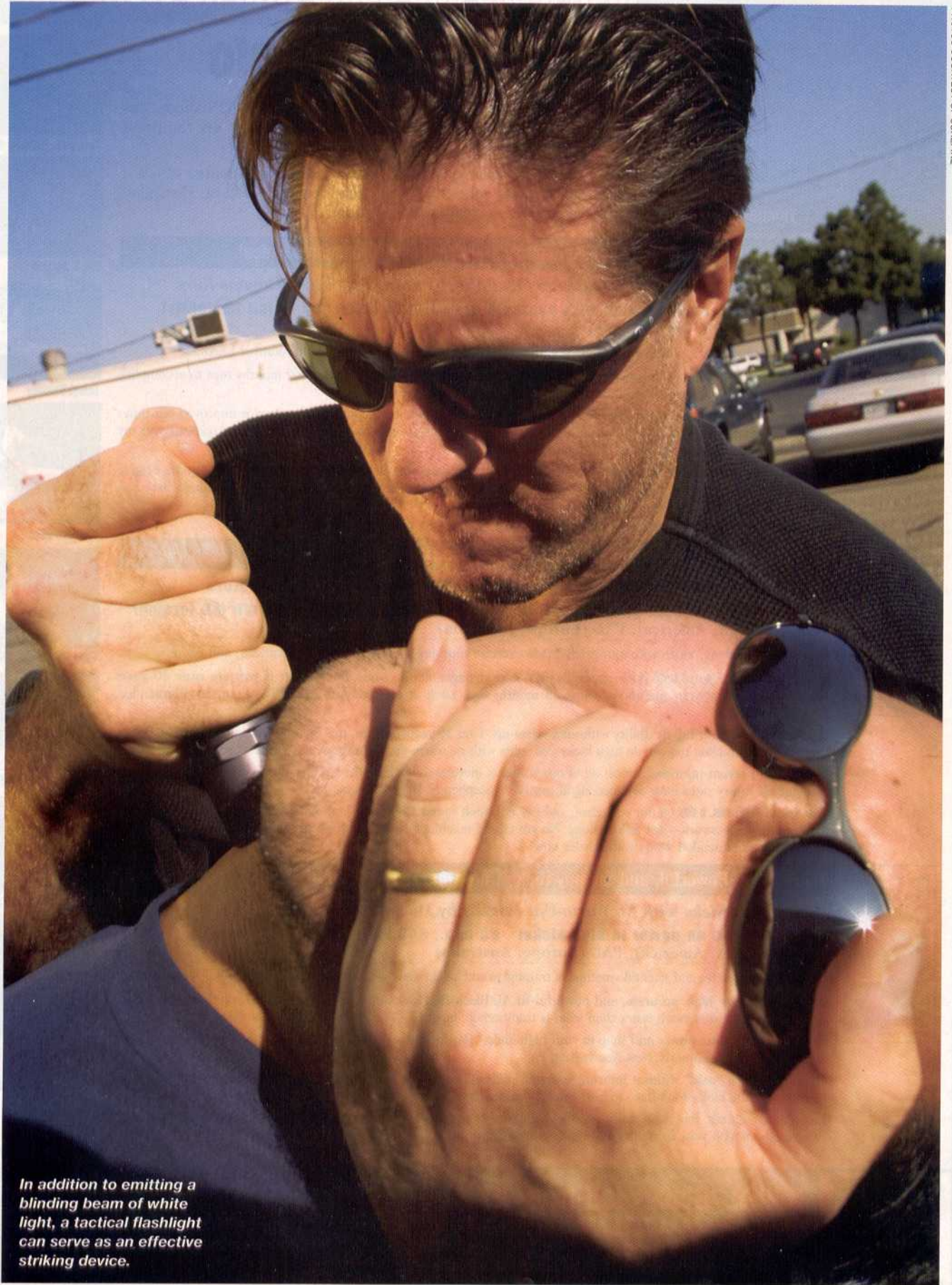
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*In addition to emitting a blinding beam of white light, a tactical flashlight can serve as an effective striking device.*

# LOOK INTO THE FLASHLIGHT

## *In Trained Hands, a Flashlight Can Be the Ultimate Self-Defense Tool!*

*by Ken J. Good*

### ***Imagine your worst nightmare is towering over you.***

A sociopath who cares no more for your life than he does for a cockroach on the kitchen floor, he's planning on squashing you with the same malice he would use to exterminate the insect. Whether or not you're a martial artist, it's frightening.

