

THE NEW LOOK IN

The Classic one-handed hold on the six-gun and pistol may be a thing of the past. Handgun veterans and the military are more and more getting both hands into the act----with amazing results!!!



Photo Below shows left hand approach for the two hand grip, right hand view this page and left hand view opposite.

In a joke as old as the automobile, a self-righteous type motorist drives up alongside a young man who is piloting with one arm around his girl.

"Use both hands!" shouts the kibitzer.

"I'd like to," is the answer, "but then I couldn't steer."

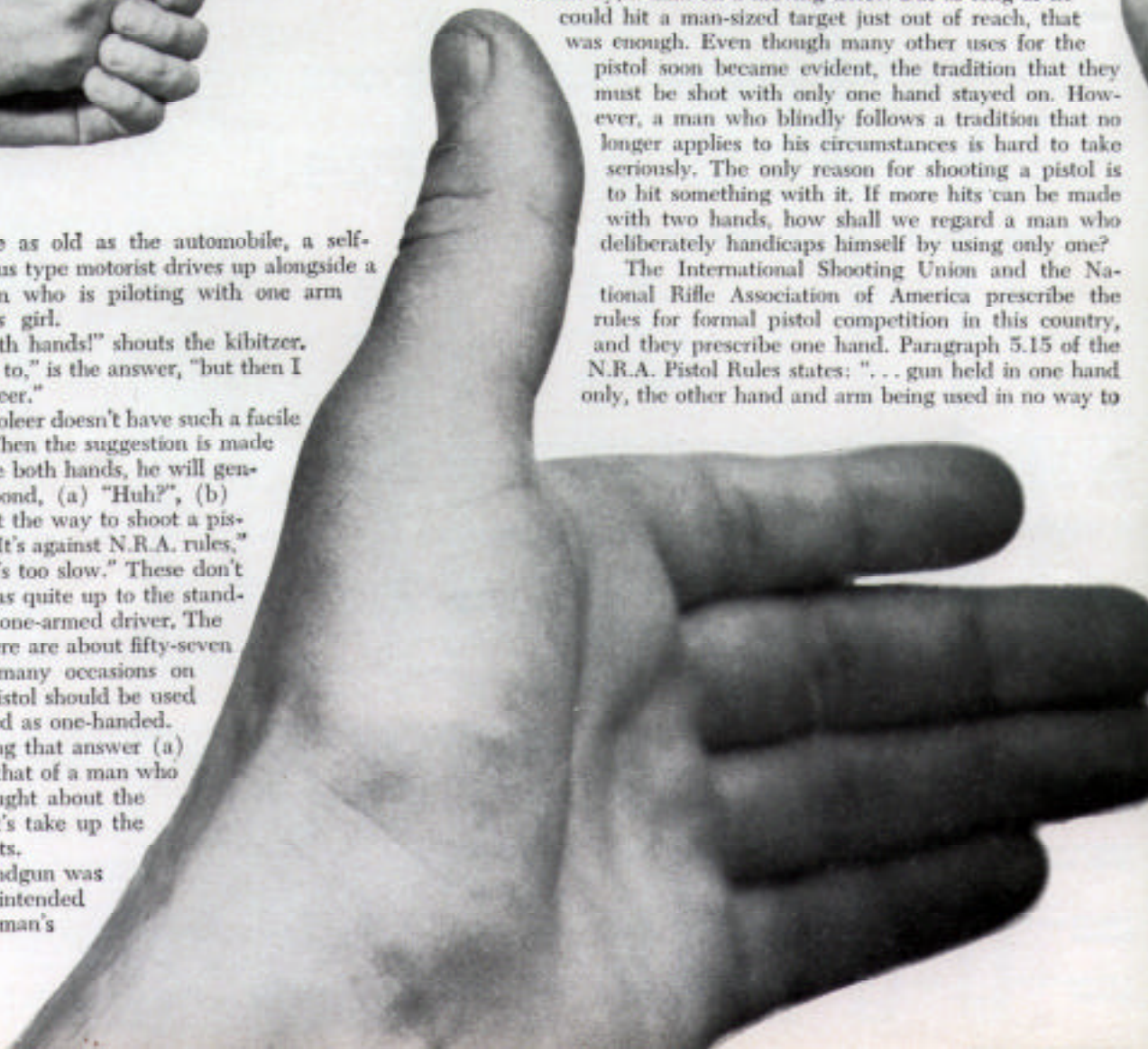
The pistoleer doesn't have such a facile answer. When the suggestion is made that he use both hands, he will generally respond, (a) "Huh?", (b) "That's not the way to shoot a pistol," (c) "It's against N.R.A. rules," or (d) "It's too slow." These don't strike me as quite up to the standard of the one-armed driver. The fact is, there are about fifty-seven times as many occasions on which a pistol should be used two-handed as one-handed.

