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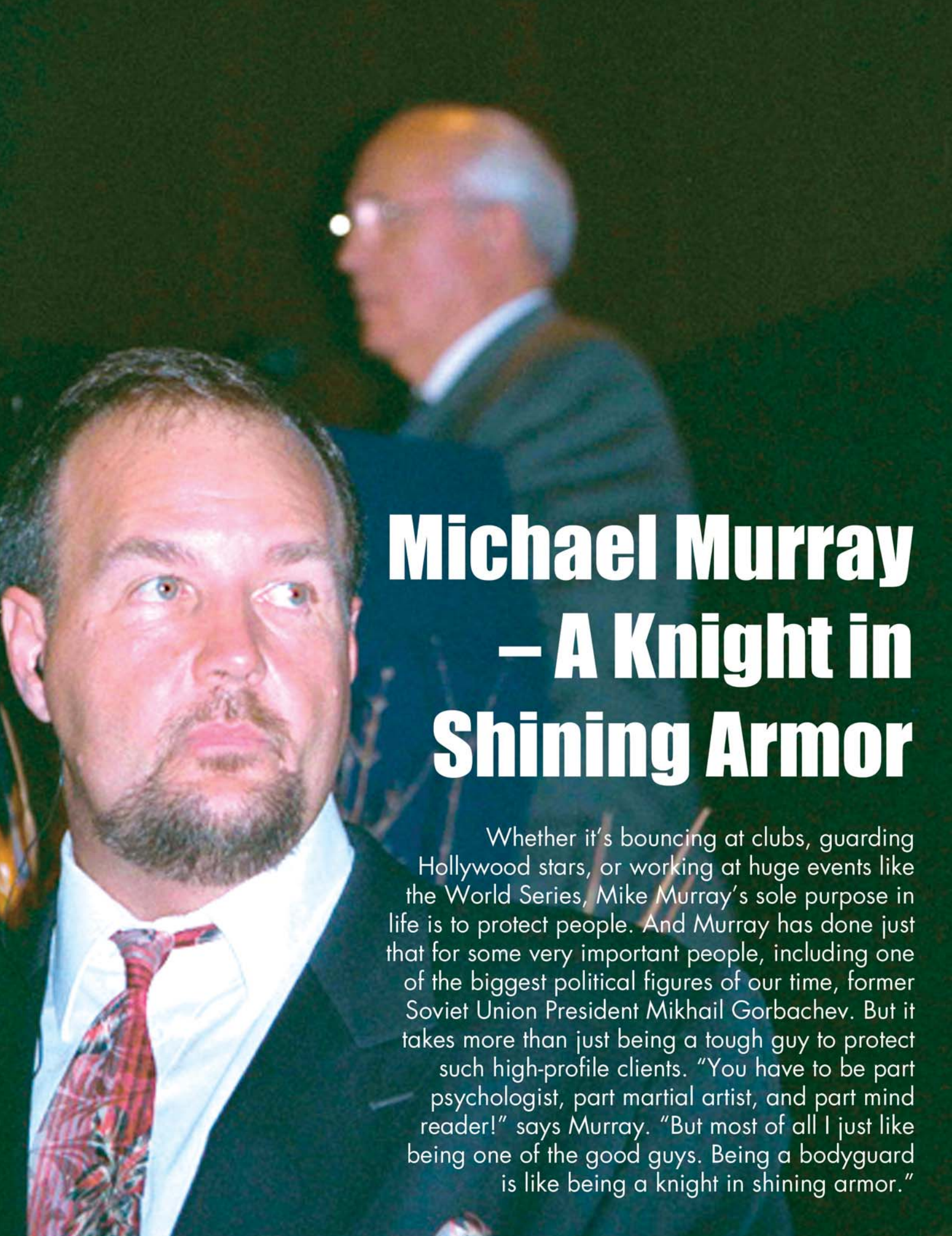


**BRANDY FLORES**



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**Plus: Bodyguard to the Stars - Michael Murray, Couture's Strength Secrets Revealed, Fitness, Health and more!**



# Michael Murray — A Knight in Shining Armor

Whether it's bouncing at clubs, guarding Hollywood stars, or working at huge events like the World Series, Mike Murray's sole purpose in life is to protect people. And Murray has done just that for some very important people, including one of the biggest political figures of our time, former Soviet Union President Mikhail Gorbachev. But it takes more than just being a tough guy to protect such high-profile clients. "You have to be part psychologist, part martial artist, and part mind reader!" says Murray. "But most of all I just like being one of the good guys. Being a bodyguard is like being a knight in shining armor."

