



Nice to See you - wherever you are - by Marc Wickert.

From the Source

Geoff Thompson is widely acknowledged as being the world's #1 authority on doormanship. With over thirty books, videos, documentaries, a feature film and a decade of real-life experience as a bouncer in some of Britain's roughest nightclubs, few can dispute the accolades.

But this wasn't always the case for Thompson who was constantly picked on as a kid. In his debut bestseller, *Watch My Back*, Geoff recounts how one Christmas morning his older brother discovered him alone and crying out of fear that the beatings he'd been receiving would continue when school resumed in two weeks time. This predicament continued throughout Geoff's childhood until he was eleven-years-old and embraced aikido.

"Like a lot of people, I got into the martial arts because I was bullied, and I thought the martial arts would be the answer. I thought if I learnt to fight, I wouldn't be bullied. It was at the time of the Bruce Lee boom, and I wanted to be superhuman like thousands of other kids. That was my main reason, so I could learn to fight, because I thought that would be the answer. Of course later I realized it was less about fighting, it was more about having confidence, having more cerebral strength," says Thompson.

Discorporation

"You become invisible. What the ninjitsu refer to as 'invisibility', I don't think they're talking necessarily about actually disappearing, but if you have a huge amount of confidence, because you've built up your physical ability, then you become invisible to threat. You're not seen as a victim to people who want to attack, so the martial arts are very good in that respect. You have to do the martial arts properly and train very hard and go through a forge so you get a tempered blade. And if don't go through the forge, then there tends to be a lot of insecurity. And being in the martial arts can actually perpetuate trouble, because if your confidence isn't mature, people tend to go looking for situations to prove themselves."

The Bad News or The Bad News?

But at such a young age, Geoff was to encounter another type of predator. As he explains in *Watch My Back*, it was a case of 'out of the frying pan and into the fire', with one kind of bullying being replaced by another. So his martial arts career was put on hold until he enrolled in Shotokan karate classes. Through the torment provided by his young peers and an unscrupulous adult, Geoff's anguished mind still showed him little compassion, however, as he dreaded the intimidation of karate sparring.

At purple-belt standing, Thompson put the karate classes on hold until some years later when he enrolled in Shaolin Motga gung fu, which he persevered with until earning his black belt.

Geoff then returned to Shotokan, but couldn't understand why the fear of real-life fighting remained.

"I reached the black belt level and physically I got the skills, but mentally I didn't feel confident. I still felt like a 9 stone weakling and remained frightened of fear and confrontation. And when a situation developed in my life, I didn't feel as though I had control of it - not just the potential of a fight, but of change. I was frightened of going up the mountain, frightened of going down the mountain, and frightened of standing still."

Pyramid Power

Geoff decided to address the problem by drawing a pyramid on a piece of paper, and on the steps of the pyramid he wrote down all his fears, and systematically confronted them one by one.

"The level I reached in martial arts didn't build up the confidence I thought it would. So I decided to go on the door and confront my fears once and for all. Ultimately I was frightened of physical confrontation, so I became a doorman to confront that fear and get some desensitization and familiarization with that fear. I figured if I faced my fears I wouldn't have any fears."

Geoff's jumping in the deep end wasn't all smooth sailing. The first night he worked he thought becoming a doorman maybe wasn't the right career move, but he remembers his colleagues patting him on the back and telling him he'd done well – the reassurance was reassuring. He decided to give it another go and eventually a day turned into a decade.

Mirrored Door

"I did my apprenticeship at a place called Buster's Nightclub, which was a very rough place, and that's where I learnt the trade. I did four years there and then I went on to work in lots of different venues. And I learnt loads and loads of stuff about myself and realized that my fear wasn't really about confrontation – it was a fear of fear. I didn't like the feeling of adrenaline or anxiety. But I did become very familiar with the feeling, and although I didn't ever get rid of fear, it's obviously part of what you do. It's part of who you are. Biologically, fear needs to be present, but you learn to manage it in extreme situations.

"And it has an overflow effect in your life. After working the door, and facing people who are trying to kill you, everyday situations don't bother you at all. If the neighbour's playing the music too loud or somebody cuts you off in the car, it's no really big shake because you've faced your ultimate fears."

