

*Wild West Gunmen Were Not So Hot*

six feet the shots are all kill hits, and you can get six shots off in less than two seconds. At distances beyond six feet fanning the hammer is nonsense—not that I do not think it is a silly, ineffectual gun stunt at any distance, for it is.

And that brings us down to the most romantic, colorful, and entrancing part of the whole story—the business of the quick draw. Ah, what glamour, what drama, what tension-packed moments have been built around the gun snatch! Haven't you read—a thousand times at least—where the hero told the villainous robber chieftain, "Go fer yer gun, Killer Floogel, I'm gonna salivate yah!" And then when he'd cajoled and pleaded with the craven gunman to draw he'd beat him to it. Well, Ike Akard and I stood face to face and practiced the draw with empty guns at least 100 times every day for a month. At the end of that time, so far as witnesses could tell, our hammers dropped exactly together. It did not matter whether we started with gun hand hanging at the side, with a grip on the gun butt, or with thumb hooked over the cartridge belt, we were always together. We'd have killed each other dead as hell at each exchange.

The old gun jiggers were popularly supposed to have swung their irons in quick-draw practice several hours daily—just as Ike and I did. Granted, then, that the fighters of yesterday were in good form all the time, it stands to reason that, if they stood up man to man and started for their sixes exactly together, they both died—just as Ike and I would have died had our guns been loaded.

I know a lot of gun slingers—not famous fellows like the old-timers who, since their demise, have had plenty of unofficial publicity agents to build 'em up—but buckos who have killed maybe six, maybe eight, or even as many as a dozen men. These gun wielders tell me that the quick draw is a minor item. When a man expects trouble, he takes his gun out before it starts and holds it ready in his hand. If the trouble develops suddenly, he distracts the other man's attention, and starts for his gun in plenty of time to get in the first shot without any race to see who clears leather first.

But of course you can't make a thrilling story out of that kind of stuff!