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Why Some Techniques Work in the Dojo, but Not in the Street!

George Kirby

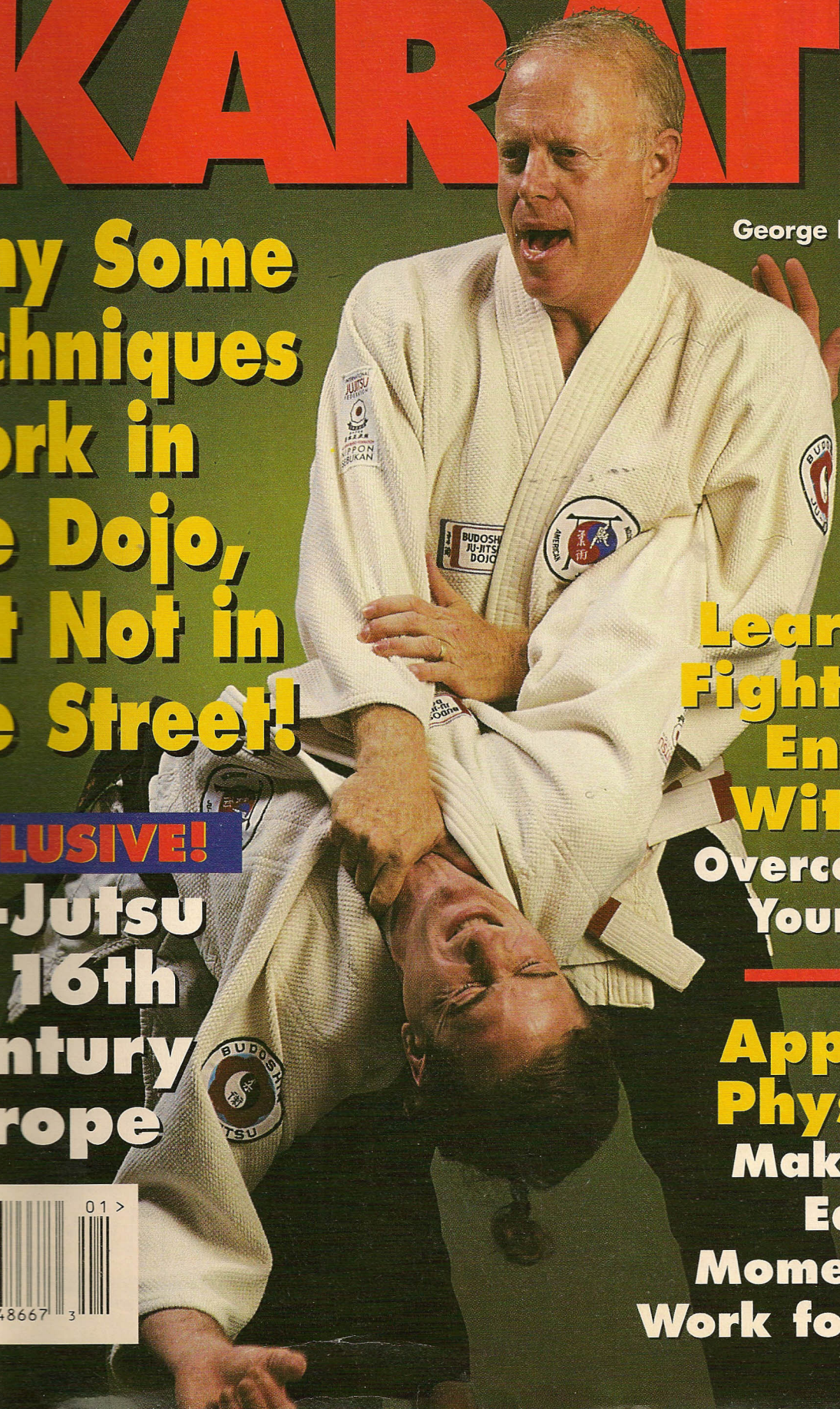
