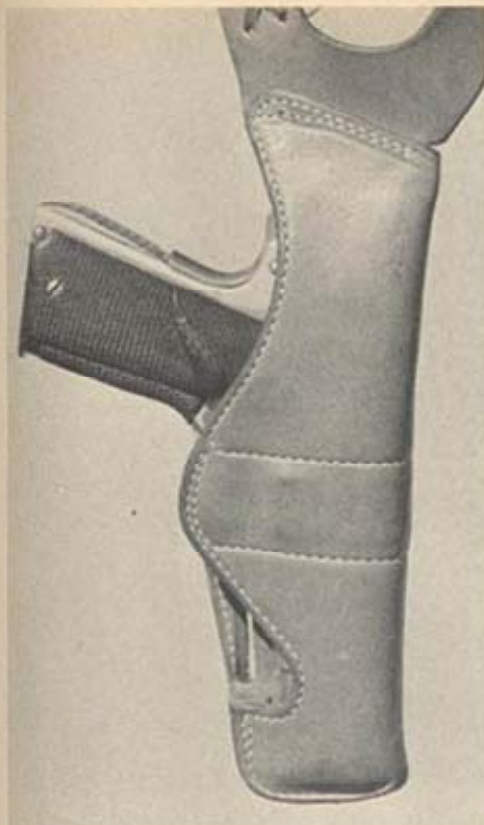


HOLSTER ANALYSIS

An Expert's Opinion: If you don't believe it—"Draw Mutha



"Forward-of-hip" seated draw illustrated. Forward of hip is actually more concealable since you can lean forward (as in looking into the trunk of a car, etc.). If pistol were in rear, it would poke out while leaning forward. "Bump-frisk" is also harder to do since you lay your arm comfortably over the gun while standing or sitting.



This is a Milt Sparks "Hardy-Cooper" shoulder holster. The horizontal spring allows the gun to be broken free of the spring without the barrel "binding" in the holster. Other designs have the spring come up from the bottom which catches the barrel and causes a bad draw.

Photos, captions & feature by Bruce Nelson, an expert Pistolero, who's employed as a special agent by a large western state.

The narcotic officer felt the electric chill of cold steel against his neck. The dealer holding the gun was demanding the keys to the trunk—\$50,000 in cash being the goal. As the dealer sat in the back seat, his weapon slipped away from the neck momentarily. The narcotic officer, promising to comply, slowly unholstered his Chief's Special, and then in an instant, fired a blind shot very close to his own ear, correctly sensing the location of the dealers head. The scene ended happily for the officer!

This incident actually happened. An analysis of it revealed that the method of holstering was crucial. The gun was carried in an inside-the-pants holster **forward** of the hip. Access to the weapon while seated, an important consideration for any pistolero, was the key.

How important is the holster? The



The Summer Special allows a proper firing grip unlike many inside the pants holsters which carry the gun so low that half the grip is inaccessible. Made by Milt Sparks. Also utilizes strap on belt instead of spring which often allows holster to come out on draw with pistol.

Survival Secrets of Modern-Day Gunfighters!



This horizontal Seventrees shoulder holster has inadequate trigger guard clearance near the forestrap. It will not allow a proper firing grip without first partially completing the draw. This is very bad for constant first shot hits.

answer lies in understanding the mission of the pistol. As Jeff Cooper points out, "The pistol stops a fight someone else starts." The degree to which it is "at the ready" will determine if hauling it around was worth the trouble. The holster must also be judged on its ability to provide instant readiness unobtrusively. Even if concealability isn't required, the exaggerated western style gunbelt is usually found to provide little, if any increase in speed under practical conditions. It

does, however, intrude seriously upon the mobility, flexibility and comfort of the man who must always go armed. When concealment is important, design must be precise.

Possibly the surest single test of a holster's defensive function is to draw and fire against the clock. This must be done from a variety of hand start positions, with combat accuracy being duly noted. Varied start positions and the observation of accuracy point out something which



Exposed trigger guard of the S.D. Myers holster does not increase speed but offers potential hazard. There is no good reason for uncovering trigger guard.



This is the Safariland ankle holster commonly called the "wet suit leg". It is extremely comfortable for an ankle holster and very secure. It doesn't wobble while running. It is most concealable when worn with the pistol on the inside of the leg, butt forward.

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any good holster must allow. You must be able to obtain a proper firing grip on the pistol without first moving it in the holster. Unfortunately the number of holsters which violate this role is staggering! If you have doubts, don't buy it.

Assuming you have managed to avoid the "firing grip" problem you may wonder just how well your concealment holster conceals. The tendency of the inexperienced person is to be more concerned about the degree of concealment than usually proves necessary. This was demonstrated to me in a very unique way a few years ago. After having flown to a Northern California city on a commercial airliner carrying six pistols in a brief case, I arrived back at the airport a couple days later after teaching a law enforcement firearms class. The security agent informed me that although he understood that I had carried the pistols on the plane two days prior, policy now forced weapons car-



Upside-down "Berns-Martin" style shoulder holster shifts to rear during wear, makes draw difficult.



Shoulder holster for women is sometimes a necessary choice due to women's clothes seldom allowing a belt to be worn.



Three-picture series shows seven pistols in waistband. (Ref: airline story)



Proper Weaver Stance handles 90% of combat situations.

