

Chris Bradford explains what it takes to be a BODYGUARD author...

As a writer, I strive for authenticity and excitement in my books. So I practise something I like to call “method writing”.

For *Young Samurai*, I travelled through Japan to scout out settings for the series; I lived with Japanese families to learn of their culture as an outsider like Jack; and I trained in *iaido* (the art of drawing and cutting with the sword) and *ninjutsu* (the art of the ninja) to provide me with the knowledge and skills to write convincing fight scenes. And in my quest to learn the orient’s deadliest secrets, I discovered that the truth is far more astonishing than anything I could ever make up.

So when it came to writing my new series, BODYGUARD, there was only one path I could take... to train and qualify as a professional close protection officer myself.

This turned out to be the most challenging and demanding research project I’d ever embarked upon. The close protection course (provided by Wilplan) was 21 days of continuous training and assessment. It encompassed every aspect of being a bodyguard including:

- Anti-surveillance techniques
- Unarmed combat
- Anti-ambush exercises
- Protective formations
- Bodycover drills
- Route reconnaissance
- Threat assessments
- Bomb detection
- Firearms training in Switzerland

And that is only just scratching the surface of the skills a professional bodyguard needs to master.

One of the biggest surprises for me, though, was the

amount of focus and attention to detail that a good close protection officer needs. Rather than just relying on muscle and intimidation, the best bodyguards possess intelligence, people skills, quick thinking and total awareness of their environment.

For no matter how technically advanced a close protection officer's equipment is (such as M16 rifles, bulletproof vests, and armoured vehicles, which all help), ultimately it's the reflexes and skills of the bodyguard protecting the Principal that makes the biggest difference in the outcome of an attack.

The speed of a bodyguard's reactions can literally mean the difference between life and death...

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For more information on Wilplan Training, visit www.wilplantraining.co.uk