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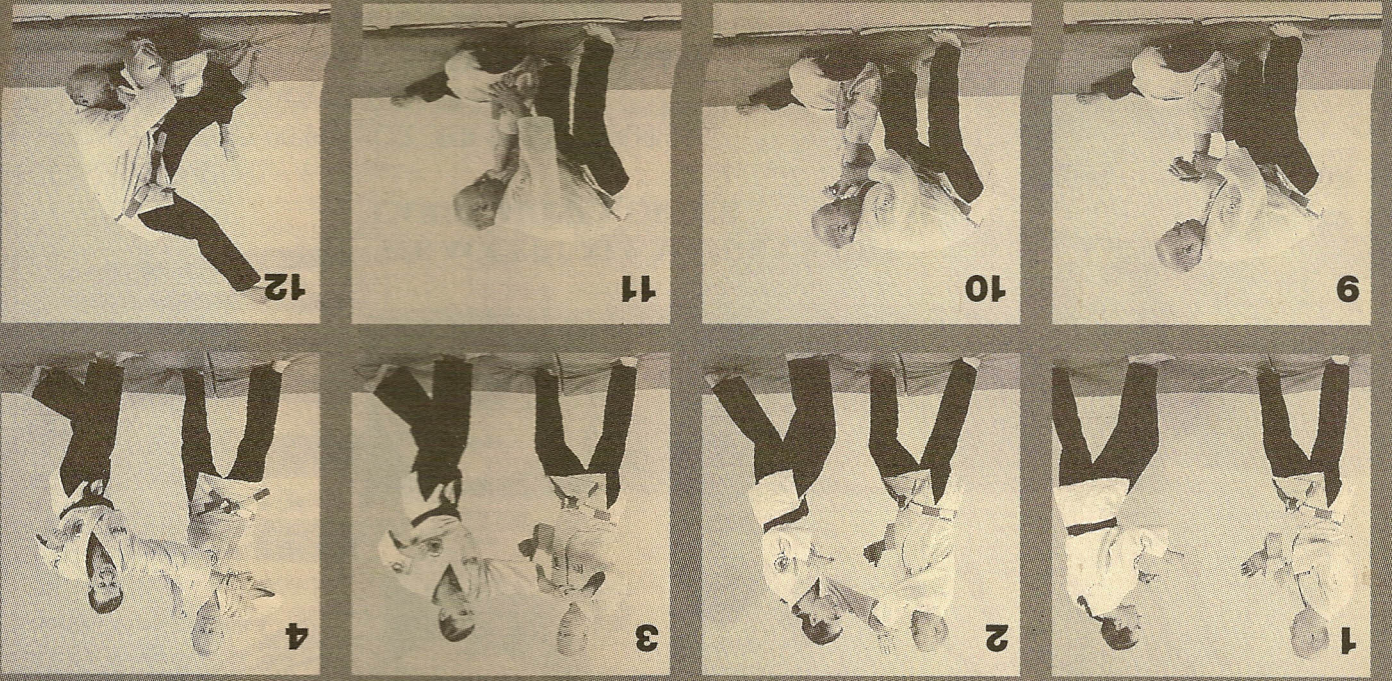
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By George Kirby