Assuming that answer (a) is merely that of a man who never thought about the matter, let's take up the other points.

The handgun was originally intended as a horseman's

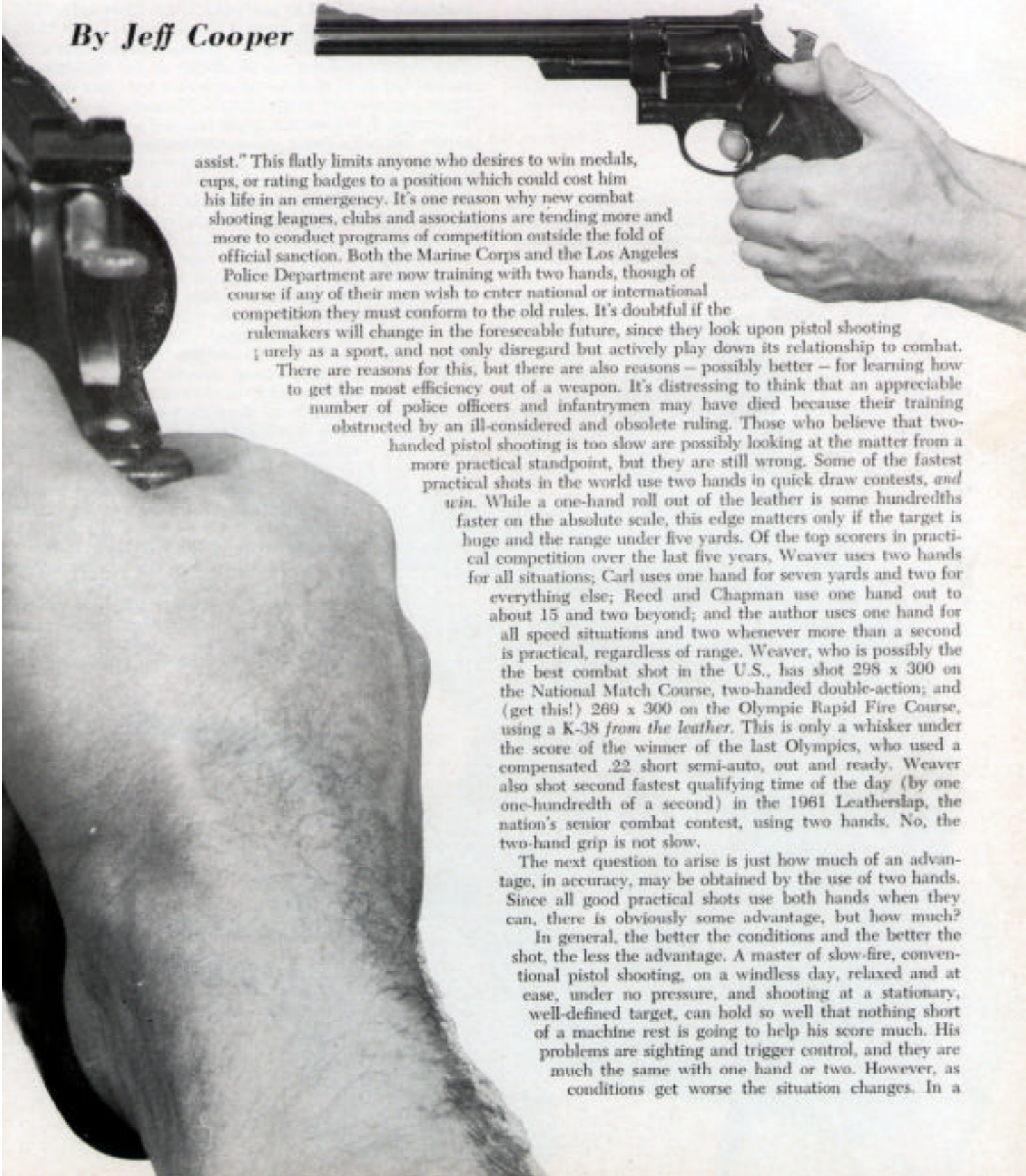
weapon — a replacement or supplement to lance and saber. Since all but the equestrian virtuoso need one hand for the reins, the horse pistol was a one-hand firearm. Naturally, no special precision was expected from, or produced by, a man on a moving horse. But as long as he could hit a man-sized target just out of reach, that was enough. Even though many other uses for the pistol soon became evident, the tradition that they must be shot with only one hand stayed on. However, a man who blindly follows a tradition that no longer applies to his circumstances is hard to take seriously. The only reason for shooting a pistol is to hit something with it. If more hits can be made with two hands, how shall we regard a man who deliberately handicaps himself by using only one?

