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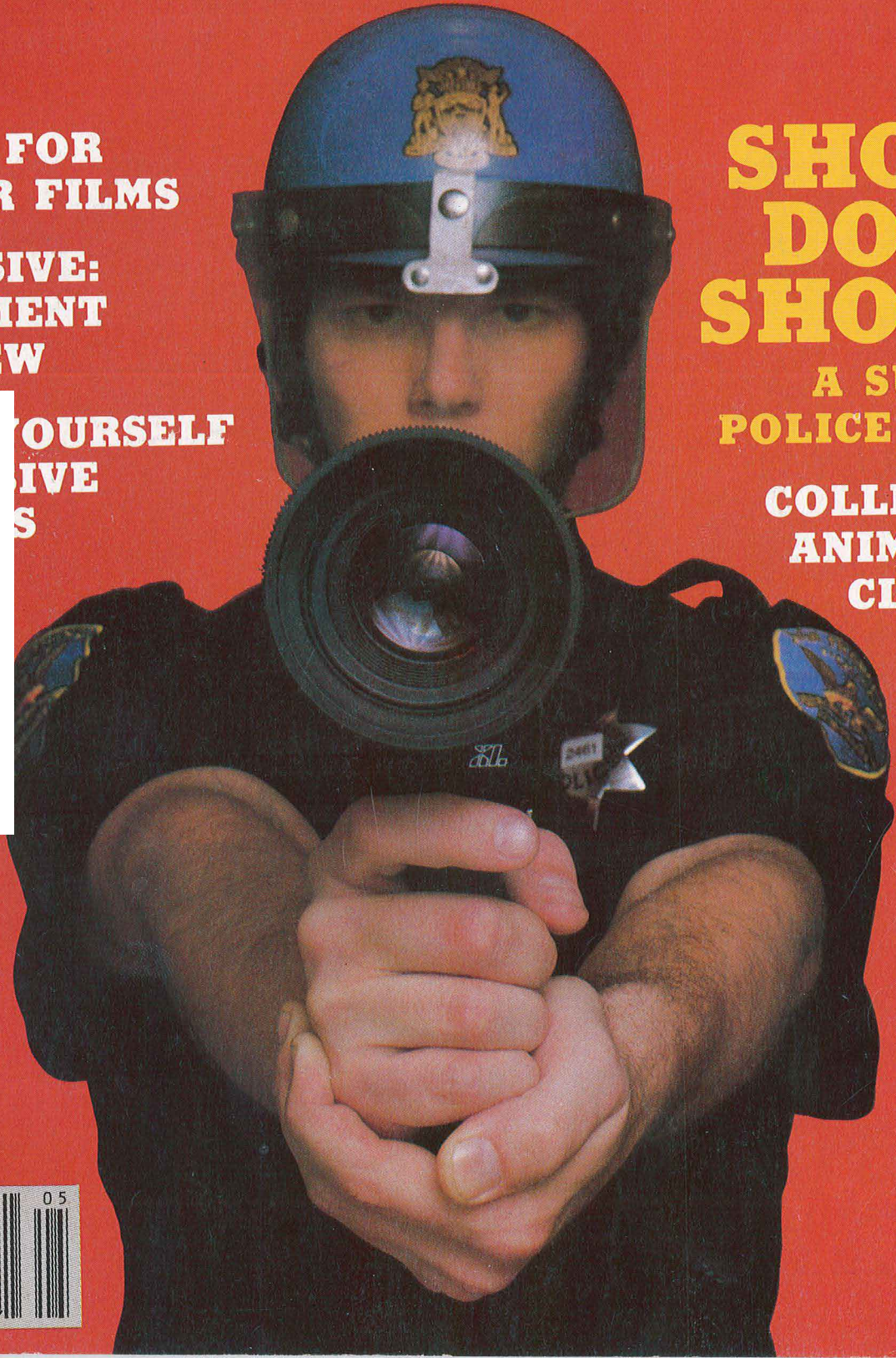
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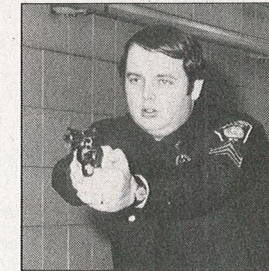
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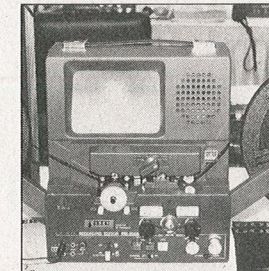
A promising new international film festival
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It's 3:00 AM. You're alone, driving a police car through the city. At any moment, your quiet patrol could turn into a life or death situation.