DOES IT WORK?

STREET DOJO VS.

The attacker swings at you with a right hook! You respond by crossblocking and deflecting his strike to your right. You then trap his right wrist with a C-grip. Before he can retract his arm, which has been trapped by your C-grip, your left forearm smashes his right elbow, dislocating it. You then execute a hand throw, snapping the assailant's right wrist as you throw him to the ground. Once he's down you retwist his arm clockwise thus rolling him onto his stomach, set a shoulderlock and then dislocate and separate his right shoulder as you somersault across his body to his left side. As taught in your dojo, you then get up into a ready position in anticipation of his possible continued assault.

Does this work in the dojo? Yes, just as long as you use control and your partner works with you.

Does this work in the street? No, because there's too much pain involved from the initial injuries received by the assailant.

Huh?

"Sensei, are you saying that I can practice this Ju-Jitsu sequence in the dojo and it works perfectly, yet it won't work on the street? Why not? Why am I learning it then?"

"Sensei, why am I being taught a sequence of joint locking techniques when any one of them would severely disable an assailant with a dislocation or fracture and thus end the confrontation?"

These are questions I get from my newer students. At some point, early in their training, they start asking "why" questions. It is part of my teaching philosophy that "why" questions need to be answered, especially if the student has reached a technical proficiency that would allow him to understand the explanation.

There are two major reasons why a Ju-Jitsu student is taught a sequence of joint locks and holds as a part of his training.

First, in Ju-Jitsu, a student is initially taught joint locking techniques one at a time. As the student advances in his training he is taught simple complimentary sequences of two to three related holds and locks. One example would be a basic hand throw to an armwind wrist-press submission. The

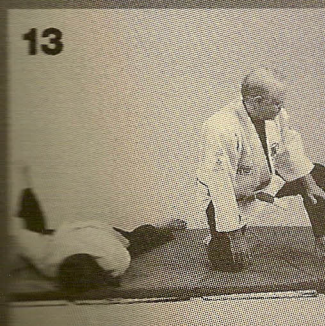
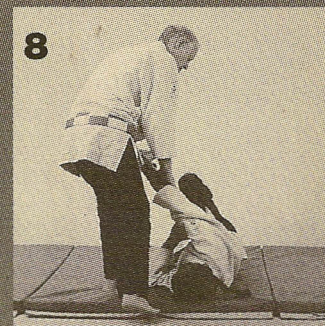
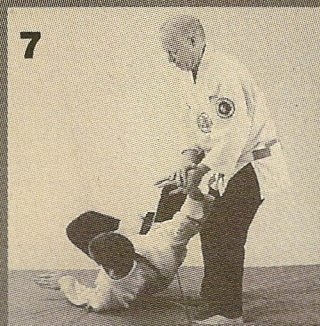
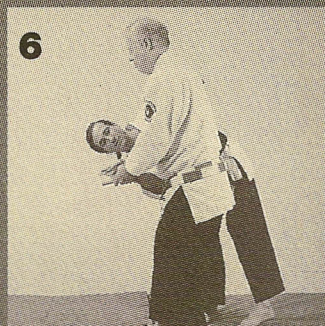
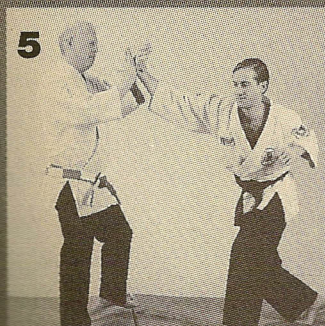
purpose of teaching simple complimentary sequences is to help the student learn how one move can flow into another. As the student develops an understanding of body movement and kinesthetics he can then put isolated locks and holds into a logical and effective sequence (of his own choosing) in which one hold will flow into another. By doing this the student learns how to tie techniques together as well as how to secure effective techniques on an assailant from a variety of positions and situations.

Second, there is a basic rule in Ju-Jitsu: never assume the first technique you use will work. A corollary to this rule is to always have 2-3 additional techniques up your sode [sleeve]. Sometimes a technique won't work as well as in the dojo and you may have to move into something else. You just can't let go of your assailant and say, "Try that attack again." By teaching a complimentary sequence of joint locks and holds the student can train his brain to react without conscious effort and move into another hold that will be effective. This allows the student to maintain control of his assailant. This is the most important aspect of effective self-defense.

This leads directly to the other question: If it works so well in the dojo, why won't it work as well on the street?

All reputable sensei and serious students would like to believe that everything they learn in the dojo will work just as well on the street. A great deal of time is spent helping students learn complimentary sequences of techniques so they can secure and maintain control over their attackers under a variety of conditions. However, there also needs to be a reality check.

