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## The Specific "How-To" Details for Making the "Hand of God" Rig.

This page isn't meant to be a complete "How-To" of holster and cartridge belt making. My intention is to cover the specifics of making the "Hand of God" Rig used by Russell Crowe in the movie, "3:10 to Yuma". This page is to supplement the patterns and directions included in my new pattern for this rig.

All of the photos shown are taken while making a complete rig from the pattern pack. The rig made is the one photographed for the envelope cover.



The distance from the edge for the edge gouges is set out in the pattern. Marks on the pattern indicate the space between Veiner impressions. Most of the impressions are made with the V708 Veiner. But, on the outside edge, the V417 Veiner is used to take up the extra space in the pattern caused by being on the outside curve of the holster loop.



Even though the larger V417 is used, you don't notice the difference in sizes between the Veiners on the finish holster loop. The U858 Mule's Foot is used between the Veiners to complete the edge pattern used on both the holster and the belt. When the edge stamping is done, bend the damp leather into the shape it will be around the holster, and let dry.



After the pattern has been transferred to dampened leather with a stylus, the surface of the leather must be incised along the lines. The result will look like this.



The next stamping tool in the series is the C830 Camouflage Tool. If ever you don't have the exact number tool I mention, use the closest thing you have. Some of the tools I use are over 30 years old and are no longer being manufactured.



Next come the Pear Shaders. I used P206 for the larger impressions, and P703 for the smaller impressions.



The Bevelers establish the predominance of the elements in the composition. A large F901 is used on both sides of the border lines. A B198 is used for most of the other lines. I use a A117 in the acute corners where the B198 doesn't fit. I have also modified a whole series of Bevelers, Matters, and Backgrounders to get the effects I want. The Crafttools are inexpensive enough I buy multiples of each and modify them to work better.



The Veiners are next. I used the V708 for all the impressions on the holster. Notice how the Veiner is used along the edges of the flower petals, and in the confluence of the stems and leaves.



I used the S864 Seeder for the centers of the flowers. A H907 Stop is used to define the terminus of each of the leaves and stems as they flow into the larger stock. A series of U858 Mule's Foot impressions are used to accent each of the Stops.



An A101 Bar Grounder is used for the background in this composition. I don't like the choppy lines made by the five-hole Bar Grounders, so I carefully file off the outside holes, leaving only three holes to make the impression. I also make the holes more defined with a Dremel tool for nice crisp bumps. Then, after making the first impression, I overlap the first hole of the tool on the last bump of the impression. That helps me line up my impressions in a nice flowing line. Of course, I only make two bumps with each impression, but I like the results.

Also, I pick lines to follow that create a flow to the background. As a general rule, I never line my Bar Grounder up with any border line, preferring instead to go with the flow of a leaf, stock, or flower.



Decorative Cuts finish off the floral carving for the "Hand of God" holster. Nothin' fancy, just a series of nice, clean, flowing lines. These I make with a specially shaped blade I hone myself. It is a little easier for my old hands to get the kind of fine cuts I use to be able to get when I was in my prime. Ah, those were the days.



While the leather is still damp, I fold over the skirt at the line and tap it down to a crisp fold with a hammer, usually which ever one is closest. Be careful not to leave hammer-head impressions in the leather.

Then, I gently fold over the pouch and line it up so it will be easier to sew when it's time. On this rig, I also flair-out the top of the pouch to make re-holstering the revolver easier and quicker. If you want it to look distressed, fold it over abruptly and leave crease marks on the face of the holster.