However, you have a secret weapon. When you use it, he won't know what hit him. All you have to do is press a button to activate the device—which, by the way, is already in your hand—and you'll deprive him of his most important asset for aggression.

That magical device, of course, is a flashlight. Widely recognized as a tool for navigating at night, it's not generally considered a self-defense implement. But with the introduction of small high-intensity units, you now have an effective yet nonlethal way to fight back.

### **ILLUMINATING HISTORY**

Study the great military commanders of the past, and you'll see they always had a thorough understanding of the conditions in which they had





to operate. Even when outnumbered or deployed far from home, they were able to triumph, and one of their secret weapons was their ability to utilize the environment.

Early on they learned that light from the sun or moon could play a critical role in battle. When natural lighting was insufficient, they would augment or replace it with artificial rays from fires, lanterns or spotlights.

Technology now enables manufacturers to create compact illumination tools that shine like a miniature sun. They emit amazingly intense, focused white light from a durable case that is specifically designed to meet the needs of law-enforcement officers, military personnel and, more recently, civil-

*A self-defense light must be compact enough for you carry all the time without being overly inconvenienced, the author says.*

ians. Ancient warriors would likely have given their eye teeth for such a device, but you can own one for less than \$100.

### **PROOF POSITIVE**

In the 1980s and '90s, following service with SEAL Team One, I embarked on a decade of directing anti-terrorism programs for the Department of the Navy. Below decks on decommissioned warships, where we could not see our own hands in front of our faces, we learned that proper employment of light had a positive in-

fluence on the outcome of most any type of engagement.

Later, as founder and director of the tactical training division of a well-known manufacturer of illumination tools, I helped design products that could be deployed in ways that met the needs of professionals. Among other things, my associates and I took a long, hard look at how to safely close the gap with non-combatants and non-compliant threats. What we discovered reinforced the conclusions reached by those ancient commanders: Light can play a powerful role in any altercation that takes place in a low-light environment.

Ever wonder why police officers point their spotlights directly into your mirrors during nighttime traffic stops? They are trying to make the environment more favorable to them. They are creating a "wall of light" that will in some respects shield them from the threat. With a good tactical flashlight, you can carry a similar wall of light with you wherever you go. The challenge lies in finding a good light.

### **CHOOSING WISELY**

If you're like most people, you own a large flashlight. Perhaps it is pre-focused, or perhaps you can twist its lens housing to narrow the beam or spread it wide. In any case, if you can observe dark rings, blank spots or regions of varying brightness within the pattern it makes on the wall, it is undesirable for use in a self-defense situation.

The on-off button of most flashlights also makes them less than opti-



mal for tactical use. A switch on the barrel of the typical light takes too much time to locate, especially in a high-stress confrontation. It can also be difficult to shut off—and in self-defense, that can be just as important as turning it on.

A properly designed light is compact. It may be comforting to have a 12-inch-long flashlight powered by three D-cells in your hand because of its skull-cracking potential, but how often will you have it with you? You won't carry it when you're at work, and your spouse won't carry into the health club. You need something that is always accessible, and that means you must be able to slip it into your pocket, clip it to your belt or hold it in your hand without being inconvenienced.

A properly designed light will be activated by depressing a button located on the rear of the unit. To cut the light, you simply release pressure. Such easy operation will enable you to use rapid pulsing and/or oscillating techniques in which the beam is flashed back and forth across the eyes to create chaotic sensory input intended to disorient the enemy.

The light should also be bright. Very bright. In fact, it's a good idea to avoid any unit that does not make you say: "Wow! That's a lot of light from such a small package."

### SHINING THROUGH

Like any other self-defense implement, a tactical flashlight cannot ensure your safety by merely being in

your pocket or purse. You have to know how to use it. The best way to do that is to experiment with a partner. Suit up in protective gear, cut the lights in your *dojo* and signal your partner to initiate a variety of attacks. As he approaches, play with the power of the light. Notice how quickly he ceases his assault and shields his eyes. No doubt he'll want to reverse roles,

on these assessments?