The reputable sensei will also tell his students that techniques are learned under ideal and controlled conditions. Sometimes they will work just as cleanly and effectively on the street. When this happens life will be good to you and you will revere your sensei. I've had students who, out of unfortunate necessity, have had street experiences using Ju-Jitsu techniques. One of my black belt girls had a knife pulled on her one night. She executed a basic hand throw, breaking her assailant's arm in the process of throwing him. End of confrontation!



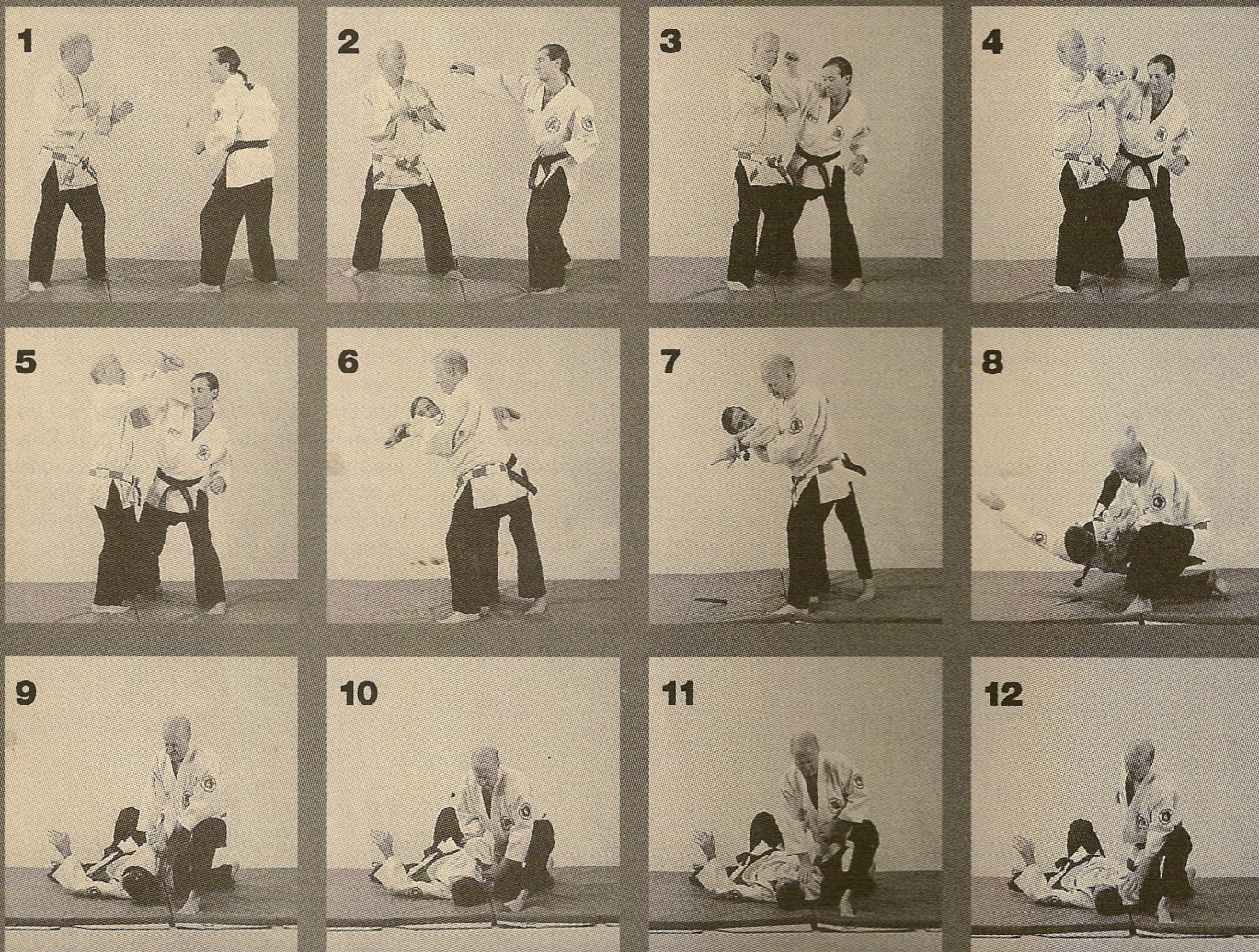
George Kirby faces off with his opponent (1). The opponent strikes and George parries (2) and lets the opponent's momentum carry his line of force to the side (3). He locks the opponent's arm out and applies an elbow bar (4), then twists the hand up (5) and around (6), bringing the opponent to the ground (7). With the attacker down (8), he applies a wristlock (9), grasps the shoulder (10), locks his hands (11), then executes a flip (12), breaking the arm and getting himself out of harm's way (13).