**Q: How did you become a bodyguard?**

**A:** I had been a member of the Moorhead State weightlifting team and also competed in judo there, winning the U.S. Collegiate Midwest Championships. After college I came to California to manage a health club and then started teaching self-defense classes there. One day, a few of the really big guys were challenging me, so I went over and showed them a few moves. They liked what they saw and invited me to work as a bouncer in a night club in Santa Ana. The club was a really dangerous one. On my first night we had to deal with about thirteen fights. It was bad but I needed the money. We were fighting every single night and eventually one of our guys was killed and four others were stabbed all in the same night. That's when I decided it was time for a change. So I started doing what I "thought" was bodyguard work, but it was more like tough guy work with a lot of confrontations and fighting. Finally, around the year 2000, I met Dominic Menaldi of MPP Bodyguards and Security. Dominic introduced me to the true concept of personal security.

**Q: Is a bodyguard different from a bouncer?**

**A:** Absolutely. We were in Anaheim, where we had President Gorbachev from Russia. We had a translator working for us at MPP, who was also a world champion wrestler from Russia, and he spoke to Gorbachev's security team. I don't know what he said, but I ended up guarding Gorbachev with Dominic. I had to shadow him all night. This was definitely one of my most memorable moments in this business because it was just so surreal. From that point on I took a sincere interest in learning what being a bodyguard really is, and I developed a passion for studying personal protection and security. What I've found is that bouncing is like rugby and, being a bodyguard is like playing chess. A bodyguard should never, ever get into a fight. It's all about getting your client through the day without anything going on. When you are bouncing, the elements are very different. Your concern is for a much larger group of people and of course, there's alcohol, which changes everything. This alone makes being a bodyguard and a bouncer totally different.

**Q: What type of person makes a good bodyguard?**

**A:** As far as physical appearance goes, it's difficult to say. A big, scary looking guy with gorilla-like proportions – what we call a conspicuous presence – is good because he can intimidate people and prevent them from causing trouble. A smaller, normal-looking



*Mike Murray on the red carpet at the Academy Awards*

person works well as a blender. They blend in with the crowd which gives them the element of surprise. I work as a blender a lot. However, physical appearance is not the most important thing, and someone doesn't make a good bodyguard based on these things alone. A good bodyguard must be able to remain under control at all times. It's called the 3 C's: cool, calm, and confident. They also must have good people skills. However, each client makes up their own set of rules for us. That's one thing that can make this job very difficult sometimes. Sometimes we work with people in the entertainment industry, who just want to be seen with huge scary-looking guys. It's just part of their ego. This can sometimes lead them to do something stupid because they know we're there. However, we also have to work for people who have a legitimate threat we have to guard against. The rules depend on the client, the atmosphere, and many other things. So with all these different elements that come in to play, it's hard to say that one type of person, who will always make a good bodyguard.

**Q: Who are the best and worst clients?**

**A:** The best is someone with the least amount of drama. Someone who understands what you do and who won't abuse your relationship. Basically, someone who knows you're not there to be a tough guy. I like working for someone who is polite, not only to us, but other people as well. Sometimes we work for people who need us to look out for them and their families. You tend to develop a relationship with these people, almost to the point where you feel like part of the family. That can be a great job because of the sense of worth and pride you get – like you're not just an employee. The type of client I like the least is the exact opposite. They misuse our services the same way people often misuse authority. They may act like a fool, because they know we're there to protect them. They walk into a room like an alpha dog with all the alpha dogs protecting them, and that can really go to their head. I always pray that I don't get a client like that, because that could get us into a life or death situation.