Once you're convinced the attack is imminent, blast the light—it should already be in your palm—into his eyes. If you are using a firearm, a knife or pepper spray, you must take pains to verify the threat you face, but with light, you can afford to make a mistake because the effects are temporary.

When you use your light, be sure to

***As we squared off, I lit him up. He was startled at the brilliance of my light, then he slashed at where he thought I was.***

and you should do it to taste the enlightenment for yourself.

Once you have witnessed firsthand the effectiveness of light as a weapon, it's time to learn what military and law-enforcement trainers have discovered. Before any attack begins, you should take note of the lighting conditions that surround you and your potential assailant. This is called "reading the light."

You will quickly learn that not all lighting conditions are equal. Furthermore, many are not in your favor. Are you looking into a bright light? What might be lurking in that dark area over there? How does your attacker see you? How will things change if you switch your light on? What tactics should you select based

direct the beam into your attacker's eyes. If the confrontation takes place at night, his eyes will have adapted to the darkness and, consequently, they will be up to 100,000 times more sensitive. Even if it isn't pitch black, one of two things will generally take place: He will immediately close his eyes and turn his head, or he will raise his hands to block the source of his discomfort.

*An assailant pins the defender against a door and prepares to punch (1). Using the flashlight hidden in his right palm, the defender floods the attacker's face with light, causing him to close his eyes and turn away (2). The defender then moves and delivers a left palm strike to the face (3) and a gouge to the eyes (4). In a darker room, he might have flashed the light on and off before moving and striking the other man.*





*The effect of shining a high-intensity light into the eyes of an adversary who plans to use the darkness to his advantage is staggering. Under certain circumstances, he can lose his balance and fall.*

enough, "lighting and moving."

The underlying strategy is this: Your attacker may know where you were when you flashed him, but the blast of light will blind and disorient him, and the subsequent absence of light will give you a chance to shift

***"If you fumble around with your light and inadvertently lock its switch in the on position, you will have lost your advantage."***

your position. On-off-move. Or on-off-move-strike-move. The specific actions you take after you kill the light are up to you.

Remember that when you find yourself in a physical confrontation, you will experience a surge of adrenaline and a resulting loss of fine motor skills. If you fumble around with your light and inadvertently lock its switch in the on position, you will have lost your advantage. Your high-tech illumination weapon will be no more than a bulb casting its rays on you, your adversary and your surroundings, and that's exactly what you don't want.

## **FINAL THOUGHTS**

I will close with a true story that involves a friend of mine—a lifelong martial artist who could tear me to pieces even if he was having a bad day. He's spent most of his life with edged weapons and has survived more than a few street confrontations in which they were used. He's called "Big Tony" because he weighs more than 350 pounds.

Well, Big Tony walked into the dojo one evening and asked me about the

If you're lucky, you will induce a momentary loss of balance and your opponent will fall. This is called "powering with light."

After you create a gap in his understanding and perception, it's time to act. Be decisive. Use whatever martial arts techniques you know by heart. No matter what your combat philosophy is, you should think, "Light on, light off, move." This is called, naturally

use of a small flashlight in conjunction with a knife. I said, "Let's go." We grabbed a pair of *tanto* training knives, and I chose a light to go along with mine. As we squared off, I lit him up. He was startled at the brilliance of my light, then he slashed at where he thought I was. By then, I had already turned it off, angled away and "stabbed" him in the kidney as I passed. As he reeled to deal with the attack, I lit up his face again, further disorienting him. I immediately flanked him and "slashed" his throat. I then created distance and watched him flail in empty space. Then we switched roles, and he pummeled me at will, laughing most of the time.

Big Tony now owns quite a few high-intensity lights. They enhance every self-defense technique in his repertoire. They are the ultimate force multiplier, and they can give you the same tactical advantage. ✕

## **Recommended Tactical Lights**

When I teach self-defense courses that focus on the flashlight, I recommend units that are well-designed, durable and effective. I have found that a number of manufacturers offer quality products; their on-line catalogs can be viewed at the following Web sites:

<http://www.laserdevices.com>

<http://www.streamlight.com>

<http://www.surefire.com>

<http://www.tacm3.com>

—KJG

*About the author: Ken J. Good is a free-lance writer and tactical instructor. For more information, visit [http://www.strategosintl.com/staff\\_ken.html](http://www.strategosintl.com/staff_ken.html).*