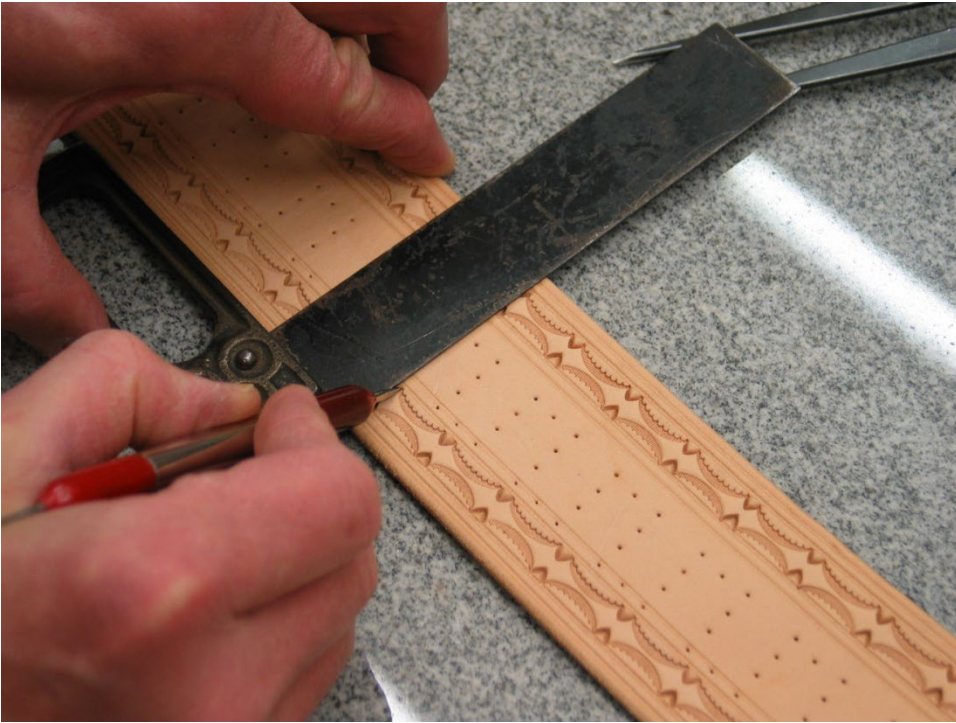


To start the belt edge tooled pattern, the edge gouges are spaced according to the markings in the pattern pack. When the edge gouges are made, it's time to lay out the spacing for the edge toolin'.

I hadn't originally planned to photograph these construction instructions, so the next few photos are after the fact.

To start the pattern, the U858 Mule's Foot is used to mark the inside and outside points at the end of the belt.





The Wing Divider, (seen being used in the next photo), is set at the distance of one U858 Mule's Foot and one V708 Veiner impression side-by-side. I usually make the impressions on a scrap of leather for this measurement. Once you have the measurement set on your Wing Divider, place one end of the Divider in the heel impression of the U858 Mule's Foot at the inside point of the end of the belt. Make a series of impressions with the Wing Divider down the length of the belt as shown in the photo below.

Above, I'm illustrating how I used the V463 Veiner to make two impressions on the outside edge of the belt, to compensate for the extra distance not used on the inside edge, made by the V708. I hope that's clear enough, but if not, ask questions.

Here I show how the Wing Divider lines up with the set of the U858 Mule's Foot impression and the V708 Veiner impression.

By using the Wing Divider, it is much easier to have a consistent spacing. It allows you to make all the V708 Veiner impressions at one time, then go back and fill-in the U858 Mules' Foot impressions.

Even though I've already edge tooled the belt, I can show how I line-up and mark the spacing, so both sides of the belt lineup with impressions from the other side.

Here I use an antique square and a stylus to show how I transfer the mark made by the Wing Divider to lineup the impressions on both sides of the edge gouges and both sides of the belt.

At this point, I've cut out and tooled all the pieces for the "Hand of God" holster and belt. It's time to start the process of preparing them for aging.

Here I "block-out" the pours in the leather using organic bee's wax. I'm rubbing it halfway between the stitching marks on the cartridge loop leather. This will give the illusion wear on the loops has worn off the coloration.



Here is a photo of some of my modified Crafttools. The modified tools are on the bottom line, and their factory counterpart are directly above. The edges are files and polished for what I feel is better performance.

After the bee's wax is laid down, I take a scrap piece of brain tanned deer hide and rub-in and smooth-out the bee's wax. The leather doesn't need to be brain tanned deer hide, just some soft suede leather that doesn't have any color in it that will transfer to the leather you are workin' on.



The same process is done on each piece of the rig. You guess where you would see wear, then rub bee's wax on that spot.

In reality, that kind of wear would take decades. But, in the world of Hollywood, it's all about the image. The camera, (and the human eye), see the variation in coloration and it registers as wear and age.



