

By The Night Rider

Transcriptions and Foreword by Knight Owl

Q: What is a superhero?

A: An anonymous adventurer, usually with above average or supernormal abilities, who fights crime and injustice independently.

Q: Who is a superhero?

A: anyone who wants to be one!

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foreword

WELCOME, HEROES! Please take a moment to read the following material, as it is vital to the context of manual.

While many of the concepts are theoretical, the purpose behind the activities performed by some real life super heroes is to defend life and property. Violence and crime are an unfortunate reality of our everyday lives. In reacting to the depraved, it is sometimes necessary to match or exceed their level of violence in order to neutralize threats. And though I will not intentionally publish material that I deem inappropriate, please be aware that some mature subject matter relating to crime and violence will be part of the content contained herein.

It is with that in mind that I state, in no unclear terms, I will make NO attempts to encourage anyone under the age of 18 to perform any actions described on herein or any of the websites related to the subject matter. As a PARENT, IF YOU ARE READING THIS, the responsibility to govern your children lies with you. Any and all information posted here is already easily accessible from any unfiltered internet service and public safety resources. All I have attempted on this project is to compile as many useful links into one readily accessed source.

As you make your way through the articles contained in this book, you might notice some possibly incongruent theories and philosophies on how to approach the lifestyle, training, and purpose of one RLSH to another. Please keep in mind there are many of us spread out across the globe, and what is good for the goose is not necessarily always good for the gander. What is ideal for one person may be completely ineffective in your particular situation. Take this to mean that despite the combined years of cumulative experience between the others active in their respective communities, there can be no correct and concrete answer for every person in every circumstance. We can only guide you so far; you have to make your decisions and manage the subsequent consequences.

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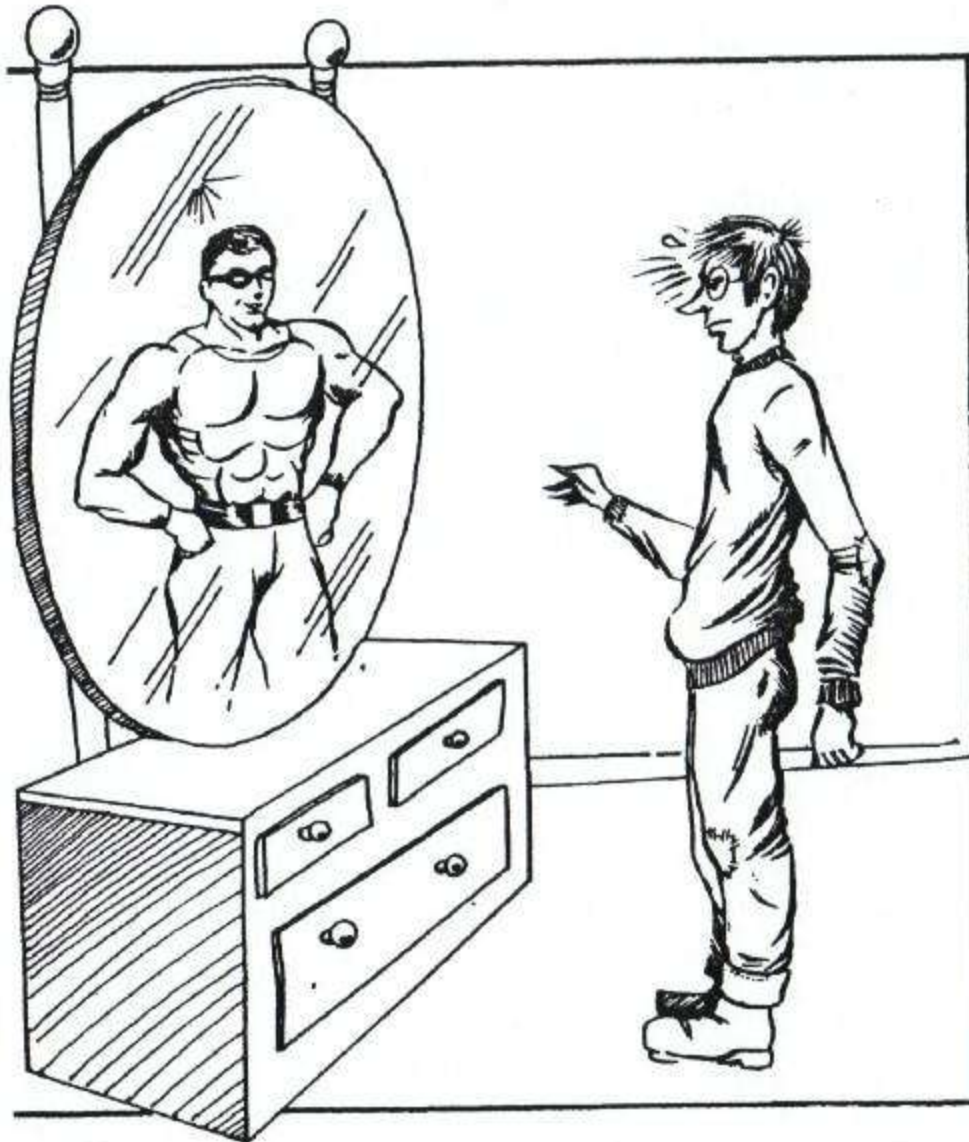
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GETTING STARTED...



Getting Started

My family always said I was born with a comic book in my hand. I learned everything from comics- vocabulary, technical matters, morals- as well as being entertained by some of the greatest characters ever created. I bought my first comic in 1957 and it's been pure education ever since.

Twenty years later, my best friend and I were discussing comic books. The question came up: why are there no super heroes in real life? After all, there are villains to rival the comics- the Boston Strangler, the Zodiac Killer, Son of Sam. Where are the heroes?

I suggested that the answer to that lies with the fact that bad news is usually better news (for reporting). How much good news do you see on the 6:00 TV report? Such stories are not as spectacular as the catastrophic events that are relayed most of the time.

The fact is, THERE ARE SUPER-HEROES. They are just not publicity-minded and they live very 'underground' lives. Their above-ground counterparts are firemen, policemen, rescue squads, paramedics- people whose daily existence is protecting others and saving lives. These people are real heroes.

The super hero as defined by the comics and pulp novels, however, is a different breed. His adventures are on a part-time basis. He* lives another role by day, only to emerge as a different and more dynamic personality at night.

Yet he depends upon this alter ego as much as the paramedic does upon his job. Although the superhero doesn't make a living from his adventures, he needs to do it because it fills a need that is not fulfilled by his everyday existence.

Just about everyone needs the reassurance that when their teacher or boss chews them out, when they are bullied or made to feel inadequate, that there is a greater force within that could turn the tide.

Everyone wants to be able to think, "the only reason I look like a fool at this moment is because I choose not to reveal the TRUE POWER to the world!"

Of course, while everyone thinks these kinds of thoughts, for how many are they true? How many have a hidden power or secret identity?

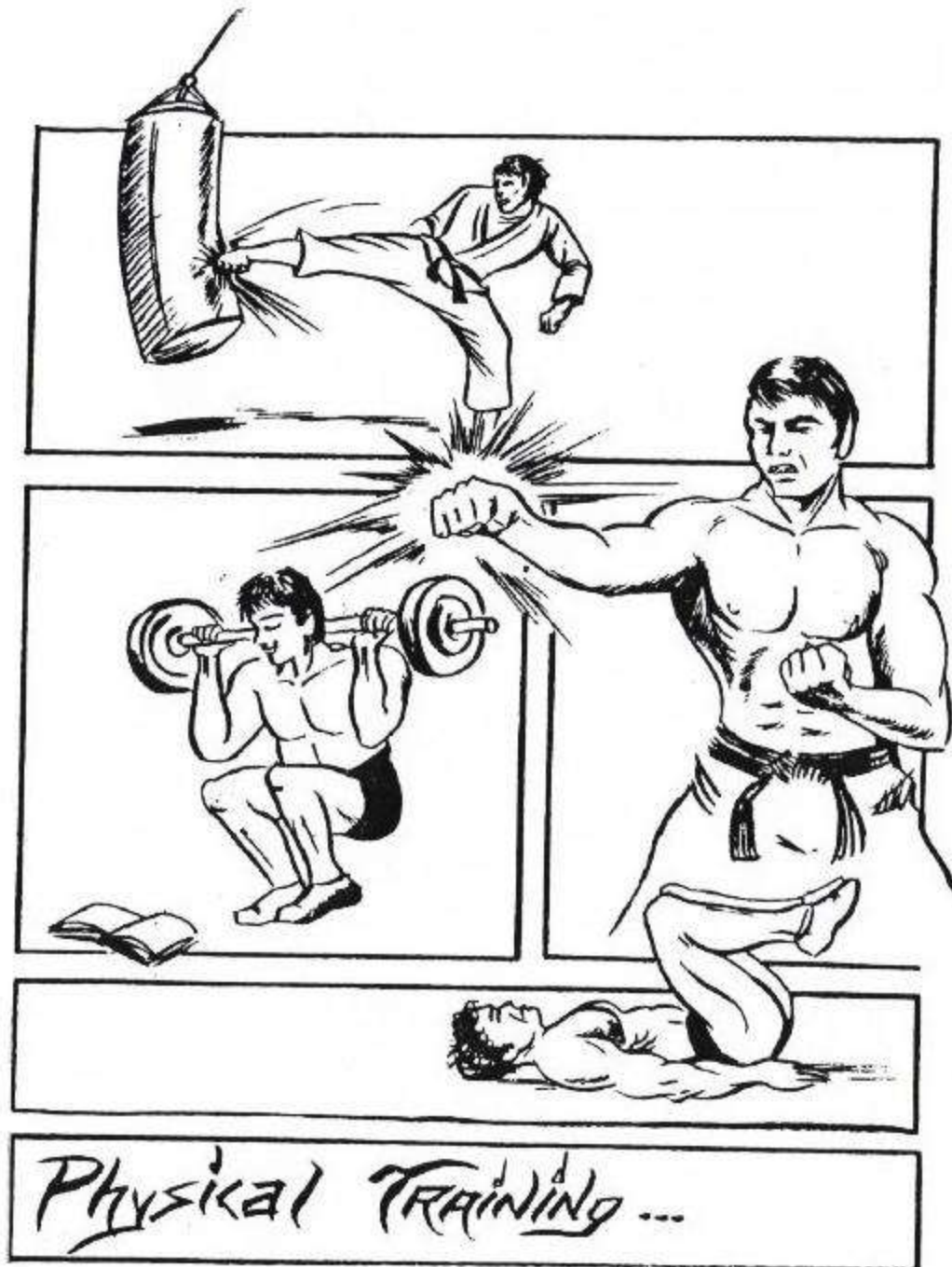
Now I can't claim to give you super-normal powers. No one can. But I can split a three inch brick with the edge of my hand, and to those who can't do it, that's super-human.

And I can say this:

YOU HAVE THE POWER TO BE THE KIND OF PERSON YOU WANT TO BE.

I'm going to show you how to let it out.

* Or she. I use the pronoun 'he' although I don't mean to exclude women. There are female superheroes, and they're much nicer than their comic book representations.



Physical Training

Most comics readers I've met haven't been too active physically, or healthy, for that matter. A superhero needs stamina and agility, and a person of any size and stature can develop them. Physical fitness is necessary.

Most YMCAs or gyms have gymnastics programs. Sign up! Gymnastics and tumbling will define your muscles, restore your vigor and teach you how to control your body.

Or design your own exercise program and stick to it! Remember, it's the regularity of your exercise that produces the results. If you can do 500 pushups straight, that's amazing. But if you only do it once a month, you're way off track. You're doing much better by doing 10 a day.

A good book to refer to is, You Can Be Physically Perfect, Powerfully Strong, by Vic Boff, ARCO Publishing Company. It's a \$1.75 paperback. Order it from your bookstore.

Knight Owl additional reference:

<http://weightlifting.org/founder/founder.htm>

http://www.amazon.com/You-Physically-Perfect-Powerfully-Strong/dp/0668037830/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1293153560&sr=1-1

The Body is the Ultimate Weapon

One must for your physical training is martial arts instruction. This I will have to insist upon, because the martial arts tie everything together- the discipline, fitness, self-defense combat ability- everything. It is the best discipline around, and the healthiest and most practical besides.

Generally speaking, if you are big, strong, or aggressively natured, then you should try a softer art like Judo or Aikido. But then if you are, you probably aren't reading this book; that type is usually too wrapped up in a ball game or fights to spend much time reading comics and dreaming about being a superhero.