Looking Death in the Eye

Geoff says that the samurai had a similar philosophy where they treated each day as though it were the last, then they were liberated from the anxiety of dealing with death. He believes that working the door put his life into perspective in the same way. He continued to train in various arts including judo, and returned to aikido. All the time he was eliminating the fears of the pyramid he'd previously drawn.

"There were times when it was very hard, mostly because I didn't understand what was going on, but it teaches you a hell of a lot about your body. Metaphorically, it was a bit like immersing an inner tube in water and finding out where the leaks are.

"I thought there were a lot of weaknesses in the stand-up systems, which were mainly long-range kicking systems, that were weak on close-range punching and weak on grappling and ground fighting. And they were weak on the psychological side of it, so I started to enhance my skills by going into different systems."

Control Your Fears

Geoff says the door experience showed him what he was capable of doing, but it also showed him the futility of violence. He deducted from the 10-year experience that fear is natural, that it can be controlled, and that it is only when you let fear overwhelm you that it becomes debilitating.

The courage it must have taken Geoff Thompson to confront his deepest fears may seem remarkable, but even more staggering is that Geoff, whilst standing just under 6-feet tall, weighed only 11½ stone.

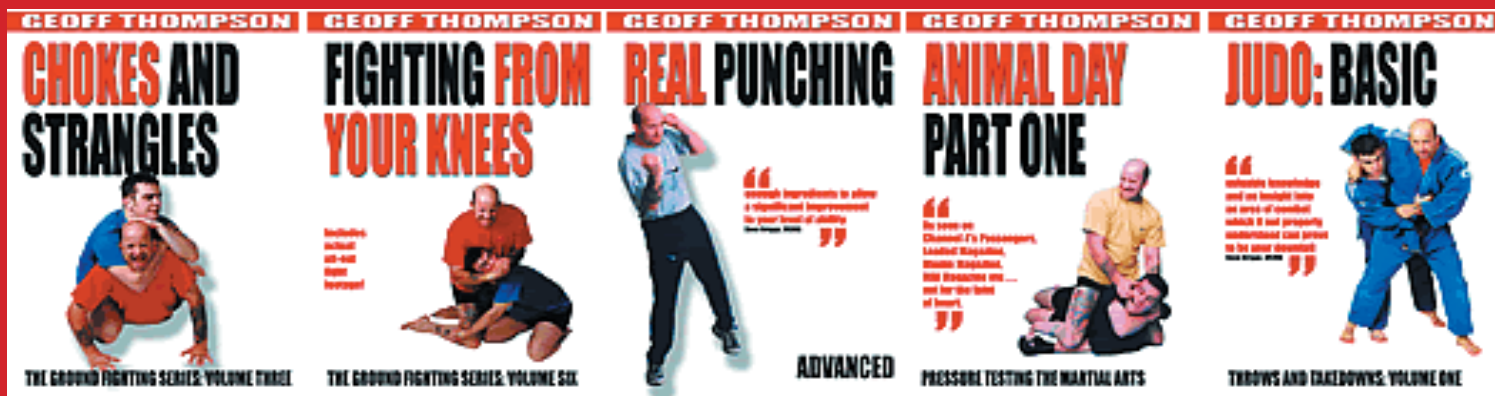
"I was 2 stone lighter than I am now. I was tall and thin. That's why everybody wanted to fight me,"
laughs Thompson.

Tailor-Made

Through the 'door days', Geoff didn't adhere to any one style, but adopted to his arsenal anything that he found practical and worked for him.

"I went into so many different systems, exploring, that it did become my own style. I moulded it for myself. But now I don't really practise any physical martial arts as such. I'm practising yoga and meditation and a bit of Qi Gong and weights. I do the weights to keep my body balanced and keep the stress hormones out. The weights also keep my skeletal muscles in place and keep everything solid. But I don't do them for the physique or strength. Everything I do now is for balance.

