

Tahoe resident turns cane into defensive device for seniors

By Eamon McNiff, 20/20

Relying on a cane was once considered a sign of an aging, weakened body. But today, some seniors are finding empowerment through their canes: They're using them as weapons of self-defense through a fighting technique known as "cane fu."

"You can carry it anywhere you want. It's a medical device, so it's always with you," cane fu creator Mark Shuey Jr. told "20/20's" Chris Cuomo. "If you carry a knife, you've got to take it out of the sheath. If you carry a gun, you have to take it out of the holster. [With] a cane, you're already locked and loaded."

(Watch the full story on two hours of "20/20" Friday.)

Shuey is a 65-year-old martial arts expert and world champion living in Lake Tahoe. He is trained in all manners of fighting techniques, including weapons, but hadn't applied those skills to a cane until he saw first-hand 10 years ago how the device was being neglected.

The Nevada resident noticed his elderly father refusing to use his cane because of the stigma it created. Around that time, he learned that several elderly people near his brother's house in Palm Springs, Fla., were robbed while carrying their canes.

"I got this epiphany to go out there and let people know what a cane really can do. It can help them," Shuey said.

With that, Shuey developed a specialized martial arts program with seniors in mind.

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