

The following article is featured in this month's March Issue of Black Belt Magazine.

Martial Arts & Mental Self-Defense

Dwight Werner owner and chief instructor of Monroe Martial Arts in Monroe, MI, didn't realize that the beautiful May morning was not just a normal day.

After his morning workout, he fed his cat and dog, kissed his wife goodbye and headed to the *dojo*. On the way he decided to stop at the bank. As he pulled into the parking lot, he noticed a car parked where it shouldn't be—right in front of the doors.

His suspicions were immediately aroused by the presence of the two men loitering nearby. Both of them were wearing heavy hooded jackets and bandannas even though it was a warm day. When Werner tried to get a better look, they turned away so he couldn't see their faces.

Even more alert now, he looked into the bank window and saw the tellers diving behind the counter. He immediately dialed 911 on his cell phone and described the men and their vehicle to the emergency operator. It seemed that they were unable to get inside and were getting upset and behaving erratically. Unbeknownst to him at the time, they had been to the bank the previous day to check out the security. On that morning, the bank employees trusted their instincts and locked the door when the two men were momentarily distracted by Werner walking by.

The men started to drive away, and Werner followed them. He called 911 again and gave the operator the license-plate number and the direction they were traveling. Once the police took up the chase, he returned to the bank to check on the employees, all of whom were unharmed but very shook up.

When the police caught the suspects, they found a loaded gun, bandanas, disguises, and some money. The officers told Werner the men were "pretty bad guys" who were suspected of having been involved in two bank robberies the previous week.

One of Werner's students later asked the Fifth-Degree Black Belt why he didn't use his knowledge of gun and knife defenses to disarm them and make a citizen's arrest. He replied that even a highly trained martial artist is at a disadvantage when facing two men who are desperate, scared, and armed. He said he would have tried to restrain them if there was no other option, but he decided to use his mental self-defense skills and let the police handle the rest. It's better to be a live witness than a dead hero, he added.

By following his instincts, being aware of his surroundings and getting involved the way he did, Werner helped the police capture two dangerous men without anybody getting hurt. He performed a very courageous act that many would have not taken on.

Dwight Werner—my dad—is the bravest man I know.

Jodi Werner
Monroe, MI