If you are like the rest of us- small, not too powerful, passive personality- stick to the harder forms like Karate, Kung Fu, or Taekwondo. The idea here is to learn how to be the opposite of what you already are, to bring out the undeveloped side of your nature. One thing: the striking arts (karate, etc.) take less training on the average to be reliable in combat than the throwing arts (judo, etc.).

Now I have trained daily in Karate for 11 years. My second degree black belt rank is recognized in Japan, and few Americans' are. My expertise is the equivalent of many Americans' fourth-degree ranks. Traditional training is just that strict. I want you to accept that I know what I'm talking about. So do what I say.

Check out the schools in your area. Watch classes. Talk to people your age in the class and get their comments. Avoid ultra-commercial schools with dozens and dozens of students. Most YMCA classes are honest and good sources of training. Try to find an oriental instructor or someone affiliated with one.

See if the school is clean and if the students are clean. A good school is very orderly and there aren't guys leaning against the wall and clowning around.

Watch out for instructors with lofty titles who push their rank. You know, "MASTER so-and-so is a SEVENTH degree black belt in FIVE martial arts!"

If the instructor is under 60 years old and is called "master", forget it. This is a new craze among American martial arts. A black belt used to be a status symbol, but now that so many people have been promoted to that level, the next thing to impress others is to be a "master". Also, people who claim to teach several different martial arts have probably not reached a high level of skill in each. You can contact SHOTOKAN KARATE OF AMERICA:

Knight Owl additional reference: address has been edited according to current information.

222 S. Hewitt Street, Room 7

Los Angeles, CA 90012 USA

<http://ska.org/>

Or the ALL-AMERICA KARATE FEDERATION at 1440 West Olympic Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90015

Now when you begin practicing, keep two things in mind: TIME and EFFORT. It is impossible to learn Karate in a short time. If you try to use it to defend yourself too soon, you will get your block knocked off by a more aggressive opponent.

It's best to start young. 13 or 14 is the best but you can begin at any age, 60 even. The older you are, though, the harder it is to learn because you've accumulated many bad habits in your movement. Whatever age, start now! If you're 14, you can become fairly skillful by the time you graduate from high school.

Now the EFFORT part. It is also impossible to learn well if you have a part time attendance or a ho-hum attitude. I was 14, a high school freshman, when I started training. Not one of the other people in my old class is still practicing today. None of them ever got as far as black belt rank. And I'll tell you why.

After every practice session when we'd line up for a short meditation before leaving, I'd tell myself, "I'm going to be good at this!" I'd never been good at anything, never played sports, had always been picked on. And I could see that this was a way to change all that, to become more like I wanted to be.

Then I'd walk home, imagining unseen attackers behind bushes, around corners, everywhere. And I'd work out in my mind how I'd block their attack and beat them. This made me very aware of my surroundings and conscious of my defense.

This period after an evening's workout was just as important to my development as the workout itself. And I'm sure that it is the reason I've come this far and my old classmates have not.

You know, the longer you train, the more you develop a kind of sixth sense, a danger signal that's every bit as real and effective as the comic heroes' super-senses. You can actually 'smell trouble'. This is because Karate and other martial arts train the mind as well as the body.

If you'd enjoy additional insight into Karate practice, buy MOVING ZEN-Karate as a way to Gentleness, by C.W. Nicol, Dell Pub. Co., #5705. It's a good account of what it's like to train in Japan.

Knight Owl additional reference:

<http://www.amazon.com/Moving-Zen-Karate-Way-Gentleness/dp/0688011810>

By the way, people with physical handicaps can learn Karate competently, even the blind. If such is the case with you, don't hesitate or dwell on your shortcomings or handicap. Get out and do it! Talk with the instructor about your case.

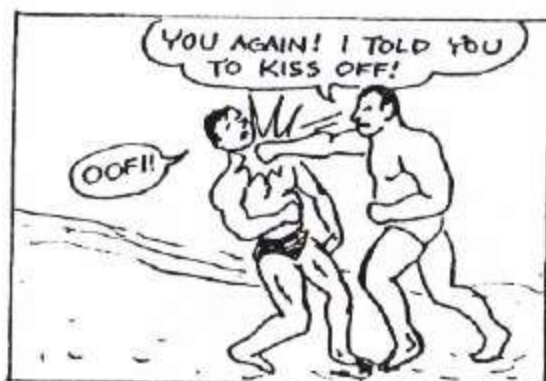
One last word about martial arts. DON'T buy some dumb paperback book on Karate and try learning it on your own. IT DOESN'T WORK. Even if the book is 100% authentic and realistic (and they rarely are), you would only end up convincing yourself you can do something you really CAN'T do. Because it's the instructor, the school atmosphere, and the interaction with the other students that makes you learn. Not the techniques. That's why it doesn't matter which style you study as long as it's a good school. Experts from different styles use different techniques, but they're still all experts.

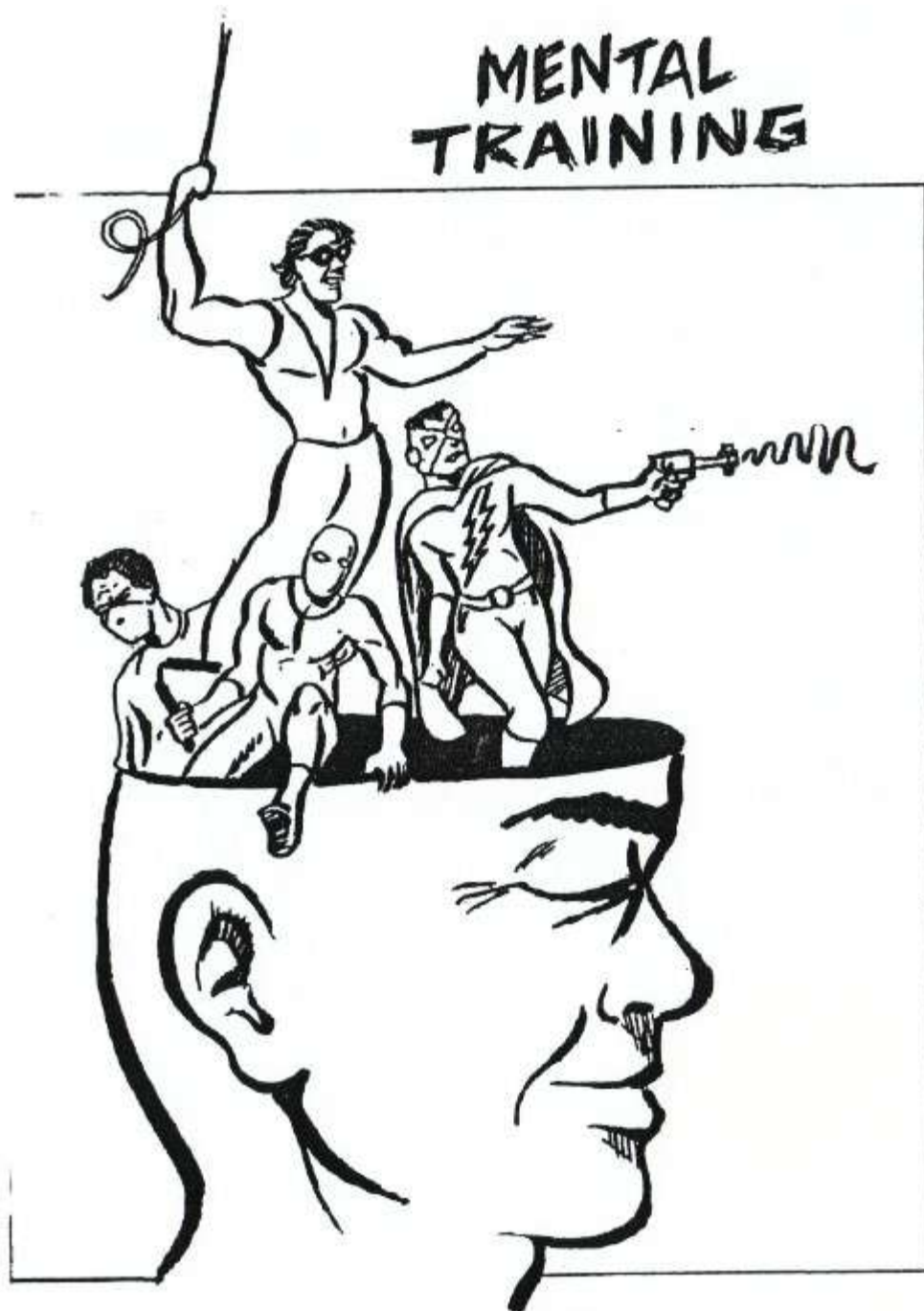
So seek out a school and begin training. Don't forget to make mental affirmations after practicing like I did- only go me one better. Instead of thinking "I'm going to be good at this," think "I AM good at this!"

You see, I didn't realize at the time I was holding myself back by placing my mental command in the future- hence, it was a long time before I really was good at it.

Therefore, you must remember this important rule: KEEP YOUR MIND IN THE PRESENT TENSE. You must convince yourself that you are the way you want to be already. This allows the mind's higher powers to work directly with your goals. More about this later.

Perseverance with your physical training and build a strong body. it takes time to prepare for super-heroing, and to start with an untrained body is just asking for failure. How fast you progress is dependent upon how regularly you exercise and practice. And while you're doing this, you'll be preparing yourself mentally as well, as we see in the next chapter. You have muscles in your mind, too!





Mental Training

It's not enough to be physically prepared. It's the change you make mentally that counts.

The first step is establishing your role. Cut out pictures from comics and magazines that represent the qualities you desire. Cut out pictures of your face and put them on other bodies or paste a photo of yourself onto a larger picture to give yourself a different locale or adventuresome are. Make

a collage. Or if you're artistic, draw it all. The important thing is: THE PICTURES MUST AFFECT YOU EMOTIONALLY. They have to excite you, inspire you.

Now these are to be kept secret, shown to no one. Every night before going to bed, take them out and look at them. Stare at a picture for a minute or two without moving your eyes (you can blink). Then shut your eyes and you will see a negative version of the picture. It will gradually fade away. Open your eyes and stare at the picture again. Repeat this every night.

As time goes by, you will be able to retain the negative image longer and soon you will be able to make it appear without looking at the picture at all!

This is to develop your visualization ability and the better you can visualize, the easier you can cause things to change.

Throughout the day, close your eyes and picture yourself as you wish to be. Hold the thought for a moment. FEEL yourself being strong, powerful, etc. SEE yourself doing all the things you've fantasized about. Make it real as possible.

Then stop. Try and think of nothing. Completely switch off the pictures for a little while. Then open your eyes and go about your business. Don't continue thinking of your fantasy. In another hour or so, do it again.

If you continue thinking about it or picturing it, you keep it in your conscious mind and prevent it from being transferred to your subconscious, so DROP it.

This visualization business is very important in reaching your goals in life. Artists and creative people have a natural talent for it- that's why they're artists. They can take a picture or idea in their mind and create a physical form of it in a painting, sculpture, or invention. Others can't draw a straight line, but they can describe something beautiful with words. They are natural poets and writers.

No matter what talents you mentally have or don't have, they can be developed by perfecting your visualization ability.

An important factor in this, as we said before, is emotion. You must FEEL strongly about your desires, enough to see them and EXPERIENCE them in your mind. And if you want to become a super hero, you probably have an inborn talent for it, like the artists and writers. It's just that public school classes don't help develop that talent, so it's up to you and your desire.

I read once that as a boy, boxing champ Muhammad Ali rode his bike past a sports arena and overheard the announcer cry: "...and still the heavyweight champion of the world- Rocky Marciano!"

The young Ali peddled away, mentally substituting his name for the champ's, so impressed was he by that title. He was so impressed, in fact, that it set up a chain reaction in his visualization process, settled into his subconscious, and caused him to start boxing and eventually BECOME champion!

And just about anyone who has gotten somewhere has used this mental ability. Few have actually had the knowledge to develop it. But you do, and you've already started.

Do your visualization exercises/fantasizing just before going to sleep at night. As you drop off, the images and thoughts keep going and reach the subconscious where they really go to work.

For more detailed instruction in training this ability, send for the Art and Practice of Getting Material Things through Creative Visualization, by Ophiel, Peach Pub. Co., Los Angeles.

Knight Owl additional reference: and BTW- don't ask me how this manual came out in 1980, and before the book he references, from 1981, linked below.

http://www.amazon.com/Practice-Getting-Material-Creative-Visualization/dp/087728279X/ref=sr_1_2?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1293165989&sr=1-2

Further, consider that the Night Rider most likely grew up during the rise of New Age spirituality (stemming from the 60s counter culture and swelling in the 80s), which ought to be apparent, as Ophiel also authored several other books on topics such as Kabbalah and Astral Projection. Just making an observation, take it for what it's worth.