Here I burnish the wax down with my deer hide. You can see how the wax has sealed and slickened the surface of the leather. The iron oxide from my tank of rusty water will have a difficult time penetrating that burnished down wax.

However, the recesses of the tooling isn't getting much wax, so the impressions will take on the iron oxide quicker and turn darker. This will give it the look of years of use. This step is repeated on all the leather parts.



Here is my rust tank. It sets on a small oven with a short chimney up the back. From time to time it helps re-circulate the iron oxide through the water if it is brought to a boil. Never get the water too hot for your hand if you have leather in the tank! Also, in the winter, I have to build a fire under it and thaw it out if I want to use it. I keep a slab of Cottonwood over it as a lid to keep out debris and make it more difficult for mosquitos to live in it.



**The rusty lookin' film on the water indicates the iron oxide isn't well circulated within the tank.**

**Straps of soft iron line the tank to maximize the surface area of iron to the effects of the water. A loop of electrical wire is submerged in the water to suspend the leather from. Before I can use the tank, I will heat it and rub my hands up and down the iron straps and the inside of the tank, dislodging the iron oxide.**



A string is run through each of the pieces in a place where it won't make a mark on the visible portion of the finished rig. Each piece is suspended in the rusty water where it isn't allowed to touch the sides or any other piece of leather.

If the leather is touching other leather, there will be a lighter shadow in that place. If the leather is touching iron, there will be a dark streak or blotch in that place. I move the pieces from time to time to make sure they aren't touching.



Here are the collected pieces after being removed from the tank and dried.

The strings are still attached to give you some ideas on how to attach them to keep from leaving faint lines.

The leather has a light gray coloration at this point. If I had left it in longer, it would turn a deep purple black that will never rub off on clothing. However, since I want the illusion of age, I took it out early.



Experimentation will give you an idea of how long to leave your leather in the tank. It looks darker while it is wet. It will dry lighter, but as you can see in this photo, when you apply the extra virgin olive oil, it darkens again.

If in doubt, take the leather out and let it dry. If it isn't dark enough, dunk it some more. You can always make it darker with repetition, but you can never lighten it up.



This is how I sew in toe-plugs. I don't glue them in. As you can see in this photo, I've stitched down the main stem, and taken two stitches across the toe before I start sewing in the toe-plug. Depending on the size of the toe-plug and the length of your stitches, the number of stitches across the toe-plug before engaging the toe-plug will vary.

Here, I am pushing my awl up through the holster to the point of the stitching groove in the toe-plug.



Here, I have flipped the holster around and I've pushed my awl up through the holster from the other side, into the point of the stitching groove in the toe-plug.

It is important when sewing toe-plugs to have a deep stitching groove in the toe-plug. It makes it much easier to get a good stitch.

Also, just push the very end of the awl through the toe-plug. It is better to have a tight hole rather than tear-out the toe-plug.



To start the actual stitching, the needle first must go up from the back-side of the holster into the point of the toe-plug.

I brace the area around the needle and thread with my fingers to help the leather resist any forces to tear-out. Tear-outs are a common occurrence among inexperienced sewers of toe-plugs. It isn't the end of the world, but it doesn't look nice.



After the thread has been pulled through from the back, flip the holster back around so you can work from the front. The needle then needs to go down through the toe-plug and come out the first stitching hole in the front of the holster.

Here you see the needle being pushed through to the front of the holster. Notice how the needle is goin' back down into the toe-plug almost exactly where it came up from the back.



Once the thread is pulled through from the back, it's time to run the thread from the front up through the toe-plug.

In the photo you can see I'm pushing the needle from the front thread up through the same hole the as the thread from the back of the holster.

Once the two threads are pulled tight, the tip of the toe-plug is secured in place.



With the tip of the toe-plug secured, I can use my awl to begin a series of holes for the next stitches. Only make a few holes at a time to keep the toe-plug aligned within the toe of the holster.

You can see I am angling the awl to make holes that run towards the tip of the toe-plug. This will be important as you reach the top of the toe-plug. If you don't angle your holes now, your stitching holes will be too close together at the top and rip out.



Now you can begin sewing the toe-plug almost like regular hand stitching. One thread will always be coming out of the toe-plug, and one out of the holster.