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“I keep to light eating and avoid the trap of over-excitement or over-stress. I kind of follow a Daoist premise, which is about flowing with life and riding the waves of life, rather than trying to oppose any of the natural forces. It’s about eating light and thinking positively. And trying to aim for goals but not grasp them. It’s that paradox of intent and surrender – it’s intending to do things to improve your quality of life, but surrendering to this natural flow.”

Pre-Emptive Strike

On the subject of martial arts in general, Geoff believes that most of the arts being taught in the world are not street effective. He says it’s not so much the different codes of the martial arts that are inadequate, but that the practitioners are not being honest with themselves.

“As far as physical self-defence is concerned, the only thing I found to be consistently effective in thousands of altercations, and watching thousands of altercations involving other people, was the pre-emptive attack. I’m talking about when a physical situation couldn’t be avoided, or escape or verbal dissuasion couldn’t be used.

“I personally think we should do anything we can to avoid a physical confrontation. If we can’t and we have to be physical, the only thing I see that works consistently in today’s arena is the pre-emptive attack. But I don’t see many people teaching that. Most people are still teaching block-counter, or letting the opponent attack first, or trap-counter. And it’s all too late. If it’s going to be physical, it’s about learning to hit hard and learning to hit first. This is the only thing that works consistently.”

Whilst Geoff has admired the different systems of martial arts he has observed around the world, he says what they are practising probably wouldn’t work unless the art was being taught in a pre-emptive manner.

Too Much Artillery

Selecting the right skills for yourself and not getting too obsessed with the size of your bag of tricks is something Thompson advises – particularly in an adrenaline-rushed street situation.

“Initially, when we enter martial arts we think we need everything. We start collecting thousands of techniques. And ultimately we whittle that down, and we get one or two that are very potent. But those one or two techniques may be different for everybody. What suits me may not suit you, so we sift through the sand to find the nuggets of gold. Again, it’s not easy to find. We have to go through the whole process to reach that.”

Once you’ve developed the ability to kill people, you become ashamed of it, and you think....

Law of Retribution

“The other side of it is, if you go into an art where you’re learning to kill – something like judo where you learn strangulation - your confidence normally goes to a level where you don’t want to be in fights. And you’re so confident that you don’t see people as worthy opponents, so you become invisible to threats. That’s the art of invisibility. Once you’ve developed the ability to kill people, you become ashamed of it, and you think, ‘Well, I don’t want to kill people, I don’t want to hurt people, I don’t want to become known as someone who is good at hurting people.’ So you let go of that need to be able to hurt others.

“The people who need to be able to do it are the ones who are not secure in what they’ve got. And I think they’re the ones who need to go back into the forge and once you go through the forge, and temper the blade, you come out the other side and you don’t want to hurt anybody. You just want to be gentle and give to other people. Ultimately you realize this is a reciprocal universe and what we give out is what comes back.”

Geoff compares this principle to the ‘boomerang effect’, and says it was something he had to learn for himself first-hand. He did this by pushing himself beyond his own limits, and believes that if practitioners do the martial arts correctly, they can completely re-humanize other people and look at them as fellow human beings, rather than undesirables or the enemy.

“They’re other people who have wives and children, and mothers and fathers – they’re human beings. And they’re probably just people like us on a bad day. There are very few evil people out there. There are lots of people who are displacing their aggression or are on the wrong track, but there are not very many evil people.”

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GEOFF THOMPSON

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Communication Skills

Part of Geoff's philosophy is that once you begin to let go of the need to be physical and start developing your communication skills, you then realize that most things aren't personal. He suggests that if you can communicate with people, you can kill off all your enemies by making friends of them. Geoff also acknowledges that it's not an easy thing to do, but it is something he believes we should all be aiming to accomplish.

"Don Draeger said we should be so good at what we do, so powerful and potent, that we can walk away from trouble. Don is someone I really admire in the martial arts. The martial artists I respect most are the ones who have developed their physical ability, and have also developed a polarity to balance it – they're very gentle but very firm. They're not shouting about how good they are or challenging people. They've found some kind of peace within themselves. That's a true martial artist."