If you are interested in the occult sciences, you'll like it even more. If not, don't let it bother you, just do what he says. I've followed his teachings for years and they WORK.

The Symbol Technique

In addition to the foregoing exercises, you can add the use of a symbol or ritual object to intensify your transformation. This should be done after you have made some progress along the lines we've talked about so far. Wait until you've built some strength and confidence. Then work at transferring them to the symbol/object as follows.

Let's say you will be using a ring. This should first impress you as being a special kind of ring, and you should use one that excites you emotionally. One that is distinctive and does not remind you of the commonplace.

Now keep this ring in a secret place and don't wear it. But visit when you are doing your mental exercises and tell yourself that it will magnify your power when you wear it. Try to see a faint glow around it. If you're developing your visualization ability, this should become easier as you go along.

As you progress, let the glow around the ring become stronger. Soon you will actually see the light, not just imagine it. Still, resist the temptation to put it on.

If you really persevere at this mental work, you will feel definite changes coming about in your personal power. When you feel that this is happening, and ONLY when you feel it, take the ring out of its hiding place when and where you won't be disturbed (take your time). You should have a mirror in the room, preferably full-length.

Hold the ring in your hand and stare at it for a few minutes, seeing the bright, burning glow around it.

After a few minutes, close your eyes and watch the mental image of the ring. This should be a familiar and routine procedure by now, except this time it is the ring that you are seeing and concentrating on.

Now try to feel your heartbeat. You will probably feel your breathing more rapid but don't be discouraged if you don't notice your heartbeat.

When the image of the ring completely leaves, open your eyes, and stand before the mirror. Take ten deep breaths. Inhale fully through the nose and exhale slowly.

Stand with both feet squarely on the floor, about shoulder width apart, your weight distributed evenly. On the tenth breath, hold it as you deliberately and slowly place the ring on your finger.

Feel a rush of power flowing from the ring up your arm and all through your body. FEEL it intensify and fill you entirely!

Keep your eyes on yourself in the mirror but don't move them about. Now exhale slowly. Let the power from the ring completely take you over. Feel it changing you!

Stare at your image until you see yourself glowing with energy. Then close your eyes and concentrate on the mental usage of yourself that you see. Make it come alive and to your mind's eye, see it doing exciting things, fantastic things! Mentally affirm that this is you as you really are: ENERGETIC, POWERFUL, ABLE TO DO ANYTHING YOU CHOOSE!

When the visions fade, pull the ring off and open your eyes. Put the ring back in its special place until next time.

Even though we use the example of a ring here, use your imagination and find what's right for you. A medallion is good or a special symbol created by you that embodies your feelings of what power is. It could be a poem or chant which will set off your inner powers and fire your imagination.

These elements are used in all types of magical practices and this should give you some insight as to what is going on during these rituals- the candles, incense, incantations, etc., all serve to excite the mind to release the powers of the subconscious. That is basically what magic is.

You might say, "I don't want to be a witch, I want to be a super-hero!" Well, all super-heroes take advantage of these 'props' to ready themselves. Remember GREEN LANTERN holding his ring before the power battery, chanting, "In brightest day. In blackest night, no evil shall escape my sight!"? Simply putting on a mask evokes a change of personality and abilities. So using your ring, magic rock, sacred symbol, or secret word is in the finest super-hero tradition, and if you think back over all the comic characters, I'm sure you'll agree. Shazam!

One other thing. If you are still a skeptic about the power in things, consider my case. I consulted with five gemologists about a precious stone called a girasol which, according to legend, has magical properties. After three years of searching, a dealer in New York located one for me. The men who got the gem to me said they felt there was something "strange" about the

stone (I didn't tell them the legends). That was four years ago, and the stone is so 'trained' now that its power is very impressive, indeed. So throw disbelief out the window when you start doing the ritual.

This little ceremony should not be performed too often- every couple weeks at most. The idea here is to gradually train your subconscious to recognize the ring as a starter, like the ignition on a car. The ring will jog the deep mind into supplying you with more energy, power and confidence than you have normally.

Let's say that before using this book your personal power was on a level of 5. If you performed the ring ritual successfully, you may have raised it to a level of 7 temporarily.

Now, after training your body and mind for some time, you will succeed in raising your normal level to a 7, so that using the ring will give you a temporary 9!

Or, to make it simpler: a weak person, under certain circumstances or conditions, can be strong. But a strong person, under the same conditions, can be very strong. Moral: don't expect self-hypnosis to do all the work. Train yourself to be stronger under normal conditions.

Why did I call it self-hypnosis? Because that's what it is. You are programming your subconscious mind to produce effects that your conscious mind obstructs. Giving yourself this programming is known as auto-suggestion. Keeping the message inside you that a certain thing will happen in the future (such as the feeling of power when you wear your ring) is called post-hypnotic suggestion.

Just because we call it hypnosis, don't think the effect isn't real. When a hypnotized person is told that he is a bar of iron, we know he really isn't. But when they suspend him between two chairs and put 600 pounds on his chest, he still doesn't bend. He might as well be a bar of iron!

So if you use hypnosis to make you strong, you won't just think you're strong. You WILL be strong! This is because it is a natural ability but mostly everyone uses only a small percentage of their natural abilities. The rest is cut off by the conscious mind.



Powers

Up till now, we have ignored the fact that many of the comic book super-heroes are just that- super. The power to fly, to lift automobiles or run at the speed of sound is unrealistic and won't be attained by you or anyone else. Face it, you have to set your sights on what is possible and then make it probable and finally, predictable.

You may not ever have X-ray vision but your extra-sensory perception can be developed to tell you things your eyes can't. You may not be able to

walk up walls under your own power, but there is equipment that can enable you to do it. Maybe you can't pick up a 200 lb. hoodlum with one hand, but you can down him pretty fast by applying that hand in the right way.

Think of the pulp magazines of the '30s and '40s. Their heroes weren't people from other planets or one-dimensional characters in multi-colored leotards. They were real people, whose senses were sometimes altered in such a way as to give them an unusual ability. More often than not, though, it was the lifelong training of a DOC SAVAGE or the pretended blindness of THE BLACK BAT that gave them the edge. Or the marksmanship of THE SPIDER- he relied on his pistols for his power!

Yes, these were real people, like you and I, doing things others could if they only had the guts. Real people who wore masks to keep themselves from being recognized, not to parade around in public, drawing crowds. People whose lives were altered in some way by circumstances which led to their adventures; people whose ideals and convictions gave them the strength to fight injustice and cut down the wrongdoers they came up against.

There is nothing corny about fighting for your beliefs while-protecting your identity. What IS unrealistic is the current generation of heroes who fly, stretch, leap, growl, flame, dematerialize, grow, shrink, swim, and flex disproportionate muscles across the comics pages- all decked out in tights and flowing capes of every color and design.

There are a few examples of realism today. Take, for instance, the BATMAN- someone whose parents were murdered. He is deprived of a normal childhood and strikes back by warring on criminals. He has no super-normal powers, so he trains himself to be a skillful fighting machine as well as a great detective.

GREEN ARROW is a street-wise archer with very strong ideals who (like myself) constantly has run-ins with the greedy, the crooked and the violent. He makes up for his lack of superhuman abilities by unerring accuracy with special arrows.

BLACK CANARY may look like just a pretty face, but she's adept at judo and a mean motorcycle rider besides. And DAREDEVIL's acrobatic ability can be equaled with a lot of practice.

Super-heroing can be rough on the body and bullets only bounce off Superman. But IRON MAN's armor would be an interesting edge for a real-life hero. Increased power and a certain amount of invulnerability would be worth the effort of creating a suit along these lines.

As you can see, what you are to become is up to your imagination. Just be realistic. What makes exciting reading doesn't make for a commonplace encounter. You will never meet a Doctor Doom-type villain. Indeed, in the real world, no one 'worships evil'. The criminal who is caught by you thinks YOU are the villain! And he probably feels justified in cutting up your girlfriend to get back at you (now think about why you want to hide your identity).

I've never met anyone who wants to rule the world. Most often it's someone who tries to frame me for something so I'll get fired and they'll get *my* job. I've never known anyone who would snuff a whole city's population, but I've

seen creeps who like to take shots at people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds.

So what Is the moral of this chapter? Keep your reading entertainment and your personal fantasies separate. Decide which abilities you want to develop and leave the fantastic stuff for Superman.

One more thing- possibly the greatest power you can possess is that of being another person. In your other identity, you can fight for yourself and others without being blamed for it. You have another, stronger person to aid you, someone who can move without restrictions. Something behind you that is bigger than you, something your enemies better beware!

THE UNIFORM



The Uniform

One's uniform is of prime importance for many reasons. First of all, it conceals one's identity. Sadly, few of the comic book heroes' costumes would do this in real life. Frequently, those parts of the face which are most recognizable are exposed by the design of the hero's mask. Comic artists are

more interested in what will make the characters handsome and dramatic rather than realistic. And then, of course, there's Clark Kent, who expects his eyeglasses to throw us all off.

Secondly, the uniform should be so designed as to allow freedom of movement and more utility than ordinary street clothes. What I mean by utility is the adaptability of the clothing to the work performed. For example, denim overalls are more suitable for farming than a three-piece double-knit suit in a pastel color. The tights and leotard worn by many characters might be great from the standpoint of comfort and movement, but they would hardly stand up to a back-alley skirmish.

Also, the utility of the uniform is expanded by the inclusion of various tools of the trade, which we will go into later. The ability to carry these tools conveniently is a necessary feature of the super-hero's uniform.

A third advantage of the uniform is its psychological effect. An opponent, momentarily startled by your appearance, can give you valuable seconds to gain the upper hand. For purposes of intimidation, a menacing countenance can do wonders. And, as anyone who was ever 'tricked' instead of 'treated' on Halloween can attest to, the shock value of a costume is tremendous. Simply seeing someone in unconventional clothing (especially a skeleton) darting at you from the darkness is a disturbing experience, to say the least.

The psychological effect is twofold. Not only does the person who beholds the disguise become affected, but the person wearing it as well. The uniform you choose will represent that identity to you, and that identity will be reinforced every time you wear it. This reaction is similar to what is happening with the ring ritual mentioned earlier, when you don that mask, it is triggering a post-hypnotic suggestion in your subconscious that tells you that you are getting down to business, that you are no longer the person you were a moment before.

Another attribute of the uniform, although related, is that of demonstrating a certain identity or ideals represented. Recall pictures of the knights of medieval times. They had symbols on their shields and breastplates. These symbols represented their family crest, the castle they fought for, or (as in the crusades) the religion they fought for- many knights bore the Christian cross on their shields.

It is common for the characters in the comics to display crest of some kind on the chest of their costumes. However, in your case, it is advisable to do just the opposite. A complete lack of distinguishing characteristics will get you out of a tight spot if you are interrupted retreating from the scene of some action.

For example, if you were to happen upon a mugging and knock the daylights out of the culprits--the victim will frequently be so emotionally upset that he/she will not realize what is happening and not recognize you as being on their side. While you are struggling with the attackers, the victim screens and attracts the police.

Even though you have apprehended the criminals, it will be a little hard to explain to the police. What kind of person goes roaming around at night wearing a mask? It will be difficult to make anyone understand that you hide your face for fear of reprisals from the criminal element.

So, realizing all this, and also that the victim may have mistaken you for another of the gang, you make a hasty exit. You are pursued. Running up alleys, leaping over fences, you have no chance to make a fast change of Identity. If you remove your mask, you are in worse trouble because you still have a blazing red "S" or some such nonsense on your chest to give you away. If you stop long enough to make a complete change, you will be caught. And it's hard to dispose of flowing capes and skin-tight outfits properly.

Now consider this. Your uniform is a simple set of dark clothes, say, navy blue. Your mask is a toboggan with eyeholes cut out. And possibly a reversible jacket is part of the suit, navy on one side and a lighter color on the other.

Now as you are making your disappearance, you roll up the toboggan into an ordinary-looking hat (or stash it in a garbage can), turn your jacket around and presto! A different person! And navy blue is easily mistaken for black, so if examined in the light, your clothes are a different color than the one who's being pursued.

So you just make the switch, turn around and walk in the opposite direction, and say "He went that-a-way, officers!"

You're probably getting the message by now. Keep it simple! If you need to have a shock effect on someone, it will most likely be a planned thing, so you can prepare ahead of time. A full skeleton costume, or something with great impact, complete with smoke bombs to give you a good entrance— all can be used effectively to intimidate the enemy. If nothing else, even the most hard-boiled adversary will think he's dealing with a maniac and be a little worried. After all, what's more frightening than a crazy man with a weapon? He might use it even if you give him no cause.

