

# Party Time

by Gary James

Some of the best opportunities to learn how to handle situations come from practical real world experiences. It is these experiences that allow us to evaluate our strategies for self defence and to test if they are valid and workable.

Let me tell you about an experience I had recently.

My wife and I were asked by a family friend to attend a party her 16 year old daughter was having for Halloween, just to be there in case there was any trouble and to ensure that only invited people were in attendance. I was already sensing disaster.

When we arrived at 7pm there were already young people on the street smoking and drinking, we were told here is the list of invited people and that some probably wouldn't turn up anyway. There were about 30 names on the list and half were already marked off. I noticed there were about 40 people already in the yard and I said why there are more people than were invited, I was told some had bought friends and they had gone to the trouble to dress up so it was all right if they stayed.

This is the point in the night when you know things are not going to be all right.

More people arrived, many more and were allowed in, I said what is it you are expecting of me if you are letting all these people in. It was also about this time that the first 14 year old drunk kid was dragged out front and put on the garden. My wife Carolyn and me were watching the street and were oblivious to what was happening in the party proper and we had no idea of how many were there by this time.

More and more cars were turning up, girls were on the phone as they were arriving and calling more people, we were sending people away from the house but they just congregated down the street.

Around 9.30pm it was starting to get very loud and very busy out front, more drunk kids were appearing from the backyard, vomiting and almost comatose. Parents were called to collect these kids and eventually they collected them. At 10.00pm I called the party quits and told the hostess that every one should leave. The kids were well behaved as they left the backyard, well over 100 and added to the 20 or so out front all with nothing to do now and nowhere to go, they just stood in the street and gathered.

It didn't take long for the sound of broken glass to signal the first strike of vandalism on someone else's property. I went to investigate and was confronted by 4 young boys who told me in uncertain terms what they thought of me, I was also informed by them that I couldn't touch them because they were 15, so what was I going to do about it, was I going to bash a child. I informed them that no I wasn't going to touch them but I would defend myself if necessary and besides I knew who one of the people in the group was so that was enough for me. Again with language that would make a sailor blush they slowly left. Meanwhile Carolyn was getting one youth off the bonnet of a very expensive car, neighbours were outside, glass bottles were breaking everywhere and cars were prevented from going up the road and when they were bottles were thrown under the tyres.

Around this time the police arrived in 3 marked and one unmarked car. This had little or no effect on the kids; they didn't break up and were not at all intimidated by their presence. Eventually they moved on as the police started taking names. One officer said to me his daughter was 10 and he was not looking forward to her getting older, he said he sees this type of behaviour way too much.

The party was over and it was time to survey the damage, broken bottles on the road, damage to property, beer bottles everywhere, angry neighbours saying their teenagers were responsible and would not act that way. Out the back, the pool liner was destroyed, furniture, bottles, food and glass were in the pool, broken glass was everywhere, gardens trampled and the mess was indescribable.

What did I learn from this, there was no violence, no-one was hurt, yes there was a considerable amount of damage done, but when there are over 120 young people in a small space that will happen. I suppose I didn't learn much at all though it was an eye opener to see what happens at teen parties, the sort of parties my own kids have attended and we were only out the front of the house.

The thing that amazed me was the amount of alcohol consumed and access to alcohol underage kids have. The party was predominately 15 to 17 year olds, some bought their younger brothers and sisters (obviously it is their responsibility to look after them on Saturday nights) who were very drunk. We need as a society to be very concerned about the easy access these kids have to alcohol and to the damage they are doing to themselves. Someone is giving it to them, parents or older friends though I didn't see any indication of this the other night; they just appeared to have it with them.

The other thing that concerned me was the total lack of respect the young people had for anyone in authority whether the police or Carolyn and I, they knew their rights and that made it OK to act however they cared.

From a self defence prospective what can we do?

1. Keep calm – do not lose your cool, speak calmly and rationally
2. Close the party before the trouble begins not when it is too late
3. Don't let in any more than were invited, EVER, if they are not on the list or have invitations then they are not welcome, do not change this rule
4. Have enough supervision to handle the expected number, it is wrong to expect 1 or 2 people to control hundreds
5. Do not allow teens to have access to alcohol, if they don't abide by the no alcohol rule then they won't come or they will leave early and never provide it under any condition
6. Invited guests should be told not to tell anyone else about the party and don't ever put it on Facebook
7. Send unwelcome people away immediately
8. Accept that young people know their rights and will use them against you; however, you do have the right to defend yourself if attacked, use only necessary force. Remember the media will treat you very unkindly should you hurt a minor, whatever the circumstances.

9. Do not carry a weapon, rely on wit and skill. If you are armed you are more likely to use the weapon if things do go pear shaped.
10. Let the police know that you are having a party and leave a contact number with them, some stations have party registers. If things get nasty then they are aware of the party and will know where to go
11. Once the party starts then keep the guests inside or around the back, if they want to leave then they don't get back in, let them know this is the rule and stick to it
12. Have a list of all attendees home phone number handy so you can contact parents if they start any trouble or are in need of assistance

There are so many things that can be added to this list, and this mainly applies for teenage parties, but these are sensible guidelines that can be applied to any and all parties.

What would I do different if asked to do this again, I would probably say no, however, I do feel our presence did stop a potentially bad situation from occurring. Once damage to personal property starts to occur then there is an escalation by the group mentality into really nasty behaviour.

I would say this was a learning experience and it could have turned out very bad had we antagonised and threatened them, a level head prevailed, no one was injured though there were probably a few sore heads after.