

Gun safety explained

Shootout at shopping mall catches youngsters' attention

By C.J. Rissak
staff writer

A hundred or so years ago, when people saw a mean-looking hombre wearing a black hat and black vest and toting a pair of pearl-handled six-shooters comin' their way, they skeddaddled. Well, pardner, times have changed. These days, a quick draw attracts crowds instead of dispersing them.

That was apparent last Thursday at Westland Shopping Center, when the Sundance Kid and his sidekick, the Cisco Kid, rode in.

Sundance (who refused to give his real name) and Cisco, alias Dennis Sisco, are both from Westland. They each became interested in the art, or sport, of quick draw shooting as the result of a meeting with former stunt actor Buck Buchanan, who now lives in Garden City.

Sundance and Cisco were packin' two pistols each as they strode up on stage in the center's central court Thursday. Nearly all eyes were glued to the pair, but apparently not quite enough to please Sundance.

In a flash, he whipped out both pistols and fired, the shots echoing through the mall.

"That's what you call an attention grabber," Sundance said with a devilish grin.

His holsters were specially constructed and angled back to allow for fast draws. "If the gunfighters had these 100 years ago, they might still be around today," Sundance joked.

ALL RESEMBLANCE to gunfighters of old ended there, as Sundance broke into a monologue on what type of weapons he and Cisco were using, and then followed that up with a lecture on gun safety.

In speaking with the duo after their show, which was abbreviated because of faulty shells, their views on guns and gun control became quite evident.

"Guns are not as dangerous as everyone makes them out to be," Sundance said. "If they're used with intelligence, there's no reason to be afraid of them."

During his performance, Sundance showed how dangerous the quick draw could be, even when using blanks. The cartridge's powder blast discharges an amount of paper wadding, enough to explode balloons at close range.

Sundance also explained to the audience how camera angles are altered so actors aren't shooting exactly at each other while movies are filmed. Despite an image of violence attached to guns, Sundance defended them. He used the phrase "intelligence in use" often, and even repeated an oft-spoken phrase uttered by gun enthusiasts: "Guns are as good or bad as the person behind them."

"IF A LOT of people were getting killed playing racquetball, people would say there was something wrong with the game and do away with it instead of studying the people involved," he said.

Sundance believes that it's not the weapon that commits the crime, but the person behind it.

Or, as Cisco simplified: "If you want to kill someone bad enough you can use a rock."

Both Cisco and Sundance agreed that some sort of gun control should be instituted, but not a ban on guns. Sundance suggested a test to determine the mental state of a person wishing to purchase a gun.

Sundance also admitted, "I guess I'm a believer in capital punishment."



The Sundance Kid (left) demonstrated his quick draw to an enraptured audience. In the mock gun battle above, his shooting proved deadly as the Cisco Kid (left) slumped over from two in the chest.

That came after a brief discourse on what he said was the fouled-up court system which protects too many criminals.

PART OF Sundance's act, which he normally performs in nightclubs and bars, deals with legends and history of the old West. But it's the men who were the fastest guns that keep his attention.

"I was always fascinated with the fast-draw," he said. "It combines speed and coordination, just like any other sport."

He got his start with the Western Wayne Gun Club. When he went into the service in 1968, he practiced shoot-

ing beer cans out of the window of a moving car while stationed at Ft. Riley, Kansas.

An injured hand (he wouldn't say how he hurt it, except that it had nothing to do with guns) forced him to give up the sport.

Until he met Buchanan at a show in 1977.

"He's the one who kind of inspired me again," Sundance said of Buchanan. Although Sundance said he isn't as fast as he once was, he claimed he could still draw, shoot and hit a target in one-sixth of a second.

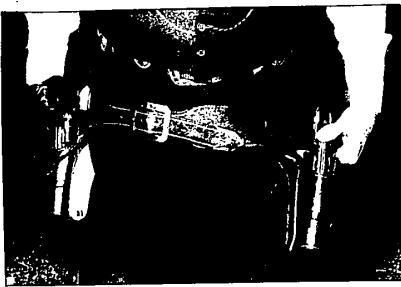
HIS WEAPONS on Thursday were

.357 magnums. His holsters were specially constructed for quick draw competitions and were angled back to allow for faster draws.

"If the gunfighters had these 100 years ago, they might still be around today," Sundance joked about the holsters.

What stop is next on the trail for Sundance and Cisco is uncertain. Just as it was 100 years ago, it remains today — quick draw artists aren't in much demand in the East and Midwest, but in the west there are several clubs, according to Sundance.

So the pair will just ride off into the sunset — until they're called upon for their next exhibition.



The Sundance Kid demonstrated how his specially constructed holsters help him to draw his two .357 magnum revolvers, shoot and hit a target all in one-sixth of a second. The holsters are angled forward to enable Sundance to slip them out more quickly. The quick draw contest was followed by a talk on gun safety.

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