Continue making angled holes with your awl that lean towards the point of the toe-plug. At the top of the toe, your hole will point straight down to the point. As you stitch down the back side of the holster, angle those holes towards the toe-plug as well.



When you have stitched all the way back to the point of the toe-plug, the thread that is coming out of the last hole in the toe-plug needs to go back through the first hole in the front of the holster. Here, you see the needle goin' back through the earlier hole to come out at the front of the holster.



One thread is coming out the front, and one coming out the back. The toe-plug is now sewn in. Back-stitch a couple holes to lock the thread.

In the photo, the thread from the front has already gone back through the previous hole and is at the back. The needle from the back is being pushed through to the front.

Two back stitches are enough, with the front stitch goin' through a third stitch and both being cut off at the back.



To assemble the hammer tie-down, the hammer loop needs to be folded in half and the ends secured with a blood knot. It is easier if the slits in the leather are stretched out before you try to force the leather through.

Notice in the photo, one slit is longer than the other. The leather will pass through the longer slit first.



The leather has been forced through the longer slit.

In the photo, I've turned the leather over to force the other end of the leather through the smaller slit.

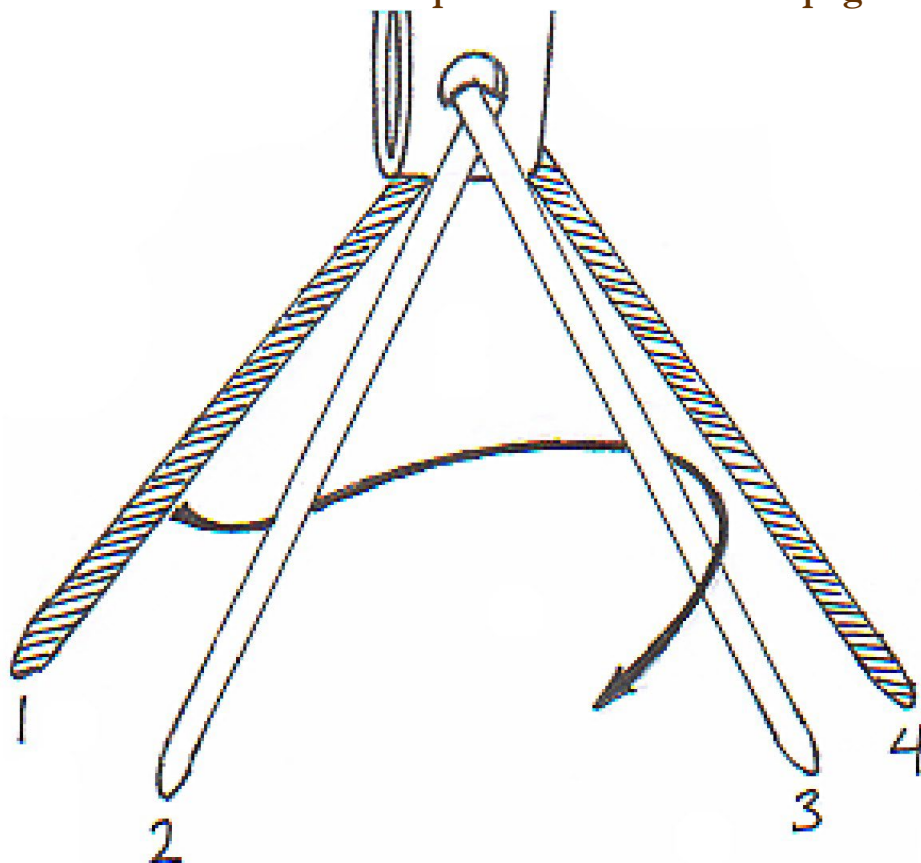


With the leather forced through the smaller slit, the ends of the hammer loop have been locked together.

**CAUTION:** The next photo may be a little too much for folks with a squeamish stomach. You may want to stop here. I don't have anything new posted right now.



I'll go and draw the illustrations I need to show how to make the four-string braid for the hammer tie-down. I'll post those on the next page when I get 'em done.



