



ROB JUBBER,
BOUNCER AT
JAMESON'S

CALL SECURITY!

A sober look at barroom bouncing BY DANTE ZUÑIGA-WEST

Picture Jerry Springer episodes mixed with the fascinating objectivity of Animal Planet, add the potential of personal harm to the viewer, combine this with alcohol and bring a mouthpiece. That's bouncing.

It's a bit like being a big brother, a scary uncle and a mercenary all in one. It's not a dream job, but it's not a bad job either if you know what you're doing. I did it cause I was a broke-ass writer and I really needed the money. Everyone's got their reasons.

Bouncing is a strange line of work to find yourself in. A lot of the time it finds you. My buddy Solomon (former bouncer at Peabody's) once got a job by accident, sitting at the bar drinking a beer and re-reading his favorite book. A drunk guy was getting out of hand and making some women uncomfortable. The bartender went to the kitchen to tell the owner, and returned to find the drunk guy unconscious on the floor and Solomon still sitting quietly with the beer, reading his book. I guess you could call that an interview.

I got lucky. I ended up catching my first shifts by way of affiliation with Ajarn Mike Walrath's Big Foot Gym, the Muay Thai kickboxing school where I am an instructor. All the instructors there are really nice but kind of scary. It would totally suck for a normal sober person to have to fight with any of them, let alone a drunkard. None of us are big scary Neanderthal-looking fools either. We just know how to conduct ourselves in a rumble.

Presentation is key. No one likes to be treated sourly when and where they go to drink. As Khun Kru Nate Sutterfield (bouncer at Jameson's) said to me, "I just try to smile at people, even if I'm having a bad day." It helps to have manners; you aren't going to win yourself any points on the job being a jerk to patrons — patrons whose safety is always your primary concern.

In the profession of bouncing one usually must hold credentials in private

security. An unarmed security course is an education in both law and protocol regarding the protection of patrons and the dispatching of perpetrators. Everything from handling a "suspect" to body language is covered.

Contrary to popular belief, most bouncers don't want to scrap. Chances are, that guy who just carded you at the door would much rather sit down and chat with you about your day at work than have to choke out a local ruffian who thinks he can do anything he wants once booze hits his bloodstream. However, shit happens, and as the bouncer you are the one expected to deal with it.

Hyper-vigilance is a must. A bouncer is human — no matter how spooky he may look, he probably likes music and socializing as much as the next man. When the liquor is flowing and the music is bumpin' it can be easy to get distracted by the pleasant lull of a happening drinking hole. As a bouncer, this lull is your worst enemy. You could find yourself in a throwdown with more than one guy in a matter of seconds. Anything could happen, and when it does happen it happens suddenly. You could get shot, stabbed, knocked out, centipeded (stomped out by many feet) or all of the above. You learn to put that reality in the back of your mind and just act. You have to act; if you hesitate, you're in trouble. You must possess genuine courage.

Even though most confrontations I encountered were with very drunk people who give the bouncer the advantage of being the sober and trained one, unknown variables can tilt the scales. I once was confronting a very drunk college kid on the outskirts of a gated patio when his buddy inside attacked both me and the head of security from behind. We tossed them out, but the kid and his friend came back to beef four times that night, with more people to back them up every time they returned. They got the worst of each exchange but it still sucked to deal with. Like I said, you have to be ready for anything.

Think of your job. Then think of getting ready for work at 8 pm. Strapping on a cup, pocketing a mouthpiece, drinking water and maybe some coffee and making sure to say goodnight to your woman who really isn't going to sleep well until you get back home safely. Think of being nice to people who often times are very not so nice and not so sober. Think of collecting beer glasses, inhaling second-hand cigarette smoke all night and then getting home at 4 am to exist on vampire hours until the next shift. Think of skinned knuckles, vomit, loud voices and cops. Then thank a bouncer. Better yet, in the spirit of this *Swizzle*, buy a few more drinks and tip your bartender graciously. Often that bouncer gets a percentage of your patronage. ■

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