So save the exaggerated stuff for those occasions when you have time to plan a complete line of action and have your escape route mapped out. Plan for the unexpected, too!

Now the best uniform I ever saw was made from an old black turtleneck shirt which was cut down the middle from the top of the neck. A zipper was then installed so that it could be removed without having to pull it over the head. The high neck was closed with a couple snaps. The pants matched the top, of course.

The mask was made from another old pullover stretch shirt. Made into a kind of large sock, it slipped over the head and nothing but the whites of the eyes showed. The mask tucked in the high neck of the turtleneck. It reached down to the collarbone, so it wouldn't pull out very easily.

When it came time for a quick change, the wearer unsnapped the neck with one tug, unzipped the top, and pulled it off, revealing a completely different set of clothes. Frequently, he wore a dress shirt and tie underneath.

The mask (always remove the mask last) was stowed with the shirt and other equipment in a briefcase hidden near the scene. But sometimes a paper bag was used which was folded and hidden in a pocket. Then, you would not suspect anything when you saw him coming out of a nearby store with his 'shopping' under his arm. Or in a pinch, the bag could be thrown into someone's garbage can.

Who was that masked man, anyway?

Although the LONE RANGER wore a mask, no one would have known who he was, anyway. He didn't live in the town, didn't have a normal job and social life. But he wore the mask as a symbol. The evildoer knew the Ranger could be anywhere, unrecognized, by simply removing his mask. And it was a great power object besides. Let me show you what I mean.

When I was about twelve or thirteen, I had a pair of sunglasses I was fond of. They were of a distinctively different design which wrapped around the head with no hinges. I loved them.

I thought they were so 'cool' that I wore them everywhere. My mother got annoyed when I wore them in the house. Not because she thought they would ruin my eyes. Not because she didn't like them (she had a pair of her own). There was another reason which I didn't realize for a while.

One time we were having an argument and she kept interrupting herself to say "Take those sunglasses off while I'm talking to you!" Being really angry at the time, I kept them on. The longer I kept wearing them, the redder she got.

"Why?" I said, "The light hurts my eyes".

"I can't talk to you when you have those sunglasses on!" she replied.

I still kept them on and the next time she mentioned it I asked again, "Why? What do the sunglasses have to do with it?"

"I CAN'T SEE YOUR EYES!", she screamed.

It was then that I realized for the first time what a psychological effect this had on people. I began to experiment. I mentally tabulated the number of times anyone would argue with me or give me trouble. I found that wearing the sunglasses kept others from arguing with me and the next time my mother and I had such a confrontation, I put them on in the middle of the dispute. While she had been getting the upper hand before, as soon as I put them on, there was a noticeable change. Her voice lowered, and she found difficulty in looking at me directly. All because she couldn't see my eyes.

And I thought of all the 'cool' characters—the tough guys who wore their 'shades' all the time. Maybe this was one reason they were tough guys.

In later years I used this on my boss, who was chewing me out as a part of his morning routine. I calmly pulled out my sunglasses (a more up-to-date pair which look so much like prescription glasses I let him think they were) and put them on. Then, as his attitude began to change, I moved over to the window, so that my back was to the light. Now to look at me he had to twist in his chair as well as stare into the sunlight.

What this suggests to his mind is that he is not in the top position any longer. He is straining before me, unable to look me in the eye, while I am relaxed and looking down at him squirming in his seat.

After chuckling over this test of my newly-found power, I made it a point to always have my sunglasses on when I was around him. And he always had a hard time trying to be forceful and commanding with me after that.

The next experience I had which gave me insight into this psychological warfare was more graphic. I had a party for a co-worker who was leaving the store where we both worked. There were stony friends there and we all polished off more beer than we needed to.

As with all parties, the evening (or early morning) ended with only four of us left. By this time we were pretty tipsy and for a laugh, they persuaded me to put on a Spider-man costume I'd worn to a previous Halloween party. I got it out of the closet, put it on, and suggested we drive around town that way. They put on masks, too, and we jumped into the car to see what kind of reactions we would get.

Now I should tell you that this costume was really authentic looking and, of course, a drunk will do anything. We pulled up at red lights and I would jump out and surprise the driver next to us. The reactions were tremendous!

We went to a supermarket that was open all night. Two employees were taking their breaks outside when I sprung out at them. Once recovered from the shock, they were really thrilled! They treated me like a celebrity and even wanted me to go inside to meet their co-workers.

But the reaction of the evening came when we stopped the car next to a truck about 3 am. The driver, obviously a farmer, glanced over and I waved to him.

I have never seen such sheer fright on a person's face before or since. He grabbed his wife on the seat beside him and began yelling something to her. She was equally shocked. I waved again, and they feebly moved their hands in recognition. Of course, no farmer has any idea who Spider-man is, and to see an outfit like that for the first time would be shocking. But even if he had read comics, neither he nor anyone else actually expects to see those characters roaming the streets.

I got a little bolder and began jumping up on the hoods of cars to get their reactions. One guy must have been a Spider-man fan, because he jumped up and down, laughed, pounded the dashboard, and yelled "I can't believe It!"

If we saw a group of people walking, I'd run over to talk to them. They all thought it was funny, but no one would get too close to me.

Afterward, back at the house, we all laughed about the evening's events and I noticed another thing.

I still had the costume on, and my friends were acting funny. Finally they all said "Take off your mask." When I asked why, they said they had trouble talking to me when I had the mask on. One said he didn't feel like it was me, the others said it was because they couldn't see my facial expressions.

The next day I thought a lot about the whole experience and realized several things:

- 1) Masks and/or costumes throw people off-balance mentally.
- 2) Looking like someone else makes you feel and therefore act like someone else.
- 3) You are less inhibited mentally when your face is masked (OK, the beer helped a little).
- 4) People's fear of the unknown is aroused by unorthodox appearances.
- 5) Many people have the secret desire to do things like this, and have a strange admiration for anyone who actually does.
- 6) When you are disguised, no one is sure of what you are up to, or capable of doing (if that farmer had had a shotgun, I might have been in BIG trouble).

So my amusing anecdotes have a purpose. They tell you just how I came to realize that super-hero traditions had practical foundations. And from there I came to know that these ideas did not simply jump from a writer's head and remain on paper.

The more I got around, the more I found that there was evidence that real super-heroes exist. It was only natural- after all, if someone was bold enough to go jumping on cars, costume-clad, in a downtown area, then someone SOMEWHERE would be doing the same thing for a more legitimate purpose than simply having fun.

But it is fun, and it's no crime to have fun doing it. In fact, if you don't, then your enthusiasm is probably not high enough for you to do a very good job at it.

Just remember, you will be doing things which are not acceptable in everyday society, particularly by the police. Then again there is the aforementioned trouble of gang vengeance. Or the political 'pull' of a crooked enemy with high connections.

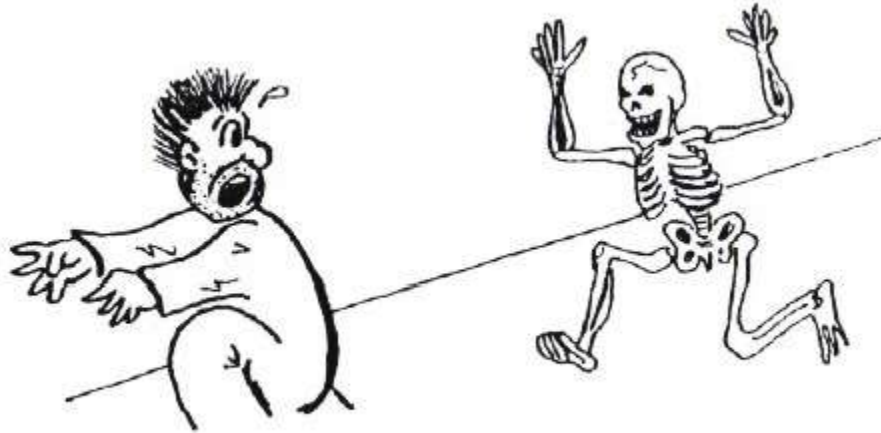
Even though it's fun, it's not a GAME. Before you move, you must make sure that you are right in doing what you are about to, and only after weighing the consequences carefully. You could be thrown in jail, or carted off to the laughing academy, depending on how they view your sanity. Or, if you are careless, you could be exposed by your enemies and then have to hide from them. That is, if you can- one former superhero in the New York area simply disappeared after a powerful businessman he was working to expose was tipped off regarding his identity.

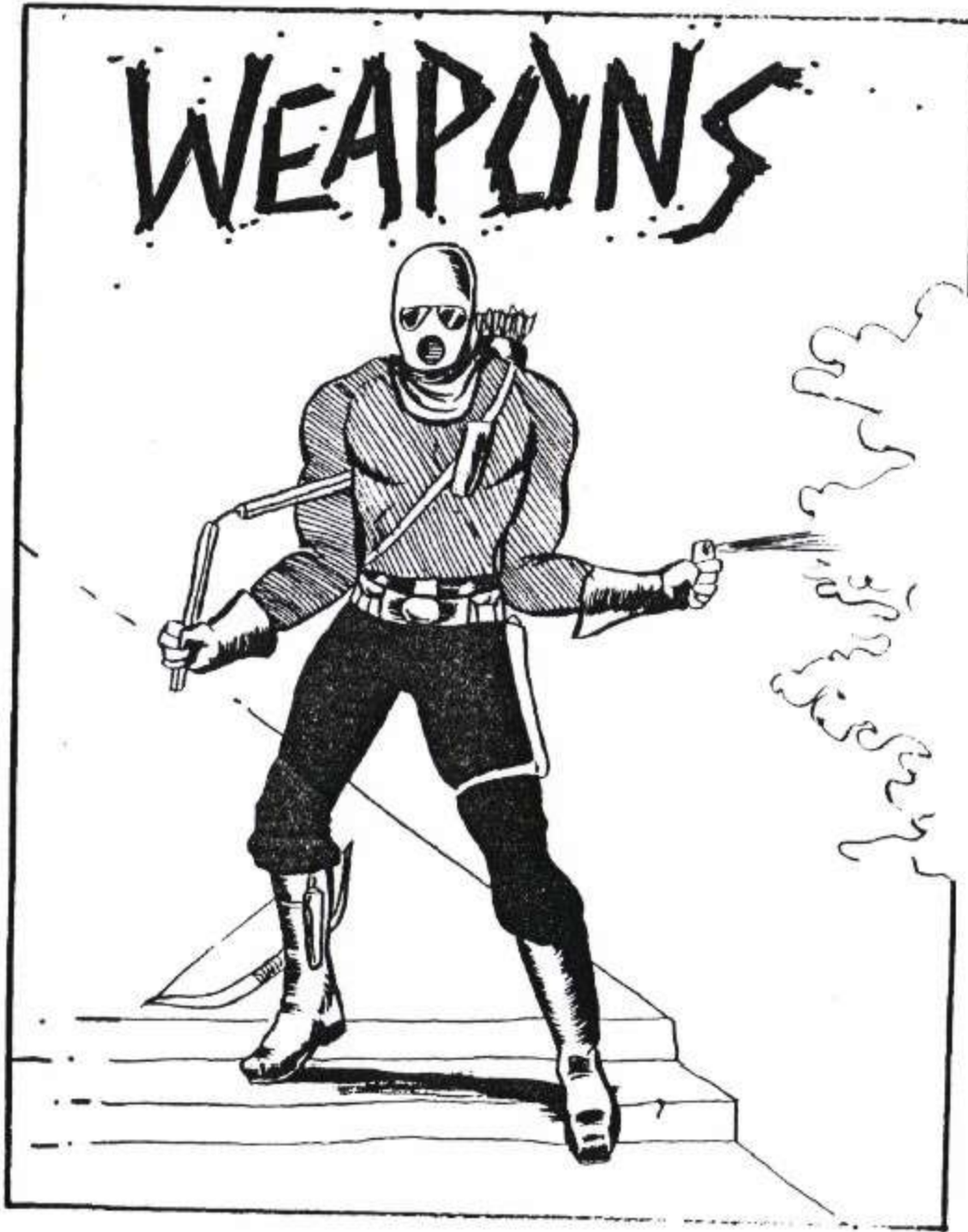
On a more positive note. It is possible to do super-heroing without ever wearing a mask, getting in a scuffle, or even leaving your own property. A little information gained from staking out a house, asking questions, and delivering the info to the right places - you can cause a whole lot of change by working behind the scenes. There has been many a time police detectives have cracked a case with information supplied by a "masked marvel" anonymous informant.