"KEB-398 to J-7," a metallic voice announces over the radio. "Respond to a possible 10-17 in progress, 116 West 22nd Street."

"J-7, 10-4," you answer while throwing on the flashing red and whites and flooring the accelerator. You leave the siren off; you're too close. If it is a *burglary in progress*, they might hear you coming.

A thousand thoughts are racing through your mind as you race to the scene. You know the place well. It's a vending machine distributor with one main door and a safe in the front office. You know

Sergeant Steve Johnson began filmmaking as a hobby while serving in the U.S. Marines. He has made animated satires as well as training films, and has served 11 years behind a police badge in Jamestown, New York.

you're the only car responding; everyone else is tied up. You'll have to handle this by yourself.

Will the burglar be armed? Can't take any chances . . . burglary is a felony. Department policy is to enter all known or possible felony situations with your weapon drawn.

The place is only a block away. You turn off the red and whites, and cut the headlights too. About 100 feet from the front entrance, you stop driving and report in on the radio. You get out of the car silently, without slamming the door . . . flashlight in your left hand, .38 revolver in your right.

Although it's a cool night, you're sweating like a horse. Cautiously, you move along the front of the building to the main entrance. It looks like the door is slightly ajar.

As you step closer, you can see the lock has obviously been forced. No doubt now, it's a break and enter.

You hear pounding noises inside the building. Slipping into the darkened interior, your heart is

pounding nearly as loud. This part of the building is a garage. The noise is definitely coming from the office, only a few feet away.

The office door is open and as you approach the room, you see the flicker of a flashlight beam. A burglar must be working on the safe. Your mouth is dry and you want to clear your throat . . . but you might be heard.

You move to the door, kneel and lean around the doorway to look inside. A man with his back to you is working on the dial of the safe. Still kneeling, you aim your revolver at the back of his head and call out, "Police—don't move!"

The suspect instantly whirls around, with his hand reaching inside his jacket. Within a split second, you must decide what to do! Shoot or don't shoot?

DEADLY DECISIONS

Potentially lethal situations like the one just described arise every day for police officers across the country. In a small town, it may only happen once. But if it does,

will the officer react properly? If the officer shoots, is it justified or is it an overreaction to a nervous movement by the suspect?

Most police officers would rather not think about a confrontation like this. But not thinking about it never keeps it from happening. As a police officer, I know that the decision to use "deadly physical force" is always a tough one. When an officer makes that deci-

"The camera would be, in effect, a police officer's eyes."

sion, he or she must be right. Once a bullet leaves a revolver, no power on earth can bring it back . . .

In Jamestown, New York, our police department has developed a way of using Super-8 filmmaking to help officers make the right decisions. We've been utilizing a Super-8 film, produced by our own Department of Police, to

test our officers' judgement in matters of life and death.

You might not have considered your own local police department as a potential client for a Super-8 film, but I imagine a lot of other police organizations could profit from a program such as ours. If you're looking for new ways to apply your own Super-8 filmmaking skills, perhaps you should consider what we've done in Jamestown.

The City of Jamestown has a population of about 39,000 and, like most cities this size, its violent crime rate is fairly low. Until recently, the Jamestown Police Department's fire arms training consisted primarily of Tactical Revolver Courses. This activity emphasizes shooting position and accuracy against stationary targets. But none of this prepares officers for reacting to a *potentially hostile situation*, and in deciding whether to use their revolver or to hold their fire.