The International Shooting Union and the National Rifle Association of America prescribe the rules for formal pistol competition in this country, and they prescribe one hand. Paragraph 5.15 of the N.R.A. Pistol Rules states: ". . . gun held in one hand only, the other hand and arm being used in no way to



HANDGUN HOLDS

By Jeff Cooper



assist." This flatly limits anyone who desires to win medals, cups, or rating badges to a position which could cost him his life in an emergency. It's one reason why new combat shooting leagues, clubs and associations are tending more and more to conduct programs of competition outside the fold of official sanction. Both the Marine Corps and the Los Angeles Police Department are now training with two hands, though of course if any of their men wish to enter national or international competition they must conform to the old rules. It's doubtful if the

rulemakers will change in the foreseeable future, since they look upon pistol shooting purely as a sport, and not only disregard but actively play down its relationship to combat.

There are reasons for this, but there are also reasons — possibly better — for learning how to get the most efficiency out of a weapon. It's distressing to think that an appreciable number of police officers and infantrymen may have died because their training

obstructed by an ill-considered and obsolete ruling. Those who believe that two-handed pistol shooting is too slow are possibly looking at the matter from a

more practical standpoint, but they are still wrong. Some of the fastest practical shots in the world use two hands in quick draw contests, and

win. While a one-hand roll out of the leather is some hundredths faster on the absolute scale, this edge matters only if the target is huge and the range under five yards. Of the top scorers in practical competition over the last five years, Weaver uses two hands for all situations; Carl uses one hand for seven yards and two for

everything else; Reed and Chapman use one hand out to about 15 and two beyond; and the author uses one hand for all speed situations and two whenever more than a second is practical, regardless of range. Weaver, who is possibly the best combat shot in the U.S., has shot 298 x 300 on the National Match Course, two-handed double-action; and (get this!) 269 x 300 on the Olympic Rapid Fire Course, using a K-38 *from the leather*. This is only a whisker under the score of the winner of the last Olympics, who used a compensated .22 short semi-auto, out and ready. Weaver also shot second fastest qualifying time of the day (by one one-hundredth of a second) in the 1961 Leatherslap, the nation's senior combat contest, using two hands. No, the two-hand grip is not slow.

The next question to arise is just how much of an advantage, in accuracy, may be obtained by the use of two hands. Since all good practical shots use both hands when they can, there is obviously some advantage, but how much?

In general, the better the conditions and the better the shot, the less the advantage. A master of slow-fire, conventional pistol shooting, on a windless day, relaxed and at ease, under no pressure, and shooting at a stationary, well-defined target, can hold so well that nothing short of a machine rest is going to help his score much. His problems are sighting and trigger control, and they are much the same with one hand or two. However, as conditions get worse the situation changes. In a



Notice the overlapping fingers and steadiness of two-hand grip.

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wind, or if the shooter is excited, in a hurry, out of breath, scared or flustered, the two-hand grip gets better. Most occasions in which a pistol may be needed involve such conditions, while in formal competition the reverse is true, so it is easy to see why the rules stand as they do.