I was a private investigator by profession, and I learned that it was the unglamorous things about detective work that really produced the results. So if you don't have the dedication to sit up all night in a darkened car to see who goes in and out of a house, then you probably won't go far in the information neighborhood.

But, your functions are up to you and your situation. You are limited only by your imagination.

More on this in a later chapter.





Weapons

During the course of your super-doings, combat or self defense will take on a new meaning. While the average person's daily routine may make him subject to an occasional mugging, your expectations are much different. You must be prepared for MULTIPLE, ARMED OPPONENTS!

Don't forget this. Expect the worst. The people you will be in conflict with are the ones who play dirty. Nobody attacks someone else or picks a fight unless they are sure of winning. So don't think you're going to combat

this type of person unless you're sure of winning. After all, you're at least as smart as he is!

If you encounter a gang that is terrorizing innocent people, you'll find that the ratio is usually three to one in their favor. Even the best karate experts will have a sticky time fighting several tough guys at the same time, especially if they all have clubs or knives. And guns are another story.

So you will need some kind of 'equalizer', a weapon that suits you as an individual which expands your fighting effectiveness. The type is up to you but you must realize that if you're going after dangerous game, you have to carry dangerous armament. If you carry a little billy club like DAREDEVIL, or decide to depend on your fists like BATMAN on TV, you have some waking up to do! In real life, villains don't just lie down and go to sleep when you hit them. If you turn your back to go BAH and POW on somebody, you're likely to get a knife stuck in it.

You see, someone who commits a crime for which he'd be locked up for many years will do drastic things in order to avoid getting caught. You may find a 'wild animal' on your hands. And no matter how 'small time' you'd like to remain, there may come a time when your usual half-tough adversary pulls a gun out from under his car seat. Then he becomes a real tough guy. You won't be able to say "Hey, I only super-hero against unarmed baddies, fellah!" He's going to blow a hole through your masked head and later say you were robbing him.

So what you need is a weapon that has these features:

- 1) Effective against several opponents.
- 2) Effective against armed, as well as unarmed opponents.
- 1) Has a range of effectiveness beyond your arms' and legs' reach.
- 3) Is more powerful than your arms or legs, or more incapacitating.
- 4) Is compact and/or concealable.

Now there are many possibilities suggested by those specifications. First, we will have to return to the subject of martial arts. By the time you are ready to use the knowledge in these later chapters, you should have been training for a good while, gaining fighting skill and experience. If your karate school is of an Okinawa style, you will probably be taught the use of the traditional peasant weapons when you are advanced enough. These are the BO, SAI, TONFA, and NUNCHAKU.

The reason I bring this up is that these are very simple but effective weapons that have been used in actual combat for hundreds of years. And they illustrate a very important principle: PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT.

The use of these old weapons is never taught independently, but only as a part of karate training. The reason for this is that these weapons are used as extensions of the body itself. A karate expert who has never trained with one of these tools can pick one up and learn to use it in a relatively short time as compared with a beginner. Why? Because he has already mastered the important things--balance, timing, application of strength, body coordination, etc. When you use one of these Okinawan weapons, it is just like using karate. Only when you punch, you have a stick in your hand that extends the range of the punch. If you don't know how to punch properly, then

you won't be able to use the stick properly. It's as simple as that. Also, if you practiced with the weapon exclusively, there would be the danger that if you were unarmed, you would be defenseless. A karate practitioner is never without his natural weapons!

So, these ancient tools of the Okinawan peasant fit the bill very nicely because they were created for the same reasons- the farmers were forbidden to have weapons, so in order to defend themselves from sword-wielding warriors, they had to use everyday objects like rice flails or grindstone handles. Everything was viewed as a potential weapon, and that is what you must do in order to find what is right for you.

The greatest value has been that these things don't look the slightest bit like weapons. Now that Bruce Lee's movies have introduced the American public to them, however, that no longer holds true. Almost everyone now knows what a nunchaku is and many (possibly your own) states have made it illegal to carry them, so watch out, even if you are just bringing them home from practice. Of course, wearing a mask and carrying weapons while leaping over rooftops is against the law, too, so I guess we don't have to dwell on the legalities of this.

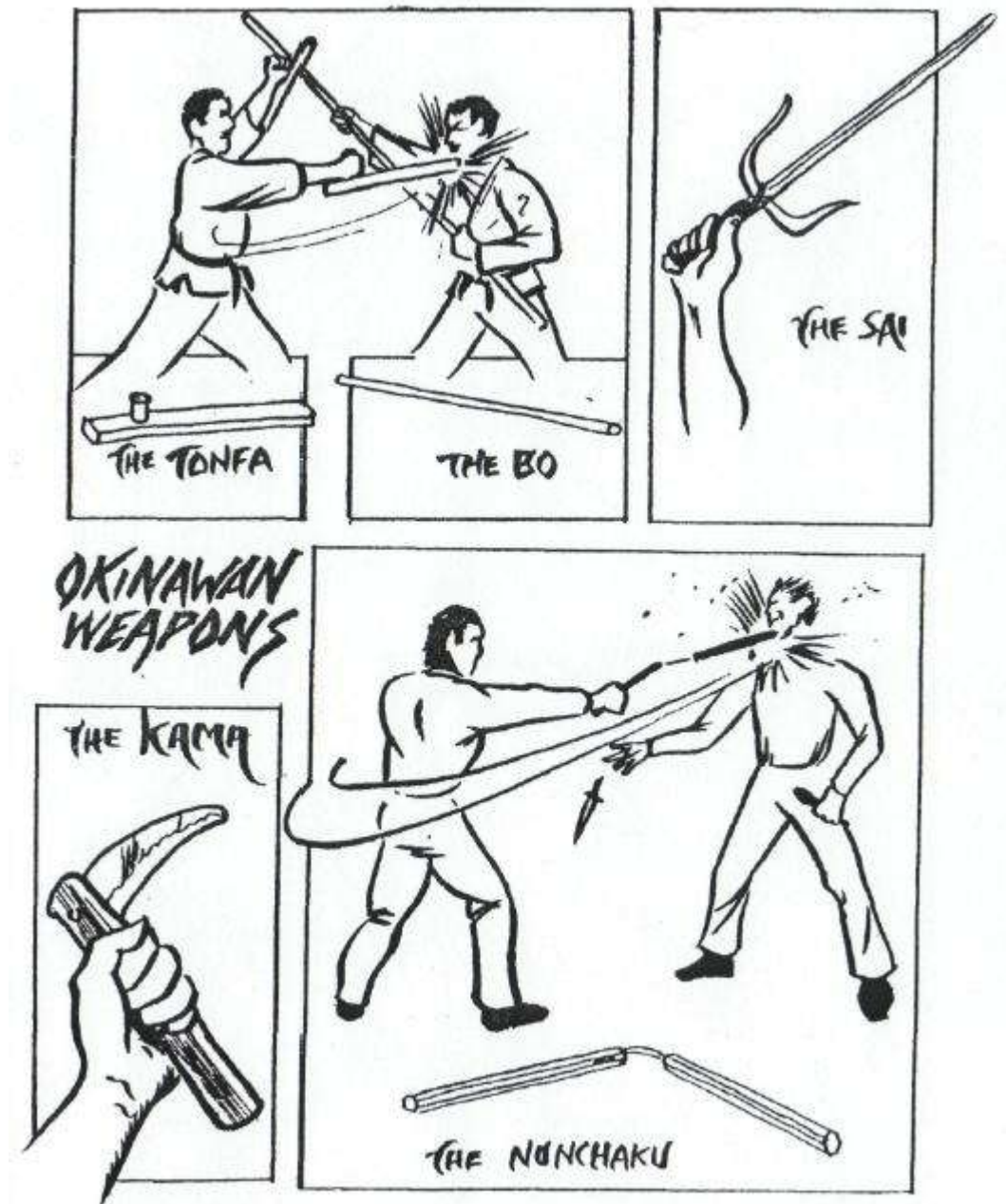


While we are on the subject of the nunchaku, you might consider it as one of your tools as it is an excellent weapon and fulfills all of the requirements previously mentioned. It more than doubles the range of your arm, and delivers devastating power. It is (if you haven't seen one by now) made of two sticks of hardwood about 12 to 14 inches long, connected by a short length of rope or chain. One stick is held while the other is spun at the opponent. The force that is generated by swinging the opposite end is incredible (I've broken boards with one). One disadvantage, if you call it one, is that you must be very good with the thing to keep from injuring yourself, and again, that means practice, practice, and more practice. But it's well worth it to have one of the few weapons that can be used around corners and besides, you'd better become familiar with it because almost all the street punks are carrying them these days. That's why they were outlawed. But punks rarely have the discipline to really master its use, so don't get cold feet.

A chain is a favorite weapon of the street fighter and it can be used effectively against the nunchaku. Especially if it's one of the Japanese variety, called a MANRIKIGUSARI. This is a length of chain with steel weights on each end. It can be swung, thrown, used to trap or block, and the weights used for striking. It can be concealed easily and is very versatile. The only trouble is that there is no one teaching its use. But there is a book called SPIKE AND CHAIN, by Charles Gruzanski (Tuttle Pub. Co.--about \$3.00) which will tell you much about it and you can become fairly proficient from this instruction. The manrikigusari itself is now being manufactured and is available from several martial arts supply houses. Check the ads in the martial arts magazines at your newsstand.

Knight Owl additional reference:

http://www.amazon.com/Spike-Chain-Charles-V-Gruzanski/dp/0804805407/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1293182422&sr=8-2



The weapon that is my personal favorite, which I rely heavily upon; is a bit more modern. It is manufactured and requires almost no training or practice to make it effective. It can paralyze group of attackers from ten feet away and can be concealed in a pocket. What is this gadget?

Back In the golden age of comics, there was a character called THE SANDMAN. This was due to his habit of putting people to sleep with a gas. It

must have put the readers to sleep, too, because there is no such type of character today.

But I loved THE SANDMAN, especially because he wore an ordinary business suit and hat, and his face was hidden by the gas mask he wore. He was very down-to-earth. And then there was the GREEN HORNET with his gas gun. So, it didn't take me very long to consider the advantages of using a gas weapon; in my case, tear gas.

Tear gas dispensers are very available commercially. I use CS type tear gas, the same as used by the U.S. Army and other military outfits. Most police forces, as you probably know, use 'chemical mace', a milder form of the CS tear gas.

Tear gas induces a burning, stinging sensation which makes it impossible to see. Breathing is very difficult, and coughing and crying are the two major effects it has on the opponent. In other words, he doesn't feel much like fighting!

Now while you have to be protected a bit yourself (stay upwind or wear a respirator of some kind), you can see the advantages to this type of weapon. And it produces no lasting damage, which gives you a wider range of possibilities in dealing with people. That is, you may not be able to avoid cracking someone's head with a nunchuku during a scuffle, even though that wasn't your intention. With the gas, you can neutralize him and then do what you want with him, whether it's tie him up for the police or teach him a good lesson.

Do NOT buy one of those little tear gas pens that look like fat hypodermic needles. These are advertised in the back pages of most magazines. They are worthless. Apart from being ineffective, they cannot be used at anything other than close range, so forget them. They are not even good for what they are advertised for--women's defense against purse snatchers.

The blank .22 pistol gas guns are not much better. They fire little tear gas cartridges which expel the gas in a cloud around the gun. You'd have to press the barrel against the guy's nose to get him to breathe any gas!

The only reliable form is the canister type seen on the next page. With one finger you can spray it over ten feet away in a second. They are usually good for 50 to 100 'shots'.

The problem of protecting yourself can be overcome by wearing a paint mask under your outer mask. These masks are to protect you from paint fumes and can be found at hardware or paint stores. There are also versions made for spraying insecticides which are really potent poisons, so these are good for tear gas, too.

You definitely want something to guard your eyes from the fumes, so look into a pair of goggles. You will probably end up looking like the SANDMAN, but you could do worse. They could find you groping around, coughing. In a cloud of your own tear gas. So if you plan any kind of major skirmish where you will be using a lot of the gas, be smart and prepare!



A good CS tear gas product is the "PARALYZER". It is sold by Defense Products Mfg. Co., 1628 South Hanley Rd., St. Louis, Missouri 63144. Their literature says "sale prohibited to minors," so if you are underage, make sure you type your letter so they will assume they are dealing with an adult. Ask for information on their tear gas products, and say you are interested in a "police unit," model # X621. It will probably run you about \$6 or so.

During the course of writing this book, I've had numerous discussions about mentioning firearms. And I want to do that- at least mention them- because I don't want any readers to have a 'fairy tale' view of the real world out there.