Our training officer suggested we try to develop a stress course

which would create realistic situations or simulated confrontations for us to respond to. We first considered pop-up targets but ruled them out because they soon became too predictable. Staged simulations with other officers portraying criminal suspects and firing blanks was considered too dangerous. Even blanks can throw fragments that can injure an eye or cause burns.

We finally considered using films. The New York State Bureau for Municipal Police (BMP) offers 16mm training films at little or no cost, and all of our departmental film equipment was 16mm silent. But the films from BMP are available only for short periods of time. Although other training films are sold on the commercial market, the prices were too prohibitive for our budget.

The biggest problem in using these 16mm films as training aids, however, was that Jamestown police officers had difficulty relating to the shooting locations. These films were usually made in a large metropolitan setting, like

A SUPER-8 POLICE STORY

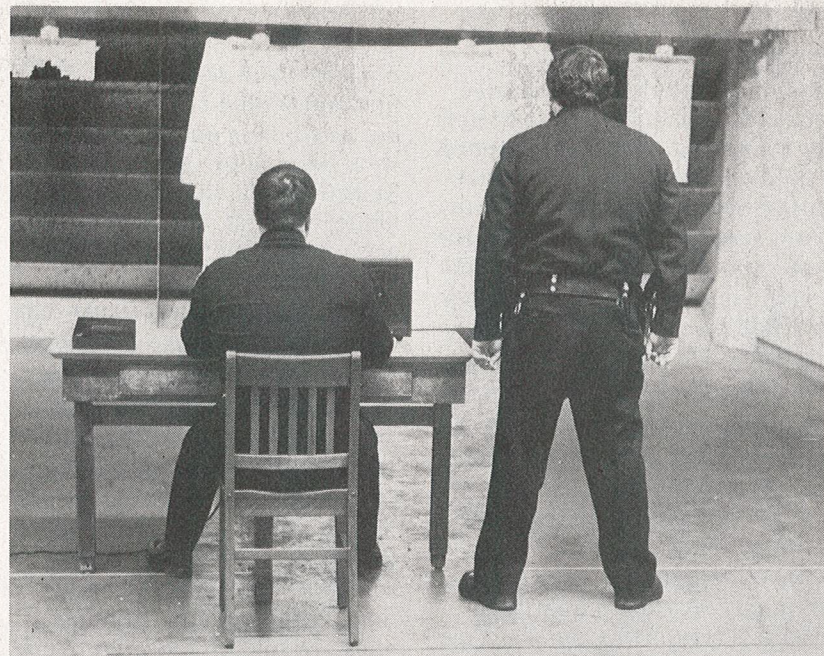
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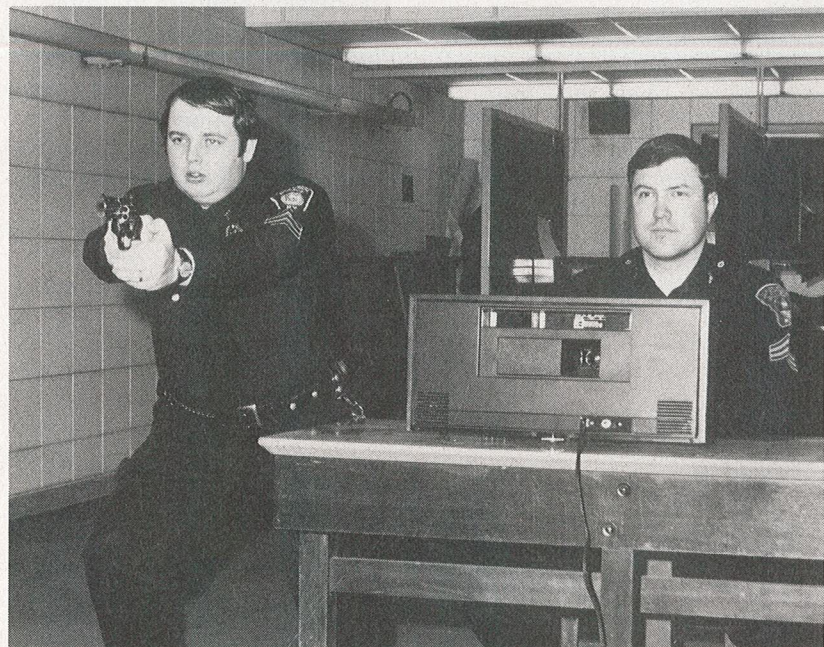
SUPER-8 FILMAKER