The Write Stuff

"I've always wanted to be a writer. I was writing long stories when I was in junior school. And then when I was twelve, the art teacher wanted to do a film and needed a script, so I wrote a script without even thinking about it. So writing has been in me for a long time, but I never really knew what to write about. Then once I went on the doors I started realizing that a lot of the experiences I was having were interesting. I would tell people stories about the door work, and one of the guys I worked the door with said I should write them down.

We had two people killed in one night in Coventry. Working the door is a life-and-death situation.

"This prompted me to write an article for a magazine and it got some good reviews. Then one of the guys I worked with suggested I write a book. At the time I'd forgotten my love of writing, probably because I was always told that people like us (working class people) don't write books. But I got some note pads, and I sat in the toilet at work, and wrote my first book. I wrote it by hand and I've still got the red ring around my bum to prove it.

"I put it on my shelf for a couple of years before one of my friends read it and said, 'This is really good'. So I sent it off and got some refusals, until one company said they liked the sound of it and I got my first publishing deal - that was Watch My Back."

Just Another Writer from Stratford-upon-Avon

"Then I thought, 'If I can write one book, why can't I write two? Why can't I write a film? Why can't I write a play?' The confidence I got from writing that first book is what started me."

Geoff has now had his first short film made, which received very favorable reviews, and stars Ray Winston (Nil By Mouth and Sexy Beast). A contract for Geoff to write a feature film followed and he has just completed the script.

Sometimes I feel like I haven't done anything, and then I look at my shelves and see thirty books, and think to myself, there's a lot of work there."

Reflections on the Mirrored Door

There were regrets at work, and times when Geoff didn't think he'd make it home from work.

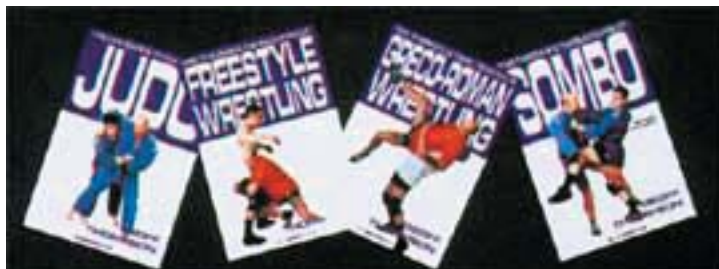
"Three of my friends were murdered during the time I was working – one was stabbed to death, one was clubbed to death and one was shot. We had two people killed in one night in Coventry. Working the door is a life-and-death situation. There were a few times when it came on top and I don't know how I got away, just pure providence. There were a few times when I thought I'd killed people. And I unashamedly got on my knees and prayed to God for another chance. And I said, 'If you give me another chance, I'll turn this baby around, and I'll tell people how it really is.'"



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The Good Guns

“My experience of violence is that there’s no romance in it. It’s ugly. When you’re there you don’t want to be there. Having knocked lots of people out and having hurt lots of people, it’s not something I wish to repeat. If people train really hard in the martial arts and go into the arts that are not questioned, like judo, boxing, wrestling, thai – the really good physical arts – they will develop an artillery that will be so good they will be able to walk away from situations.



“That’s why the best people are the most gentle people. If you look at the Gracies or the Machados, when you actually meet them – I’m not talking about their reputations – when you meet them they are the most gentle people you could encounter. And people like John Will in Australia, who is a Machado black belt, he is a very gentle and giving man. People like that I really admire.”



A Last Word from Geoff Thompson

“You can’t play with the martial arts. You either have to do them or you don’t. But to half do them, you don’t really get the answers. If you do them recreationally, you only get the recreational results. If you really want to find yourself you need to delve into the arts and it needs to become a life passion. And what you have at the other side of it is liberation, and it really is worth the journey – the art of invisibility.



Marc Wickert

<http://www.knucklepit.com/>

This set contains 6 titles This set contains 6 titles :: Pins; Escapes; Chokes and Strangles; Armlocks and Locks; Fighting from your Back; Fighting from your Knees

The set contains 4 titles : Judo: Freestyle Wrestling: Greco Roman Wrestling: Sombo Russian Wrestling

The set contains 5 titles : Fear : A Book for the seriously stressed; Elephant and Twig; The Great Escape, Watch my Back