It is beyond the scope of this book to prepare anyone to deal with 'big league' enemies - professional killers, high-level criminal combines, seasoned murderers, etc. And this is the game which merits the use of firearms. The prey which cannot be handled easily without guns- the ultimate tool for killing.

Therefore, guns are not recommended, whether you are licensed or not, for super-heroing. The police and FBI exist for hunting the 'big game', and their training is more adapted for it than yours ever could be. The type of foe you will usually run into is the relatively unskilled criminal. Or he may be someone who bends the law so that he isn't even technically a criminal at all.

The professional killer is a trained assassin with no regard for human life. He will have as few qualms about shooting the person who tries to stop him as he does about shooting the victim. In the world of high-level crime, people who interfere with profits are rubbed out with no emotion or ceremony. It is just a business matter for them and any obstacles to the business have to be removed.

But the violent crimes committed by the street gangs, the muggers, the small-time strong-arm men, the bullies--these are mats performed by unskilled criminals, and thereby pose a different kind of threat. The mugger who is armed may get off a round or two at you, but it will be a quick, panicked shot that comes your way. Not one with the accuracy of the syndicate killer's, whose skill is honed as sharp as any Marine marksman.

No, unlike the professional assassin, the street punk is a nervous individual who only appears tough (he wouldn't need a gang if he really were). He wants things to go smoothly and isn't out for mass bloodshed. He isn't apt to spend much time developing his accuracy or speed with his weapon. So it is possible to handle him without blowing a hole in him. Besides, there's always the question of whether the person who shoots a killer is a killer himself. Morally, the answer will differ with the individual, and legally. It will vary with the circumstances. But what we don't want is for the super-hero to become the same type of person he is combating. There are ways and there are ways.

For example, there is a group in New York that has been quite effective in preventing armed robbery with no weapons used at all. Personally, I've always thought the super-hero tradition of swinging down and going ZAP and POWIE with just, the fists was totally unrealistic and could never be applied. But I'm happy to say that this super-hero team has proven me wrong. You will read about them in the last chapter of this book.

The only reason we've had to discuss weapons in the first place is that super-heroes find themselves in threatening situations more often than everyday folks. If you attempt to prevent a crime, you are doing something lawful- a citizen's arrest. If the criminal attacks you and you defend yourself, you are doing something lawful--self-defense. But ONLY if you use just enough force to insure your safety; not if you permanently injure the guy when he attacked you with less-than-deadly force.

Needless to say, firearms are more of a liability here than anything else. It's difficult not to inflict a serious wound with a gun. So if you didn't get the message yet, avoid the things.

An interesting weapon which has been used extensively in the comics is the bow. The arrow could be said to be the father of the bullet. It is a weapon which can be used at long range, much longer than its predecessor, the spear. It was used to start fires, give signals, and defeat an enemy without having to match skill with him (as with a sword).

Yes, the arrow revolutionized warfare* back in the dark ages. And I can see it revolutionizing super-heroing today. Remember GREEN ARROW's trick arrows? One for a smoke screen, one for releasing a net, one for releasing tear gas. Get the picture?

Think what an arrow with a rubber bulb instead of a head would do. It wouldn't kill someone, but it would knock them out in a hurry. Arrows can go through doors, walls, cars, even. With a good bow and practice, you can shoot the tires off a car from a distance and nobody would see what happened. When the occupants got out, you could fire a gas arrow into their midst and drop a net over them while they were gagging.

Now I'll admit a bow is a little hard to carry. And even GREEN ARROW'S was collapsible. But it's possible to make a small bow that would still pack a lot of power. Or better yet, a crossbow! These have the advantage of using shafts instead of arrows, which don't need feathers, so it's possible to make your own. Experiment. See what you can come up with. Just remember, even though it's not a gun, you are carrying a deadly weapon--and most states don't even allow crossbows for legal hunting.

There is no limit to what you can do if your imagination is fertile. We've covered the whole range here, but there are hundreds of specific things that couldn't even be touched on. Your weapons will be just that- YOURS. What you do with them is up to YOU and I don't advise you to use anything that can harm someone unless your life or well-being is threatened.

ONLY IN SELF-DEFENSE is the rule to follow.





GETTING INTO ACTION

By this time you're probably wondering just what real-life super-heroes do. If there are no mad scientists running loose or monsters roaming the streets, no threat of invasion from other planets, etc., what do they spend their time doing?

Well, perhaps there are no villains quite as exaggerated or colorful as the comics'. But there are real 'mad scientists' threatening us every day. The industries that pollute our air, land and water have skilled professors and technicians on staff who disregard nature and public safety to keep on the payroll. They are paid to find the cheapest methods of operating and disposing of wastes for the profit-hungry industrialists, who continually find ways to side-step government regulations.

The environmentalist movement has made it harder for them to do it, but money is powerful. It is hard to oppose fat-cat factory owners who can put pressure on you for protesting their activities. You can suddenly find yourself without a job and not know why, until you put it together that your boss is a friend or otherwise influenced by the business you've caused public embarrassment. In other words, you are penalized for calling to attention another's crimes.

Unless you assume the super-hero's role in place of the protestor's role. A good example is "The Fox". In 1971, a company that was grossly polluting the river of a Midwestern city was under fire from the first organized environmentalists. The officials of the firm had enough aloofness to protect them from concern with the charges. As long as it didn't get too much publicity, they didn't feel too threatened.

Then The Fox entered the scene. He exposed some of the company's practices of dumping waste into the river through anonymous activities. He sabotaged a few of their operations and the press began to take notice. In a crowning piece of super-hero work, he entered the company's offices and painted the executives' walls with the foul-smelling chemical waste he found pouring into the river.



The newspapers had a field day with the story. The officials of the company had a hard time claiming that the stinking stuff was harmless. The Fox had made his point, called public attention to the problem, initiated widespread pressure on such violations of environmental protection, and became the hero of young and old. All without revealing his identity. In

fact, he even inspired imitators, like "The Bear", who appeared on the scene not long after.

This story is also interesting because of its parallel with one of fiction's most celebrated super-heroes, ZORRO. As Don Diego, he would not speak out against government and political oppression, so as not to hamper his efforts. But as ZORRO, he fought taxation and unfair treatment of peasants. Don Diego seemed uncaring about such issues, while he gained important information by being friendly with the authorities. And in his other identity, he fought them. Incidentally, in Spanish, ZORRO means "the fox".

Knight Owl additional reference: "James Phillips, 70, Environmentalist Who Was Called the Fox"

So, whatever your pet causes are, you can help- them out anonymously more often than by sticking your neck out. Having your stands publicly known is a sure way to get stopped. If The Fox had been a loud protestor in his other identity, he'd have been picked up by the police after his first act.

Using that story as a bit of inspiration (more on real-life heroes in the next chapter), we will now examine the potential ways you can operate.

Most of the time, your calls to action won't necessarily come from a daily or nightly patrol for evildoers. It will usually result from someone you know being involved in trouble of some kind. So there will rarely be the need to dash into an alley and tear off your clothes to reveal a costume underneath. This has been explained in the section on the uniform.

But there are super-heroes who do make patrols, most notably the neighborhood "vigilante squads" who police high-crime areas. These are neighbors who have banded together to catch criminals where the police forces are too undermanned to patrol frequently. One such group in Chicago ride in their private cars, keeping in touch by two-way radio. Many of them carry guns (which are legally licensed) and they are led by a karate expert resident whose 70-year old parents were mugged outside their own home.

This squad has been responsible for hundreds of citizen's arrests, and has reduced crime drastically in that section of the city. They are looked down upon by the police officials, but they break no laws and have rendered an incredible public service. Residents are loyal to them. Police officers ask their assistance frequently, though their supervisors are irritated by the fact. The average patrolman there admits that these citizens are effective where the police force is not.

Which brings us to the subject of group action. There are many advantages to super-heroing in numbers, providing you know like-minded people who have the same desires as you.

If you have friends such as these, then it is best that you team up. First of all, the inspiration gained during training would be very valuable. No one is as likely to give up If he Is Involved with other people. If your effort is united, then you will make good progress, because you will always be checking each other and getting valuable feedback. You can test your combat skills with each other, share ideas on how to operate, etc.

Secondly, it makes a big difference to you mentally to know you are not alone. That is one reason for this book. You are not alone in your desires

and now you know you don't have to be embarrassed about them. If you have friends whom you suspect of having similar thoughts as yourself, introduce them to this book. Once they've read it (of course, I hope they BUY it), talk about it and get their reactions. Chances are if they liked it, it won't be long before you are formulating plans of some kind.

Also, you are more powerful in a group. More likely to win in a skirmish involving multiple opponents, more of a deterrent, too. People do not want to mess with a whole team of mysterious, masked characters. And you can get more done with several members—more places can be staked out, more problems can be dealt with. You will have backups if you really get involved, and also better protection of your identity. For instance, if you are suspected of being the Masked Thingamajig, you can arrange for one of your partners to make an appearance as yourself, while you are present. The possibilities are endless.

And, of course, just the fun of being able to discuss adventures with someone else makes it all worthwhile. Provided you all really trust each other, the group will be a never-ending source of inspiration and support for each of its members. So, if it's possible, team up!

You may feel like a loner now, but there's truth in the old saying "strength in numbers", and once you read about the Magnificent 13, a super-hero team profiled in the next chapter, you'll see how this adage can be effectively applied in combating street crime. And can it ever!

Even if you don't live in a high-risk area as far as crime goes, you can get involved in some police cases from time to time by means of a sneaky gadget called a scanner. A scanner, if you're not familiar with C.B. radios and the like, is a radio receiver with crystals for several channels (meaning they can pick up conversations on different frequencies but cannot send out signals—not a two-way radio). The scanner monitors those channels it is set up to receive and when a call is picked up on any one, it is locked in and plays the conversation.

The crystals which are commonly used in scanners are those channels used by aircraft, ambulances, and police forces.

You can listen to the scanner and pick up calls from the police dept. to patrol cars, informing them of some crime and the location. If your scanner is mounted in your car, you might be closer and arrive first. Or you might pick up an ambulance call and rush there to help out until the ambulance gets there. There are loads of possibilities and it's exciting.

In small to mid-sized towns, the local police force usually uses one channel for its calls. In larger cities, though, they may use two channels, one for sending and one for receiving. This is done to prevent your listening in— you will only hear the station or the patrol car, depending on which crystal you have. Most state police agencies do this, because they have larger budgets for more sophisticated equipment. But this can be solved by getting two scanners, if you have the money. Usually, a scanner won't handle both crystals you want at the same time.

But talk with someone at an electronics store that sells C.B. radios and scanners and ask about which crystals you would need for your area. Your local RADIO SHACK store or similar outfit is a good source. Usually they have a scanner set up in the store for their own enjoyment, listening to the police or airplane calls. Let them advise you as to which crystals to have

installed to hear what you want. Don't be worried. There is nothing illegal about listening to what goes out over the air waves. The salesman is not going to hassle you because he thinks you are going to use the scanner to be a masked do-gooder.

So let's say you have a scanner or other good source of action. Getting around is the next step. As mentioned before, it's best to have a mobile scanner that mounts in your car than a home unit (and cheaper). If you do, you can have a really exciting time because you can respond instantly to anything you hear about. Your car can carry your extra clothing and equipment and be good protection besides.

A motorcycle is an excellent conveyance for a super-hero. It's fast, maneuverable, and hard to identify- to most people, all motorcycles look the same. If being pursued, you can go through yards, narrow alleyways- places cars can't go. Always keep your license plates muddy, though, so your number can't be seen. Always rub some dirt over them before any super-doings.

There's also the advantage of the motorcycle helmet. In addition to protecting you from harm, it effectively conceals your face. Sort of a mask that can be worn in public.

Also it comes in handy by concealing and/or reinforcing a gas mask and can even be used as a weapon!

If you are on foot or cycle, there are little scanners available that fit in your pocket. They usually have only four channels, though, as opposed to the eight or more on the regular ones. But they're worth looking into.

Why would anyone want to do all this? Why would anyone even buy this book, some might ask. Well, it's no longer satisfying to fantasize about being policemen, FBI agents, etc. The system is too corrupt today for any idealistic person to work within it. This is why the need for super-heroes is greater than ever.

For example, I wanted to be a detective the whole time I was growing up. When I did grow up, I became a private investigator with a detective agency. I soon found out that you don't always know what you're dealing with. Information I'd gather would be used to ruin peoples' lives. A scheming person would hire me to watch an innocent person, using me to intimidate them. I was for sale to the first bidder, whether they were in the right or not.