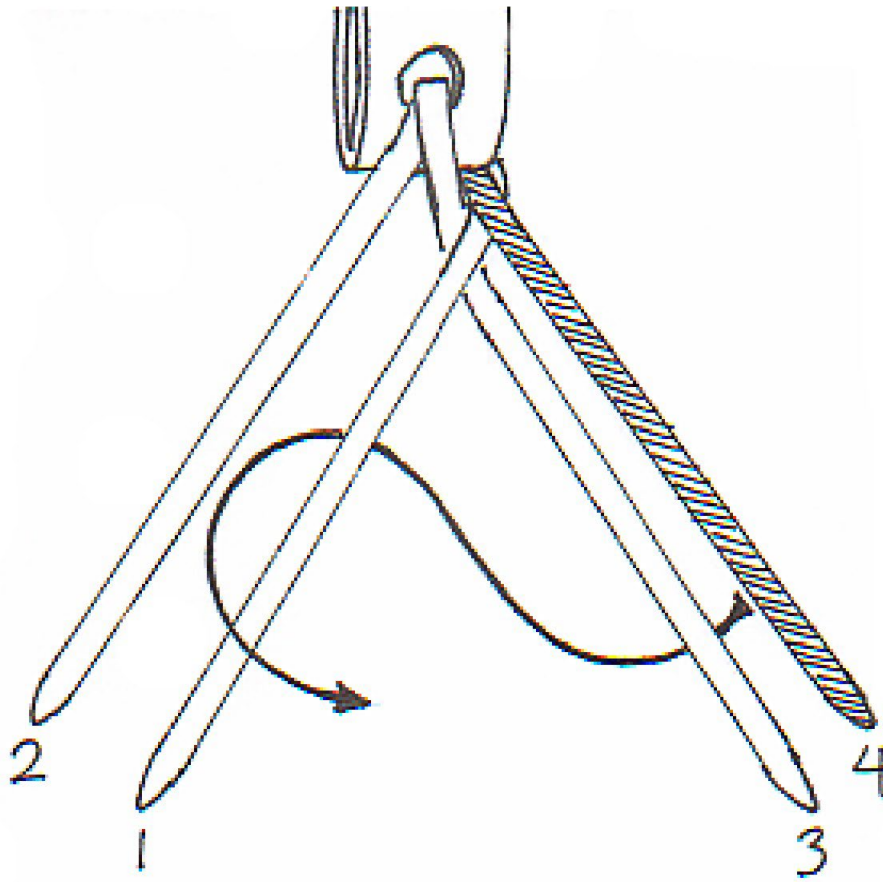
To braid the thong for the hammer tie-down, it is easier to see if I use illustrations. Here, I have looped both 20 inch lace through the hole in the fold of the hammer tie-down. Both ends of one lace are held on the right side, both ends of the other lace are held on the left side.

In the illustrations, the shaded lace indicates the flesh side of the lace. As you can see, the flesh side of the lace is to the back, and the hair side of the lace is on the facing side. In the illustrations, I don't show the whole length of the lace for the sake of illustration.