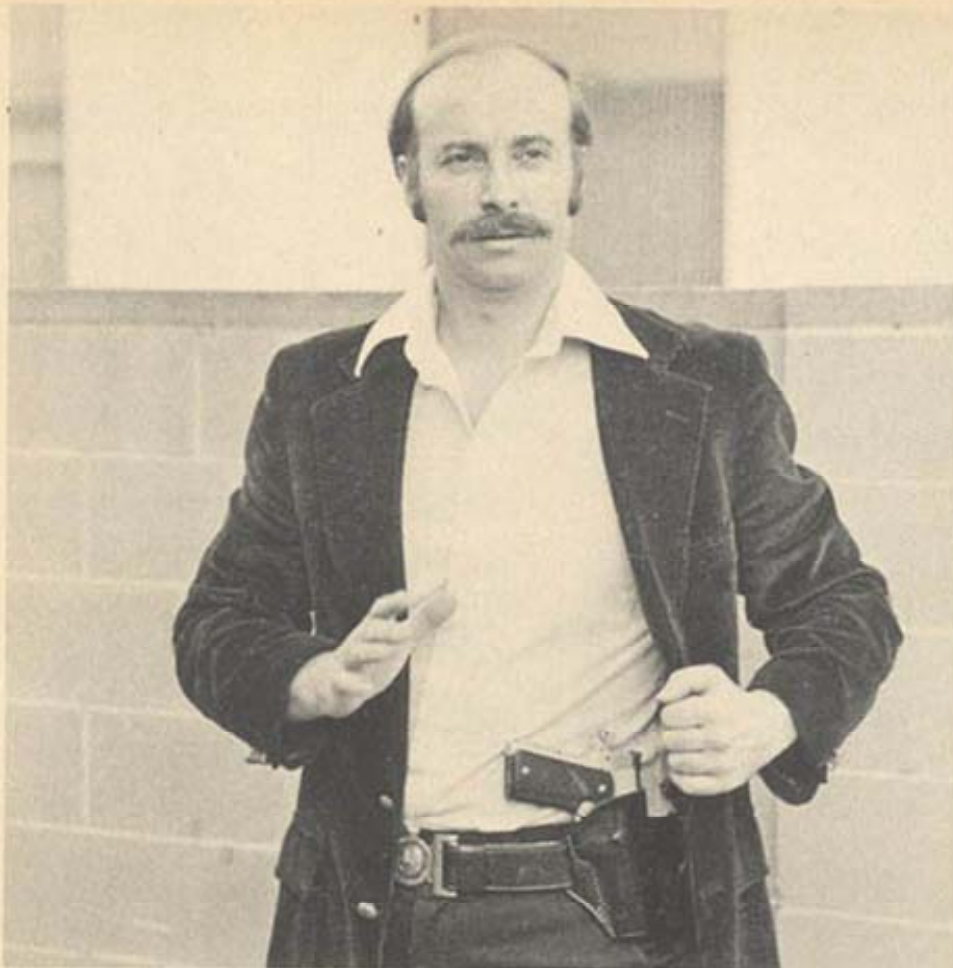
ried aboard to be worn! After negotiating on this point until minutes before departure and deciding against checking them as luggage, knowing the theft rate, I borrowed a private office and slipped all six into my waistband along with the Colt Commander I was already wearing. I then "clanked" my way on to the aircraft past 180 passengers with all seven weapons covered by only a "square-cut" sportshirt worn "untucked." No one looked twice. So much for worries about concealment! Concern for proper concealment

cannot, however, be made light of, as it is important for many reasons. Although many methods have been tried, the properly designed belt holster or the "inside-the-pants" holster will handle 95% of the concealment problems encountered. Wrist holsters, crotch holsters, and holsters which suspend the gun in the middle of your back all have an appeal to the imagination but more often than not end up abandoned in a drawer. If the holster you choose allows: 1) a proper and consistent firing grip before moving the pistol; 2) reasonable



flatness and stability on the belt; and 3) access while sitting, it will probably work alright.

In the case of the "inside-the-pants" holster expect a certain level of discomfort in exchange for the above mentioned qualities. You can get use to it. When the urge strikes you to leave your gun under the front seat of the car remember how much discomfort getting hit by a barrage of



Cross-draw of proper design is deceptively fast due to lack of difficulty in clearing the coat. Holster is similar to Milt Spark No. 55 BN.



6½-inch S&W .44 Magnum is very fast out of Milt Sparks shoulder holster.

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bullets causes! While shoulder holsters are widely used, it is safe to say that their use is generally restricted to wearing under a coat. There are problems with many designs. The upside-down Berns Martin style places the gun at a difficult angle for a firing grip. As the holster shifts to the rear during normal wear the grip becomes impossible. Horizontal styles tend to draw better, however they may cut the blood circulation in your arm with the larger guns. One of the finest designs on the market is a very old one. The Hardy-Cooper shoulder holster, a joint effort of holster maker Cap Hardy, and Jeff Cooper, it incorporates a horizontal spring which does not bind the barrel during the draw as many other designs do. For many years it was unavailable, however Milt Sparks renovated the design. Write Milt Sparks Holsters, Box 7P, Idaho City, Idaho 83631 for a brochure. He makes excellent conceal-

ment holsters of all types.

A brief word about the ability of a holster to retain the pistol under adverse conditions should be said. Whenever possible, tension or friction should replace the use of safety straps and thumb-breaks. Clearing a shirt or coat and unfastening a strap can create some interesting fumbles when time is of the essence! Straps also, in many cases, interfere with the consistent firing grip which makes the first shot a possible hit.

In buying a holster pay some attention to the man building it. Is he a combat shooter? Does he specialize in designs that are personally tested? Beware of the holster builder who makes saddles and purses—his holsters may show a similarity to his other products.

A holster has to be right for you. Different body builds and personal feel all require different holsters. If it doesn't feel right, it probably isn't!

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