Photo: Dennis M. Kearney



In top photo, Steve Johnson is about to project a point-of-view training film to test the reactions of Sgt. William MacLaughlin. Below, Sgt. MacLaughlin assumes the close combat position and prepares to fire.



New York City or Los Angeles. Our hometown environment and tactics were much different than those of a big city police department. For these various reasons, this approach was ruled out.

THE CASE FOR SUPER-8

I still felt that motion picture film was the best way to go. With several years of experience in making Super-8 movies as a hobbyist, I realized how inexpensively we could make our own training films. Before long, we had an idea for a Super-8 film called

"Shoot . . . Don't Shoot." We went to Chief Richard D. Ream with a proposal to make our own training film in color and sync sound.

We wanted to film a series of potentially hostile situations that may or may not develop into a confrontation requiring an officer to shoot. Each of these scenes would be shot in one continuous take from a first person point-of-view. The camera would be, in effect, a responding officer's eyes. In viewing the film, the

officers in training would see the situation as if they were actually there.

We planned to project the film onto a large sheet of paper at our indoor pistol range. When or if a criminal confrontation arises on screen, the officer being tested must decide whether to shoot or not. If the decision is to shoot, the officer fires live ammunition at the screen image. A scoring system would evaluate each officer's decision to shoot or not shoot.

It all sounded good but Chief Ream was somewhat reluctant at first. He envisioned a Hollywood

"Once a bullet leaves a revolver, no power on earth can bring it back."

film crew and a huge cast with a budget to match. After we explained it could be done for a few hundred dollars in Super-8, as opposed to 16mm, he finally gave us the go-ahead.

EQUIPMENT ROUNDUP

We didn't need to look far for a camera, since my own Elmo 1012S-XL was perfect for the job. All we had to find was a Super-8 sound projector suitable for departmental use, which I was authorized to purchase. For only \$150, I bought a used Kodak Ektasound 235 sound projector. The main feature we needed was a freeze frame function which this projector had. The importance and use of this capacity will be explained later on.

At first, I was torn between the use of 50-foot or 200-foot cartridges, since my Elmo camera will accept either. I finally decided on 200-foot cartridges of Kodachrome 40 (K40) sound film because I wouldn't have to worry about running out of film in the middle of a scene lasting longer than a few minutes.

The only tricky part in using the 200-foot cartridge was the added

height it gave to the camera when filming from inside the patrol car. The big cartridge sometimes made it difficult to hold the camera at eye level for point-of-view shots. I also had to practice getting out of the car with the camera running, so I wouldn't hit the door frame with the top of the cartridge.

We were all excited about using sound film since it would add a distinct feeling of reality to the training. All footage was shot in sync sound which permitted the suspects to respond both verbally and visually in each situation we filmed. Environmental sound also added a further touch of realism.

In most of the shots, we used a Bell and Howell shotgun microphone fixed to a five-foot boom and handheld by our sound person, Jerry Molenda, a film instructor at Jamestown Community College.

PRE-PRODUCTION PLANNING

With equipment, film stock and shooting technique figured out, our next step was a script. I first thought we could make up some hypothetical situations which could result in confrontations involving the use of fire arms. But the more I thought about it, the more I realized that if a situation was imaginary, there were too many equally imaginary conclusions it could reach. How could we decide how the suspects should behave?

We eventually decided to use actual encounters from our files. Since these problems had really taken place, we could base each of our situations on a true event. We would know for a fact what had actually transpired, including whether or not the original officer handled the problem properly from a tactical viewpoint. This method ruled out debate on how the actors would handle each situation.