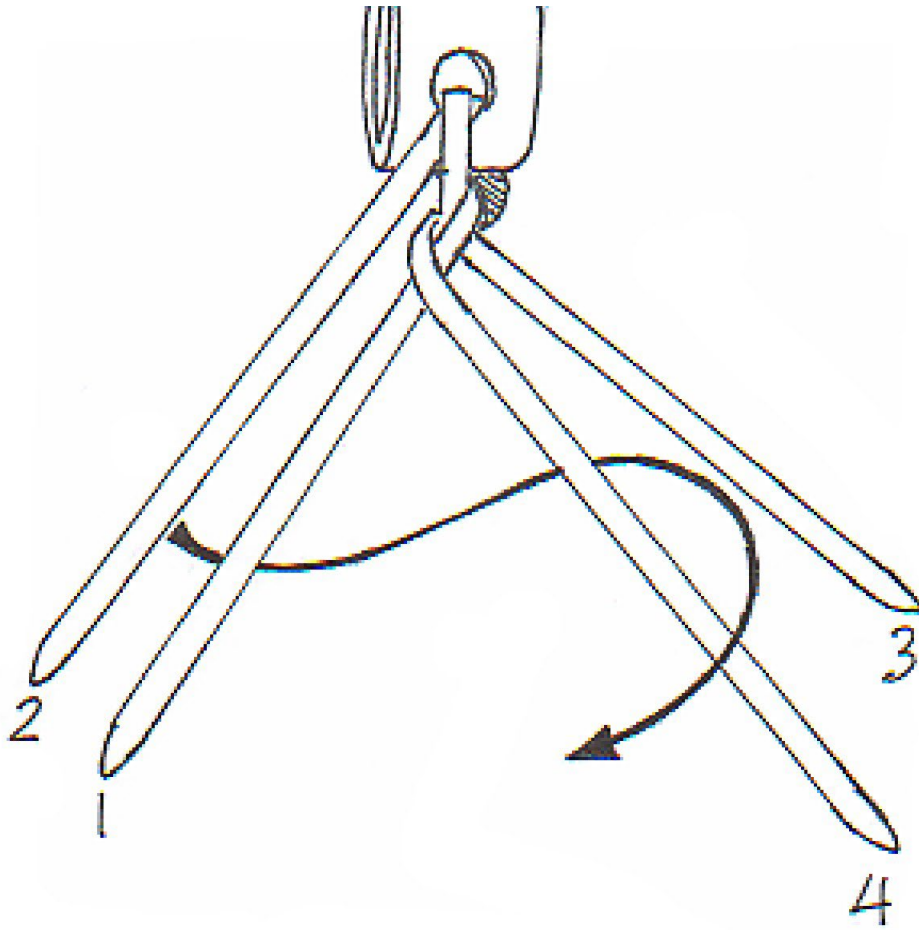
Starting with lace end labeled 1, take it behind 2, and between 3 & 4, then back over to be held on the left side with 2.

Then, from the right, 4 goes around behind 3, between 1 & 2, over 1, and back to the right to be held with 4.

Notice how 1 folded over so the flesh side is now to the back. This is important so the hair side of the lace will be visible consistently as the braid proceeds.



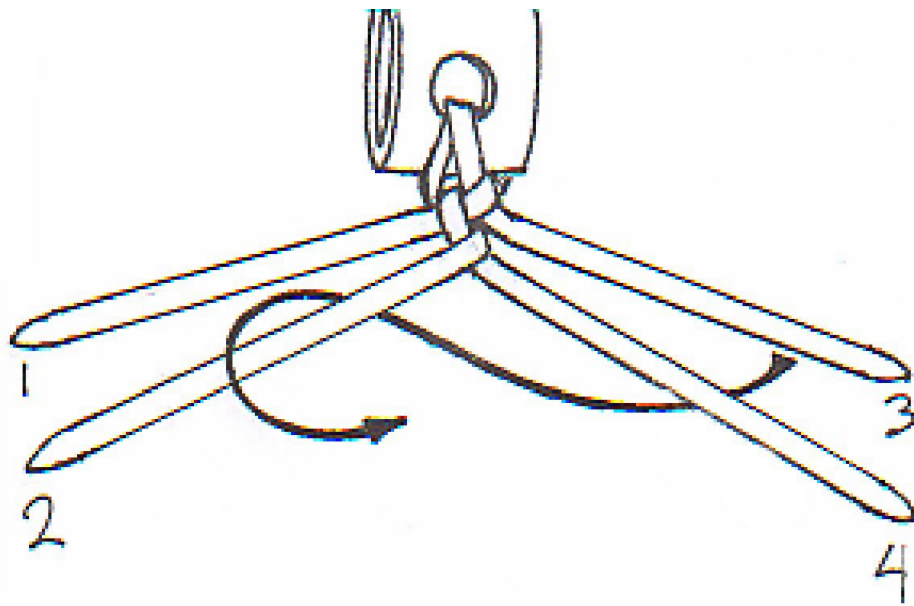
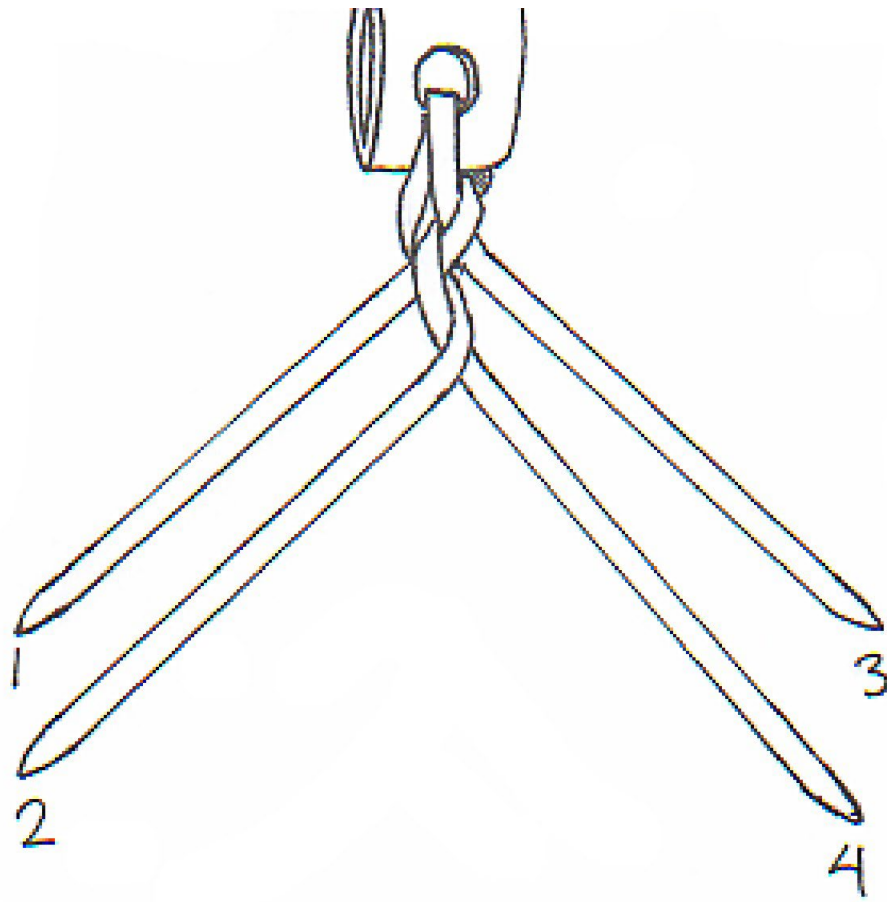
From the left, 2 passes behind 1, between 4 & 3, over 4, and back to be held next to 1. With 4 folding around and returning to the left, all the hair side of the laces are facing the braider. This should continue to the end of the braid.



