

The cat in the hat is Matt Thomas, and he's willing to take a throttling in his role as a Model Mugging.



Fighting Back

I began Model Mugging 22 years ago when I was spending my first of two years at Harvard Medical School. A friend had been raped, and I started analyzing assaults against women. I had already studied martial arts, and in looking into rapes I realized that even women who tried to fight back weren't using the right self-defense techniques. I developed a course based on my research, and that led to our Model Mugging program. I got knocked out at our first graduation. Success!

I teach 30 to 45 women a month here in Burbank, Calif., at \$500 each, and I've personally trained about 5,000 students. I'm 42 and I've been kicked in the head half a million times. I've been kicked in the groin half a million times. Even wearing the 60 pounds of custom-made "armor" and the padded helmet, I've been KO'd 19 times and had my ribs broken six times. I should be in the *Guinness Book of World Records* for stupid career moves.

Of our 20,000 alumnae, we know of 300 who have deterred assaults through psychological methods, like yelling at potential attackers. Our former students have 80 "wins" in attack situations, 49 by knockout. We tell the women that we hope they never have to use the things we teach. But it's good for them to know these techniques. When they leave here, they walk taller. □

Photography: JOHN MCDONOUGH