Once we selected the problems to film, we had to decide where to shoot them. We planned to film on location and no sets were to be constructed. We used some of the actual locations of the original

events, but due to traffic congestion or space limitations, we had to look elsewhere for the others. For situations that took place indoors, we contacted suitable businesses and got permission to use their facilities.

THE ACTORS

All police officers who appear in the film are real officers. We did this because they were comfortable in the role and, if something unexpected occurred, we didn't want an actor to be mistaken for a police officer.

At first, we also wanted to use police personnel to portray the suspects, but we decided they were too easy to identify for the officers watching the film. I went to the Little Theater of Jamestown and explained what we were doing. The theater group was quite willing to help us and

"In Jamestown, New York, we've been using Super-8 film to test our police officers' judgement in matters of life and death."

we eventually used about 30 theatrical actors in the situations we filmed.

In choosing who would play which part, I deliberately assigned some roles in contradiction to common stereotypes. This was to see if an officer would make a decision too hastily, based on a suspect's appearance rather than what he or she was actually doing. For some street situations, extra actors were assigned to positions in perilous locations when the moment of confrontation arose between the officer and the suspect. Officers in this situation must place the safety of innocent bystanders above their own.

SHOOTING THE FILM

We determined that Sunday mornings would be the best time

to shoot in public areas. We wanted to avoid everyday traffic that fills streets and sidewalks.

Each situation took about an hour to film. This included setting up equipment and, depending on the complexity of the scene, walking through it half a dozen times before filming. It took four Sunday mornings and two nights of shooting to get the footage we needed "in the can."

Radio transmissions used at the beginning of some scenes were taped earlier over an intercom to provide an appropriate "tinniness," and then played back in the patrol car as we filmed. This way, we could pick up the radio on the original sound track rather than dub it in later. We considered using real radio "traffic" with a warning just before doing it to "disregard the following alarm," but we knew that someone wouldn't hear the warning and come screeching in, thinking it was a real call.

POST PRODUCTION

While waiting for the film to be processed, we began arranging the twelve situations in an appropriate order. We divided them into three groups of four problems each, with each group containing: one definite shooting situation; one situation in which shooting could be justified but was not necessarily required; one doubtful situation where, even though shooting was justifiable, it would be questionable; and one definite "no-shoot" situation.

The problems ranged from arson to armed robbery, with several totally innocent situations thrown in to keep the officers off balance.

When we viewed our film for the first time, we received several surprises. We discovered that some scenes were shot under a slight overcast and the resulting images were a bit muddy. However, these could easily be passed off as dusk or early evening, so they were still usable.

Another sequence had to be edited out because the available light wasn't strong enough. This

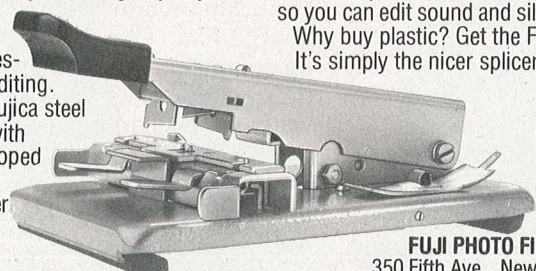
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was a nighttime situation involving a purse snatching in a parking lot. The location was lit by several mercury vapor lights mounted very high on poles, but somehow the night just swallowed up whatever illumination there was.

We found that some small objects, such as knives or handguns, didn't always show up as well as we had hoped. This was due in part to the "muddied" effect we got with the K40 film under less than excellent light conditions. I made a note to have a combination of K40 and Ektachrome 160 cartridges next time, so I could choose the stock to fit the lighting.

During filming, I deliberately avoided using movie lights. Since there was considerable camera movement in order to simulate the responding officer's actions, I realized that keeping the lights hidden would have been very difficult in most of the locations, especially in the street.

All things considered, we were quite pleased with the results. We had previously decided that this particular film would only be a prototype anyway, so technical quality was given a lower priority than content.