I know of another Ju-Jitsu student who was grabbed from behind in a parking lot. She trapped her assailant's arm, executed a basic drop throw, sending her assailant to the ground. She retracted into a ready position to see what would happen. Her simple throw had caused him to break two ribs, separate his shoulder, and secure a concussion, all from hitting the ground. End of confrontation!

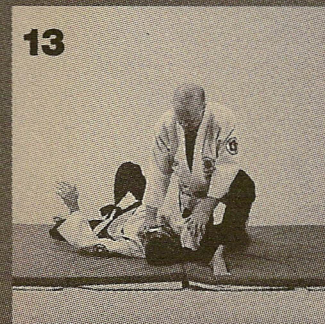
Students have come back to me surprised that the techniques worked as effectively as they did — but that's what they're supposed to do! Students with street experience have also learned some additional valuable lessons that are difficult to teach in the dojo. They will quickly learn why everything doesn't always work as neatly as learned in the dojo. [1] The assailant isn't in the dojo and isn't cooperating with you. [2] The assailant doesn't know how to protect his body and thus gets injured. [3] Once an assailant sustains a serious

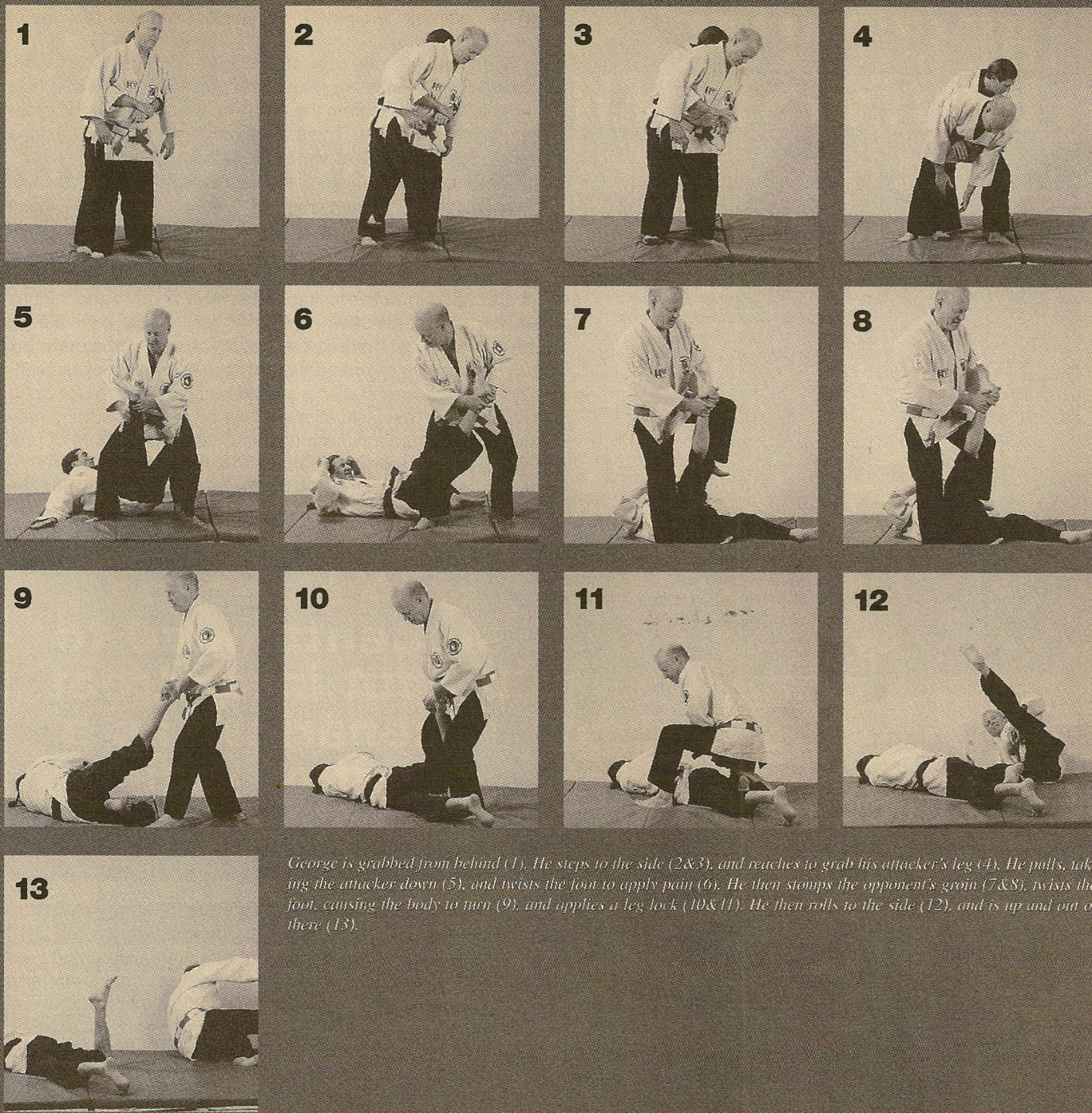
injury it will be impossible for you to continue your defensive sequence of joint locks, holds, etc. His goal will not be to continue to assault you, but to get away from you!