The novice, who cannot hold well even under ideal conditions with one hand, is thus aided more by the use of both hands than the expert. This is one reason why many old timers look upon the system with scorn, as a boot technique. They do this until a boot, using two hands, wipes them out on a field reaction course. Naturally if they never fire a field reaction course they may rest upon their assumed superiority, for they probably can hold off the newcomer on the National Match Course. That the NMC has practically no relation to weaponcraft is a subject brought up only by the tactless.

Various versions of the two-hand grip are illustrated. While there will be personnel modifications due to hand size, type of weapon, and time allowance, it is noteworthy that the left (off) hand always furnishes support forward of the wrist. Little, if any, help may be given the gun hand by support at or in rear of the wrist, for the wrist joint is the weak point, not the arm. If the left hand is placed forward, supporting the steel ahead of the right, some of the gun-wrist's flexibility may be damped out. As the angle

between the planes of two wrists increases, so does the degree to which both wrists are stiffened. Therefore the forearms should avoid lying parallel and include as large an angle as is convenient and comfortable.

The left hand should overlap the right in such a way that the conventional one-hand grip is not changed. Recoil-support is important in any pistol which kicks appreciably, and this must remain constant in all positions. The ball of the left thumb rides alongside the second phalange of the right thumb, and the parallel fingers of the left hand ride around the front of the butt in such a way that the index finger supports the trigger guard. When this is done right, the weight of the weapon is pivoted on the second phalange of the left index finger, where the trigger guard rests, and the pistol is restrained from rolling forward on this fulcrum by the weight of the right hand and arm on the back strap. No muscles in the shooting hand or arm are under any tension — all the right hand does is squeeze. In the prone or rest positions the left hand is likewise limp, as the entire weight of the weapon is borne on the joined fingers of the left hand, placed between the trigger guard and solid support, and forming a tension-free pad. In the standing position the left arm carries the weight, as it does in rifle offhand. In the free-sitting position both arms bear some weight, with about $\frac{2}{3}$ on the left. In the kneeling position the left arm, placed directly on top of the left knee, carries *all* the weight. In all positions the firing hand is largely freed to perform its main function, thus simplifying trigger control. But the technique must be studied — many try it without understanding it, and thus do not derive enough benefit from it to matter.

For extremely precise shooting where time is not important (as when sighting in), further use may be obtained from the two-hand grip. This is by means of the two-finger squeeze. If the middle-finger of the left hand is used to support the trigger guard, the pad of the left index finger may be placed over the tip of the firing finger. Then, if a carefully controlled pressure is applied and held constant by the left hand, such pressure may, in effect, be subtracted from the weight of the trigger pull. A marksman with good control can take up all but a few ounces with his left hand



Two-hand shooter holds revolver far out as possible. Most of the revolver sights are made for arm-length use.

in this manner, leaving his firing hand a free-pistol pull. If you try this remember that the left hand does *not* release the trigger, but holds a constant pressure which merely lightens the load of the trigger finger. Of course this also takes a little learning — don't expect wonders on your first time out.

The foregoing techniques are principally applicable to deliberate shooting. Both grip and trigger action are slightly different in speed shooting, as the illustrations show. Some work is necessary to coordinate the hands so that the pistol may be punched accurately and uniformly into the supporting hand on a maximum speed draw, but you can hardly expect expertness to come when you whistle, in any field.

After supervising and participating in a great deal of unrestricted competition over the past five years — and without a measure of success — it seems to me that the two-handed use of the pistol should become the norm rather than the exception. Instead of holding that one usually fires a handgun with one hand, and only rarely with



Los Angeles County Deputy Sheriff Jack Weaver, one of the country's top combat shooters, has won many competitions for speed and accuracy by using both hands.

two, the reverse will be found to be true. In four cases the pistol should be one-handed:

- (a) When one arm is disabled.
 - (b) When one arm is necessary to hold on, or to control, as on horseback or a motorcycle.
 - (c) When attempting absolutely maximum speed at very short range on a very large target.
 - (d) When participating in an I.S.U. or N.R.A. match.
- Thus it appears that, for pistols, offhand is obsolete. ■



Author Jeff Cooper demonstrates his two hand grip in the kneeling position.