**Q: What do you like most about being a bodyguard?**

**A:** I love the diversity of the jobs. The opportunity to have such unique experiences in places you never dreamed you would be, with people you never dreamed you would meet. I have been to the Winners Circle at the Grand Prix, stood on the Red Carpet at the



*Mike Murray with Dennis Hopper*



Mike Murray with John Walsh and Hank Hill

sense of myself, but rather to show that I have an appreciation and gratitude for those moments. I couldn't think of any other profession that would have allowed me all of these opportunities.

### Q: What type training is best for bodyguard work?

**A:** I'd say it's cerebral. Anything that stimulates your thinking, your mind, and makes you aware of what's going on. Some people are just faster, quicker, more alert, and have better perceptive skills.



Bob Anderson (left), after he won the World Wrestling Championship, with Merl and Mike Murray

These are extremely important in bodyguard work. However, a bodyguard does a wide variety of things, so you have to do your homework for each job and each client. You have to be very intelligent about what you're doing. There isn't really a standard set of things that you can train in and

### Q: Do you carry a weapon?

**A:** I prefer not to, although I am licensed. But if the job calls for it or the client requires it, then I will. I don't like guns because you really can't use them for the most part. Most places we work are very crowded, and there is too much risk to bystanders to discharge a ballistic weapon. If I do carry a gun, I want it to be exposed. I want people to know I have that gun, to persuade them to not cause any trouble. A gun is the absolute last resort I would ever take. Once you pull a gun and fire it, your life will change forever.

### Q: Which martial art is best for a bodyguard?

**A:** I wouldn't say that one art or style is the best, because there are great things in all of them. However, one thing about bodyguard work is that you don't want to be rolling around on the ground. We can't be grappling with someone while our client is being attacked. Even though the ground is where almost all regular fights end up, bodyguard work is different. It's typically not a man-to-man situation or a fair fight. If you hit the ground, you could have bottles, chairs, chains or whatever coming at you, which

Academy Awards, watched the Kentucky Derby from the Turf Club, sat under the basket and watched Carmelo Anthony take his first shot in the NBA, and the list just goes on and on. I say this in no way trying to brag or show an elite

could put your client in real danger. Everything about bodyguard training must be "Go, go, go!" You must control or end an attack very quickly and get your client to safety. I'll use whatever style, art, or technique is necessary to do that.

### Q: How important are communication skills for a bodyguard?

**A:** Extremely important. Most people think that we're supposed to look like some guy out of "The Matrix," who just stands there like a battle robot. That can actually cause trouble. Many people feel threatened by that

and people can do stupid things when threatened. I'll usually tell potential troublemakers that we know they're tough and they have nothing to prove. Sometimes people will try to fight us

just to show they're not afraid of us. That's why we have to be able to effectively communicate with them and let them know we're not there to challenge them. That can be a tough job, especially as a bouncer, when alcohol is involved. One thing that helps is to leave emotions at the door. If someone insults you or your client, and you take it personally, you might react on emotion and escalate a situation for the worse.

That's one thing that makes it so special. If I could teach people one thing it would be to be nice. We live in such a great place and we are so lucky. If we're hungry, we can just go right down the street and get a hamburger or whatever. That's just an example of how privileged we are. There are millions of people in this world who don't have that option. With the great lives we have, we should all be able to be nice and not worry about confrontation and trouble. Just be nice. If everyone understood that, there would be no need for bodyguards and I'd be just fine with that. ▼

Q: If you weren't a bodyguard, what would you be?  
**A:** At the age I am now, with all of my experiences, I'd be a mentor of some kind. Teaching has always been a passion of mine, whether it's weight training, martial arts, or whatever. I like to help people and make them feel good. I really look up to people who have a positive message and share it with others. Teaching is an important part of life and something that could never be replaced by machines or technology.

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Mike Murray and the Los Angeles Laker Cheerleaders in Huntington Beach, California



Mike Murray bench pressing 505lbs



Mike Murray at the El Capitan on Oscar Night