And when someone tried to kill me, he was never prosecuted because his father had connections with the governor. All of which made me realize: THE POWERFUL CORRUPT USE INNOCENT MIDDLE MEN TO CONTROL THE WEAK FOR THEIR OWN PROFIT.

The middle men have included myself, or staff workers whom the bosses use to do their dirty work, and various other people who are too intimidated to stand up and fight. Unfortunately, also included in this category very often, is the police.

The police's hands are tied often by the regulations which prevent them from stopping crime and restoring justice. Someone who commits continual crimes is back out on the street every time thanks to a slick lawyer. The police know someone is responsible for a crime but they can't get anyone to testify because the guilty party has threatened everybody into turning their

heads. THERE ARE CRIMES BEYOND THE LAW'S REACH, INJUSTICE THAT CANNOT BE FOUGHT WITH RULES AND REGULATIONS. THESE ARE THE SUPER-HERO'S CONCERNS!



MORE TRUE STORIES OF REAL-LIFE SUPER-HEROES

A man who owned several apartment buildings was a fairly contented guy. He was stable financially, and he had just recently been married after a long period of bachelorhood. He and his new wife didn't entertain very frequently. They were very peace-loving people, happy to stay at home. We'll call them Jim and Jane.

His wife's best friend was named Betty. The two were quite close, and Betty would call on Jane from time to time to ask advice regarding her stormy marriage. Betty's husband was a hot-tempered man who had been increasingly rough on her in recent years. He would slap her about 1f he was upset, and on several occasions severely bruised her on the arms and legs. Betty tearfully hung on because of their two young children.

Jim and Jane were always at a loss for suggestions. If Betty left him, she would have to find a way to support, herself and the children. Betty had never worked and her husband was wealthy. Betty's husband refused to admit he had a problem and was always apologetic after beating her. So she always returned.

One night, Betty arrived at Jim and Jane's unexpectedly with her children. She was crying, her lips swollen and bloody- Her eyes were blackened, and one arm was so badly bruised they suspected it was broken. She asked if she could stay the night.

Jim and Jane were shocked, especially because the idea of marital violence was totally foreign to them. Jane was fuming over his treatment of her closest friend and Jim was determined to see that Betty was aided in any way possible to prosecute her husband.

But the more he looked into the matter, he began to realize that even the best domestic violence task forces were limited. They would try to set up counseling sessions to help the husband but usually he would revert to his old battering ways before too long.

Jim was returning from a lawyer friend's house when he found the front door of his house splintered.

"Betty's husband found out she was here and tried to get in," Jane informed him.

Since Betty's husband was fairly wealthy and influential, and Jim's lawyer had given him pessimistic news about prosecution, an idea began to hatch in Jim's brain.

He'd been shocked by the grim reality of domestic violence. And he decided to do something about it, in the only way he knew how. Especially since he was now involved. Violence had come to his door. He had to repel it. He became "The Phantom Avenger"!

Wearing an old track suit and toboggan ski mask, Jim waited for Betty's husband outside his home. He'd been a fairly good boxer in his college days, and Jim decided to brush up- with a live partner.

Betty's husband pulled up the driveway and exited his car, an expensive white Continental. As he opened his front door, Jim hit him with a flying tackle that carried them both into the living room. Betty's husband looked up at Jim and cried, "Who are you?"

"I'm the Phantom Avenger and I'm going to teach you a lesson you'll never forget!"

With that, Jim hit his opponent with a terrific right that sent him sprawling over the coffee table. Pouncing on him, he raised him up to his feet by gripping the man's throat. He tried unsuccessfully to fight back, but The Phantom Avenger was too much for him. A flurry of blows knocked the wife beater across the room, each one hitting the mark. His mouth was bubbling red.

"You like slapping women around, eh?", the Phantom Avenger asked. "Well, get this. If you try to get at Betty, at Jane and Jim's house or anywhere else, I'll be back to give you a real sample of what I can do!"

With the message across, he slammed the man's face down onto the end table. "That's so everybody will know what happened to you! And tell all your wife-beating friends!", he called as he walked out the door.

The light of dawn showed to all in the upper-class neighborhood this message painted in huge letters on the front of the house: WIFE BEATER. The fancy white Continental also had brilliant red words added by Jim before he left: I BEAT MY WIFE; I'M A CRUMB; and THE PHANTOM AVENGER PUNISHED ME.

Jim had been bored for a good many years, not having to put in a full day's work like others, just retiring to his books and business details. His life was peaceful, but at the same time a sense of purpose was missing. He'd found it now. He converted space in one of his buildings and founded a home for battered women. Businessman friends aided in employing Betty and others like her. A tragic incident changed a man's whole life style. And occasionally, a drunken and violent wife beater is found tied to a tree with a sign about his neck:

"THE PHANTOM AVENGER HATES WOMAN BEATERS!"

* * *

The foregoing story illustrates how real-life heroes evolve. This was not a man who read comics and fantasized about being Captain Marvel. This was a serious-minded individual who saw a problem he could help correct and was wise enough to see that working within the system was not going to get the job done. He was also motivated by an emotional charge.

He didn't think of himself as a costumed do-gooder in the comic book sense. His using the name "Phantom Avenger" was mostly in jest- his sense of

humor showing. But it was also the use of a tactic instinctively used by superhero types and that is: establish another identity for your masked self to keep your everyday self from being suspected. That is, as a masked 'somebody', Jim might have been suspected since he was directly involved. But, as "The Phantom Avenger", his foe was a little more confused, since it implied that this was a person who did this kind of thing all the time. If this was just 'another case' for the Phantom Avenger, then it would be doubtful that he was anyone the wrongdoer knew.

In the next example, we shall see how even suspecting the masked person's identity does not always do the wrongdoer any good.

* * *

Carol was a secretary in a typing pool of about twenty girls. She had moved to the city from out-of-state not long before, and therefore didn't have many close friends. She was a quiet young lady who didn't talk about herself much. No one would have suspected her of holding the black belt ranking in karate.

The supervisor in the office was a Mr. Pavone. Despised by all the girls in the office, Pavone was a woman chaser from the word 'go'. He would proposition the secretaries and threaten them with their jobs if they did not comply. If a hapless worker would chance to be in the file room alone, he would appear, blocking their exit and delivering one of his classic lines, such as "I can see you and me together, honey!"

Carol asked her co-workers if no one had ever thought to complain to the big boss, his employer. They replied that the big boss had a similar character and that he and Pavone were too close for anyone to put pressure on that way. The only answer, the girls said, was to avoid him as much as possible and try not to antagonize him.

Carol, for one, needed her job badly at that particular time, and could not afford to lose it or quit to find another. But one thing she knew- she was not about to put up with Pavone's advances.

She sat contemplating the problem at work, while watching the 'wolf' pinching the secretaries as they walked by. She knew he always initiated the new girls by asking them out. There was another girl who started to work a week before she had, and Pavone was putting her through the wringer. She must have refused him, because he was very short with her and checked her work every day, hoping to find mistakes. When he did, he would badger her about them until the young lady was in tears.

Carol noticed him giving her the eye, although the circumstances had not been right for him to make advances toward her yet. She felt sure it would not be long in coming, though, and she wisely planned to take action before there was any trouble.

She did some simple deduction. He was really a coward, afraid of anyone who would get tough with him. This was evidenced by the fact that he avoided the secretaries who were married. She could see that he wanted no part of an angry husband, and his cocksure attitude was only bolstered by the fact that he could fire anyone he liked without fear of reprimand.

The trick, she reasoned, was how to get tough with him without jeopardizing anyone's job. How to make him back off and show him that there

was something that could threaten him without going through his boss. After some deep thought on the matter, she formulated a plan of action.

He was hanging up his coat when the phone rang. A sexy voice on the line said, "Hi, Del. I've been trying to reach you since you left the office."

"Who is this? Pavone asked.

"You know who," the voice answered coyly. "I came back to the office hoping you'd be working late. I thought we might get together tonight. I bet you could show a girl a really good time."

"You know it, doll. But who are you?"

"Just come back to the office. There's nobody here but me," the voice said seductively.

Ten minutes later, Del Pavone was entering the darkened offices. The building janitors had not made it into their section yet, and there was but one light on. It was in his office. As he approached, he could see someone standing by his desk, peering through the window separating his office from the secretaries' pool. She was wearing a hat which threw a shadow across her face, the light behind her.

He entered his office to find his visitor clad in a long, flowing burgundy robe, which looked somewhat like a choir gown. The wide-brimmed hat, although out of fashion, matched the robe.

"Hey, honey, why so secretive?" he asked. The figure turned as he spoke, revealing a blank face beneath the hat which had neither detail nor expression. After a moment's shock, Pavone realized it was a woman's Halloween mask, complete with wig.

"This is why!" the voice came from motionless lips as his attention was riveted on the masked face. There was a cracking sound as pain shot up his leg. His hands went immediately to his shin, and as they did, a foot came flying up and into his face. Pavone went down to the floor with a wail, as the mysterious personage before him spread her arms, the folds of her robe making her look like some winged bird of prey. He could see in her hand the deadly nunchaku which had smashed into his sensitive shin.

"Owwwww! What is this?!", he yelled.

"You are going to be taught a lesson about how to treat women with dignity! Now stand up and bend over!"

He complied, and as he did, she pulled his hands backward between his legs, and with a couple clicks, he knew he'd been handcuffed to his own desk.

After a short discourse on how he was to treat the secretaries in his offices, she left by the fire escape, with the exasperated supervisor chained in such a manner that, if he relaxed, he would put an agonizing pressure on his crotch.

The next morning, as she arrived at work, carol was somewhat disappointed to find that Pavone was no longer chained to his desk. Evidently, the janitor had freed him later in the evening. Carol hoped it had

been much later. She'd wanted Pavone to suffer the embarrassment of having all the girls see him in his predicament.

He didn't come to work that day. As that was Friday, they didn't see him until the following week. From that time on, he stayed in his office most of the time, and was not forward with any of the secretaries, which had them all puzzled. Of course, if any of the girls had chanced to look at the paper in Pavone's typewriter that next Monday, they would have found a note reading:

REMEMBER WHAT I TOLD YOU. IF YOU GET FRESH WITH ANY OF THE GIRLS,

I'LL COME BACK AND BREAK BOTH YOUR ARMS!

~MS. MYSTERY

* * *

Now this girl was on the ball! She didn't wait for the problem to affect her directly. If anyone would be suspected, it would have been the last girl Pavone had given trouble. And this was unlikely, as Carol well knew, because she was a very short, petite girl as opposed to Carol, who was on the tall side. And, since all the girls hated him, it could have been anyone- and for all he knew, all twenty of them were in on it!

The mask and wig were a disguise that fit in the purse easily, and the robe concealed her build effectively. The nunchaku was protection and persuasion at the same time. All combined to make a lady super-hero of top caliber!

But so far we've examined loners- true life superheroes whose careers may span only a few adventures. How about those operating on a more grand scale? Those heroes with partners, even networks, of fellow adventurers- they exist also. And the following example is what was in the back of my mind when I advised you that teamwork was the preferable way to go in superhero-land.

An eight year old boy named Curtis was riding the subway home after a judo lesson. He was surrounded by eight street punks before leaving the station. After going through his judo uniform which was rolled under his arm, they believed his story about not having any money. So they decided to just rough him up instead. Although Curtis managed to throw several of his attackers, the scuffle came to an abrupt halt when he began to get the better of them. They stabbed him.

Curtis survived. When he grew older, he teamed up with a mountain-sized buddy to catch muggers. He would wear an expensive suit and attract the attackers, and his partner would emerge to even the odd. He would later remark, "They came like flies to honey!"

A real go-getter, Curt qualified for hero-hood early. At 16, he rescued six people from a burning house. He earned his nickname, "The Rock", from his troubleshooting within the tough section he grew up in. An assistant manager/bouncer for a McDonald's restaurant in the Bronx, he gained respect as a tough scrapper who kept the peace.

Then, in 1977, Curtis, "The Rock" expanded his activities to include coworkers with similar desires- to prevent crime on the streets and subways. THE MAGNIFICENT 13 was organized.

Working in shifts and always in groups of three, the 13 ride the subways from 8pm to 4am every night. They carry no weapons, which "the Rock" claims gives them their public acceptance, and toleration by the police. They wear red berets and shirts with "Magnificent 13" emblazoned in red letters across their chests. They have been very successful in aborting muggings and have made a number of citizen's arrests.

The members of the 13 are carefully chosen by "the Rock" (at the time of this writing, the number of the group has swelled to over 100, including women). They are put through six months' training for the streets before they go out on patrol. They must be capable fighters, able to handle an assault. Curtis, whose expertise has improved greatly since those early days, tests their ability himself. Another rule of his: all members must be employed or in school, and have no police record.