The third reason why techniques don't work as well on the street as in the dojo is the most important reason why sequences don't work as ideally as in the dojo. Serious injuries resulting from Ju-Jitsu joint locks that cause fractures, dislocations, joint separations and sprains also cause tremendous pain when aggravated by further movement. If you were to try to break your assailant's wrist with a hand throw after dislocating his elbow, as described in the opening scenario, you would be extremely lucky. Dislocating his elbow would cause him and his arm to retract violently away from you. You wouldn't have a chance of completing the entire sequence that you learned in the dojo. It just won't happen. You might get the hand throw in and break his wrist



George and his knife-wielding attacker face off (1). The attacker thrusts his knife (2), and George sidesteps and blocks (3). He locks the hand, rendering the knife useless (4), and levers the arm up (5) and around (6), bringing the attacker down (7&8). On the ground he locks the elbow (9&10), controls the attacker with pressure to the shoulder (11), then delivers the finishing blow (12&13).





George is grabbed from behind (1). He steps to the side (2&3), and reaches to grab his attacker's leg (4). He pulls, taking the attacker down (5), and twists the foot to apply pain (6). He then stomps the opponent's groin (7&8), twists the foot, causing the body to turn (9), and applies a leg lock (10&11). He then rolls to the side (12), and is up and out of there (13).

in the process if you moved fast enough, but that's all you'd be able to do.

Then, why learn to execute a sequence of complementary joint locks and holds? Simple — you might not dislocate the elbow. It goes back to the basic rule: don't assume that the first thing you do will work. If the sequence is properly learned and ingrained your strike to the assailant's elbow would be immediately followed by the hand throw. If your techniques have resulted in a dislocation or fracture by this point, it will be obvious. There will be no need to continue the sequence because [a] there is no need to further disable your assailant and [b] the pain caused by either joint being injured will make it difficult, if not impossible, for you to continue the sequence anyway.