THE BIG TEST

Before putting the film into general use as part of our fire arms training, we picked five officers to go through the course on a "shakedown" test cruise. We projected the film on a large sheet of newsprint hung across the backstop of our indoor pistol range. To maintain a life-size image on the screen, the distance from the projector lens to the newsprint was established at about 21 feet.

The officer being tested either sits in a chair or stands, depending on whether the camera's point-of-view depicts walking or riding in a patrol car. The officer is positioned immediately to the side of the projector. The projectionist (range officer) gives no prior information as to the nature of the situation. All the officer

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Jerry Molenda (on sound) assists the author in filming an interior scene.

will know is what he or she sees and hears—the same way an officer is assigned to any real call.

As the film progresses, the officer watching may have to verbally order a subject to do something. Have you ever tried to get someone to talk to a movie screen? But the officers being tested soon learned that what they said was just as important as what they did.

When or if the officer makes the decision to shoot, he or she does so and expends live ammunition as necessary. At the instant the first round goes off, the range officer freeze frames the projector to see exactly where the shot or shots hit.

SUPER-8 SCORES

The Super-8 freeze frame projector makes it possible to actually "score" the officer's deci-



Steve Johnson films Bob Asel and John Ireland as they reenact a burglary taken from actual police files.

SUPER-8 FILMAKER

sion to shoot. If the suspect had fired a weapon *before* the officer did, we counted the officer "hit," regardless of where the officer's shot went on the screen.

If the officer fired simultaneously with the suspect and hit the suspect, we gave credit for a hit but we considered the officer also hit. If the officer fires before the suspect but misses, we call the suspect's shot a hit on the officer.

This might appear to give the officer little chance of emerging unscathed but we place a great deal of significance on the accuracy of the officer's first shot because *it may be all there is time for*.

This experimental phase revealed some important surprises. We

“We wanted to film a series of potentially hostile situations that may or may not develop into a confrontation requiring an officer to shoot.”

found that some officers went into this test under the impression that they *had* to shoot every time. After seeing seven or eight consecutive "hostile" or "potentially hostile" situations, most officers became so anticipatory that they overreacted to a high degree.

THE FILM'S FOUR GOALS

At the outset of this project, we established four objectives we hoped to meet by using the Super-8 training film. First, to test the officer's knowledge of the Penal Law. The New York State Criminal Code is quite specific as to the use of "deadly physical force" and all police officers must be familiar with those statutes. Second, to test the officer's powers of observation. Police officers must interpret what they see correctly the first time around, because there are no "instant replays" in real life.

Third, to test the officer's discretion in knowing whether to shoot or hold fire. And fourth, to test the officer's accuracy. When the decision to shoot is made, the shot must be accurate.

When we began using this film for the rest of the department, we had a couple of resident wisecracks go into the course with the attitude that they would get to blast some bad guys and have some fun. They came out, however, with an entirely different outlook. The great pains we went to in filming these situations as realistically as possible paid off. Even though it's only a movie, there's something a bit unnerving about someone with a gun trying to shoot you.

Our Chief was so enthusiastic, after seeing the film and watching it in use, that he authorized us to film more situations. We are now completing another, more polished "Shoot . . . Don't Shoot" film as well as other types of training films—all in Super-8.

BURGLARY IN PROGRESS

The burglar instantly whirls and as he does, he reaches into his jacket. "I said—don't move!" you yell with about 2½ pounds of pressure on the trigger of your service revolver.

The suspect, staring at your front sight, suddenly freezes. Slowly his hand comes out of his jacket, empty. His hands go up in the air, and you start to breathe again.

After frisking him, you find that he has no weapon. But what made him reach into his jacket? Was it an instinctive reaction to shield himself from the bullet he was sure you'd fire into him? Who knows?

What's important is that you're more relieved than ever that you held off for that extra second or two. Later, as you take the burglar to the booking desk at the police station, you think to yourself, "One of those training films I saw was just about like this one, except the suspect turned out to be a locksmith repairing the safe. But I didn't wait then . . . I shot at the screen and killed him." □

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