Although it is impossible to tell how many hundreds of crimes they have prevented simply by being a deterrent (troublemakers disappear when they see red berets), they have had their share of spectacular scrapes. Once, a woman was attacked by six muggers leaving the subway train, just as "the Rock" and two partners were making their rounds. Intercepting them, he and his fellow crimebusters saw one of the attackers pull a sawed off shotgun as they approached. The mugger aimed the gun at the woman, as Curtis made a last-chance maneuver to save her. Launching a flying kick through the air, he connected with the thug, discharging the shotgun blast into the ceiling.

As the attackers fled, Curtis plummeted 17 feet from the platform to the tracks below. His loss of balance might have proved deadly, but a pile of refuse miraculously broke his fall. "The Rock" survived again.

Aside from the two black eyes and bruises Curtis sustained in that fall, only one other member has been injured seriously; a mugger rammed him into a subway platform, breaking his jaw and hospitalizing him for two months. But even this is remarkable, considering the fact that they are on duty every night of the world and come up against armed foes who travel in packs. But they prove it can be done; the super hero concept has been taken to the streets and it's working. And 23 year old Curtis plans to initiate chapters in other cities, in rural settings as well as urban. "The country is ripe for this," he stated in a recent interview.

Knight Owl additional reference: "In New York: The Magnificent 13"

* * *

You may find inspiration in these case histories as others have. And you will have for the first time the reassurance that others have the same dream as you. Not only do they have the dream, but they make it come true. So it is up to you whether you are going to fantasize or actualize- dream or do.

The fate of society and the world may depend upon those potential heroes out there. God knows we need 'em.

GOOD LUCK!

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

James Phillips, 70, Environmentalist Who Was Called the Fox

New York Times October 22, 2001

By DOUGLAS MARTIN

James F. Phillips, an environment advocate who used flamboyant tactics like putting metal caps on top of belching smoke stacks, then leaving a note signed "the Fox," died on Oct. 3 in Aurora, Ill. He was 70.

The cause was complications of diabetes, his sister Dorothy Spring said.

Mr. Phillips led a dual existence as a middle school science teacher and an ecological saboteur, using techniques later refined by Greenpeace and other environmental groups. He never acknowledged that he was the Fox, although family members and friends confirmed that Mr. Phillips was.

"He carved a peculiar niche for himself," said his friend Ralph Frese, a blacksmith and canoe maker who accompanied Mr. Phillips on a mission or two. "He tried to disguise himself, but it was a thin disguise."

The Fox plugged polluting sewer outlets and left skunks on the doorsteps of the executives who owned them. He collected 50 pounds of sewage that a company had spewed into Lake Michigan and dumped it in the company's reception room.

"I got tired of watching the smoke and the filth and the little streams dying one by one," he said in an interview with Time magazine in October 1970. "Finally, I decided to do something -- the courts weren't doing anything to these polluters except granting continuance after continuance."

Much of what the Fox did was against the law, and the police were hardly amused by the fox's face, sometimes smiling, sometimes grim, that he customarily drew inside the "o" of "Fox" on the notes he left behind.

Robert Kollwelter, a local police sergeant, said in an interview with Newsweek in October 1970 that the authorities would charge the Fox with trespassing and criminal damage to property if they could catch him.

But they could not. "It's kind of hard to lift fingerprints from the inside of a sewer," Sergeant Kollwelter explained.

At least one government official suggested that the Fox was performing a valuable service. The official, David Dominick, commissioner of the federal Water Quality Administration, said in a speech before the American Society of Civil Engineers in 1970, "The Fox, by his deeds, challenges us all with the question: Do we, as individuals in a technological society, have the will to control and prevent the degradation of our environment."

James Frederick Phillips was born in Aurora on Nov. 20, 1930. His grandparents were asparagus farmers, and he grew up on a farm. He earned a degree in biology from Northern Illinois University. He later taught science in middle school for 10 years.

In the late 1960's, he was distressed to see dead ducks on the polluted Fox River, which meanders through Aurora to the Illinois River. He decided to take direct action: He stopped up a sewer pipe that was spewing sudsy wastes into the Fox River with plywood.

'Nobody ever stuck up for that poor, mistreated stream,' he told Newsweek. 'So I decided to do something in its name.'

He moved to bigger targets like United States Steel. In a 1970 column in The Chicago Daily News, Mike Royko told of his darting about Chicago putting up signs attacking the company for polluting.

For example, he posted a sign on a coffee shop window: 'Making steel is my business, murdering your environment is my sideline.'

Mr. Phillips later was a field inspector for the Kane County Environmental Department west of Chicago before retiring in 1986 to start the Fox River Conservation Foundation. 'He got a chance to do it legally,' Mr. Frese said.

The Fox's escapades stopped after the enactment of state and federal laws to control pollution. His passion for the environment persists in a local group named for him, Friends of the Fox.

He is survived by two brothers, Herb, of Chicago, and Albert, of Verokua, Wis.; and two sisters, Dorothy Spring of Aurora and Margaret Webb of Fayetteville, Ark.

For further reading: "Raising Kane: The Fox Chronicles" **Ray Fox**

http://www.amazon.com/Raising-Kane-Fox-Chronicles-Ray/dp/0962676519/ref=sr_1_8?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1293250969&sr=1-8

In New York: The Magnificent 13

By HP-Time.com; James Wilde Monday, May. 07, 1979

The New York City subway is cold, and spooky with shadows. Water drips from the vaulted ceiling into small pools beside the tracks below. At one end the platform a rusting steel bridge leads to the street elevator. It is past midnight. A well-dressed man walks nervously up and down, a few steps at a time, waiting for a train. He knows he is a target and is plainly scared. The elevator descends. The man sees six teen-age blacks sweeping toward him like a pack of wolves. First they literally sniff him up and down, and then they urinate in a circle around him. They reek of the peppermint smell of angel dust, and they are looking for somebody to blow away, like this turkey.

Suddenly four more teen-agers in red berets emerge from the shadows at the other end of the dark platform. They are silent. But at the sight of them the wolves leave their victim, disappearing at a run down the track toward the next station, their shouted obscenities echoing back through the tunnel. As the Curtis rescued man tries to say thanks, his words are drowned in the roar of an oncoming train. He gets aboard, shakily waving one hand at his young rescuers in a half salute.

The rescuers, one black, one Hispanic and two Chinese, are on patrol for a vigilante group that calls itself the Magnificent 13. But for their presence at the 149th Street-Grand Concourse IRT station in The Bronx, the traveler might well have become one more grim ripple in the current wave of terror beneath New York's streets. Nobody is sure exactly how many people have been robbed and beaten in recent months by teen-age gangs, often while fellow passengers and even train conductors did nothing. Already this year there have been eight subway murders. On one particularly bad night two token-booth operators in Queens were burned to death after some teen-agers poured gasoline through the change window and set it afire.

The situation got so bad that in March Mayor Edward Koch sent additional police underground to patrol subway trains between 6 p.m. and 2 a.m. But the Magnificent 13 took up its underground patrols well before the mayor acted. The group's founder and leader is Curtis ("The Rock") Sliwa, 23, a night manager of the McDonald's restaurant at the corner of Broadway and 236th Street in The Bronx. Neatly turned out and ruggedly handsome, Sliwa became known as The Rock for his high school skill at brawling and an ability to go for days without sleep. He also has some notable experience with civil action. In 1977 he formed something called the Rock Brigade, 63 high school kids, all volunteers, who are still providing and servicing 440 garbage cans in the ghettos of the South Bronx to set an example of how to keep a neighborhood clean. Considering crime on the subways, Sliwa came to a conclusion. "Volunteer patrols," he recalls, "seemed the only way to show those bums the public's had enough."

Wearing red berets as a badge of office, the original 13 went into action last Feb. 13, with three teams patrolling what is known as the Muggers' Express, the No. 4 IRT train from Woodlawn in The Bronx to Atlantic Avenue in Brooklyn "We stopped a mugging the first night at 167th and River Avenue," one patroller remembers. "We asked the conductor to signal ahead to the next station, where we handed the mugger over to the transit police." A week later, they suffered their first casualty.

During a routine inspection, a team captain, Karl Smucker, 20, a cook at McDonald's, was knocked down by a thief lurking behind a garbage container. The rest of the patrol grabbed the attacker, but Smucker had already been slammed to the floor hard enough to break his jaw in two places.

After a few weeks of patrolling by the Red Berets (which the 13 are sometimes called), robberies and violence dropped on the Muggers' Express. Since then Sliwa has branched out. Every night the teams meet at Sliwa's McDonald's at 9 p.m., then head out in patrols of four. Though most members accepted into the Magnificent 13 have had some training in the martial arts, and some admit to carrying knives for protection when journeying alone at night, on patrol they have no weapons and even refused the walkie-talkie radios that the Transit Authority urged them to use. They do not want to seem part of the police. Patrolling, they check out the stations first, particularly those of elevated trains, which are always badly lit. Once aboard a train they split up, striding through the cars looking for potential targets such as drunks or women alone, and for potential troublemakers, usually small groups of watchful kids also on the lookout for victims. At each stop the Red Berets all stick their heads out the doors of whatever cars they are in to check up on each other. If anyone is missing, they know the guy is in trouble. "Our main weapon is our presence," Sliwa notes. "We don't want to tangle with anyone if we can help it, but just being around puts the muggers off."

Sliwa began recruiting in the jungles of the South Bronx among ghetto kids who, in the eyes of the world, are more likely to be criminals than crime fighters. Among the original 13 is Tony Mayo, 18, a black who never knew his father, lost his mother when he was still a toddler, was then raised by relatives in one of the grimmest sections in any American city. "I'm nearly a black belt," says Mayo. "I can disarm a man carrying a knife. I've developed a spiritual eye. I can feel you behind me, I can feel your vibes." Arnaldo Salinas, 18, another ghetto child, wants to be an FBI man. "There's not so many Puerto Ricans in the FBI, I think," he says, with a grin gleaming from under a straggly mustache. Carlos Lopez, another Puerto Rican, has just graduated from Cardinal Hayes High School, where he was president of the computer club and editor of the school paper. He has just been admitted to M.I.T. His father is a janitor in a New York hospital.

With volunteers flowing in, the 13 have now become 48. "You've got to have a job or be going to school," says Sliwa. "And your motivation can't be one of revenge. I've turned down over 30 people who wanted in for the same reason as Charles Bronson in Death Wish—because somebody in their family has been attacked." Recruits are first tested for reflexes and ability to go without sleep, then for tolerance of verbal abuse, as Sliwa calls them "nigger" or "spik," the least of the taunts they may get in the subway. Nearly every volunteer has been excited by The Warriors, a film in which street gangs plot to take over New York. Among the fired-up who have been accepted are ten whites, six blacks, twelve Hispanics and, just lately, 20 Chinese—after the Magnificent 13 was written up in Chinese newspapers. Before taking any of them, Sliwa had to hold consultations with the Ghost Shadows, the most powerful gang in Chinatown, explaining he was not out to control turf, just police the subways.

The police do not take the Red Berets very seriously, partly because they distrust vigilantes and have come to feel that active help from "civilians" is more trouble than it is worth. But Sliwa intends to continue the patrols. "It didn't take the muggers long to change their schedule," he notes. Six major subway thefts with violence have lately been committed after special police patrols knocked off work at 2 a.m. Fortnight ago, as Sliwa and two other Red Berets drove off six men trying to rape a woman on a Brooklyn elevated platform, Sliwa disarmed a man with a sawed-off shotgun by using a Kung Fu kick to the head. But he himself spun over the guardrail and fell 18 feet into a freight yard. He suffered only heavy bruises and strained muscles.

One Saturday night on the Muggers' Express, with some of the cars awash in vomit, Lopez's patrol picked up a drunk who was hardly able to stand. He recognized them: "Hey, man, I seen you guys."

Man, I'm outta my head. Please take me home." They did. Back on the line, they met an old woman who said simply, "You boys, you make me feel safe again."

Such compliments in ghetto slang are known as "zooping you up." The 13 are zooped up a good deal these days. Says Sliwa: "This is partly why the guys do this. They really get a kick out of being recognized." It is nearly 4 a.m. Sunday and the Berets are so tired they can barely see. Doing this night after night is pretty monotonous, Lopez points out. "You wait and you wait and just when you feel like dozing off something happens."

Sure enough. Entering a new car, they find a pickpocket rolling a drunk. When he sees the patrol, the nimble-fingered dude just smiles and slips away emptyhanded.

—James Wilde