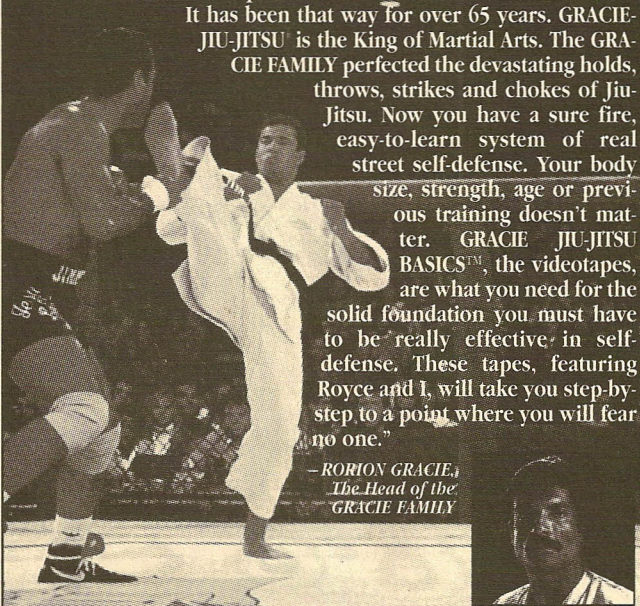
Learning a sequence of moves helps you learn not to evaluate each move separately, but to effectively defend yourself.

On the street the worst thing you can do is stop after each move to see what has happened to your assailant. If your assailant receives a serious injury it will become immediately obvious by his exaggerated body movements and cries of pain to compensate for the injuries. To continue to disable your attacker after the point of removing the threat of injury by him is not only philosophically inexcusable, but may also put you in jeopardy with respect to the issue of reasonable force.

Laws in different states may vary, but the basic rule is that you may use only the amount of force necessary to protect yourself from injury and remove yourself safely from the situation. The continued application of locks and holds after a disabling injury could be construed as excessive force — something that could create legal liabilities for you even though you were the victim. This is an additional reason why you can't complete the sequence taught in the dojo. The art

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of the complete sequence may conflict with the realities of the legal system.

Street realities can conflict with what is taught in the dojo. Ignoring the issue is like the ostrich putting his head in a hole in the tatami to hide from the problem. Unfortunately the problem doesn't disappear. There are some things that can be done to help the student deal with street realities.

First, sensei and students must realize the importance of complimentary sequencing of techniques and those sequences must be practiced to the point where they are executed flawlessly.

Second, more advanced students [Brown & Black Belt level] should practice using some resistance to techniques and try to counter them whenever reasonably possible. In this way the uki forces the tori to change or modify his sequence as he encounters resistance or evasion of his techniques. Advanced students should be cautioned to use good judgement in these situations. While protective padding may help protect students from hits and kicks, no amount of protective gear can protect participants from joint locking techniques. In fact, most protective gear actually increases the chance of injury.

"Advanced students need to be put into street "scenarios" as a part of their training."

Third, advanced students need to be put into street "scenarios" as a part of their training. They need to be attacked in random fashion by one or more attackers using moderate force and resistance. They need to develop an awareness and the tactical skills necessary to handle multiple attackers. This can be done in a variety of ways inside and outside the dojo in a safe and educational manner without imposing undue risk to the students.

The last second and third recommendation require close supervision by the sensei because of the increased risk of injury to the uki. The uki and tori also have to use good judgement in deciding how much to resist a technique and at what point to release the pressure on a hold respectively — to protect the uki.

The dojo is not the street. What works in the dojo doesn't always work on the street. However, by properly training students in the use of joint locks and holds as well as their complimentary sequencing, the Ju-Jitsu sensei can improve the odds of his students being better able to successfully defend themselves in a street confrontation if a physical conflict is unavoidable.

George Kirby, 8th degree Black Belt in Ju-Jitsu, is a Defensive Tactics Consultant for the LAPD. He is also Chairman of the Board of Directors of the American Ju-Jitsu Association.