At this point, only 3 has not made the pass behind.

Pull up and out with the two sets of lace on each side. Work them against each other to tighten up the braid.

This should be done from now on whenever a lace passes around and returns to its proper side.



Now, 3 passes behind 4, between 2 & 1, over 2, and returns to the right.

All laces have now made the circuit. To continue the braid, start again with 1, and repeat the steps.

You will want to braid a longer section of the lace than you think you will need. That will aid in passing the braid through the holes in the holster. After the hammer tie-down is adjusted to the hammer, the excess braiding will be unbraided so the knot can be made in the appropriate place.

Use a bulldog clip, or rubber bands to fasten the two laces on the left and right together till you are ready to run the braid through the holes in the holster.



When you are finished making the braid for the hammer tie-down, it will look somethin' like this.

Notice the bulldog clips holding the laces separate in the background.

Roll the lace on the edge of a hard surfaced area to smooth it all out. Also, stretch the braid to get some of the give out of it. If you don't stretch it first, it will stretch after you have it on the holster and it will be too loose.

Thread all four loose ends of the lace into the top hole in the holster as seen here.



I use a lace threader, shown here goin' into the lower hole in the holster. The threader make is much easier to do this job. If you don't have one, run out and get one. If you don't want to run out and get one, you'll probably spend more time and money tryin' to make this work than if you just broke-down and got one.



Once the lace threader is run up through the second hole, run the four lace ends through the eye of the threader. Make sure you have enough lace stickin' through to hold tight and not slip out. Also, make sure your laces are all pulled through tight. You don't want one lace not goin' through with the rest of 'em and creatin' a ball of lace on the inside of the holster while you're tryin' to yank it through.



Yank that puppy through fast. You'll probably break at least one lace, but my theory is that momentum will carry the whole shebang through.

You can see here that I broke one lace, but she got through by golly.



Put your pistol in the holster. Force the hammer tie-down over the hammer. The light leather will stretch and conform to the gun.

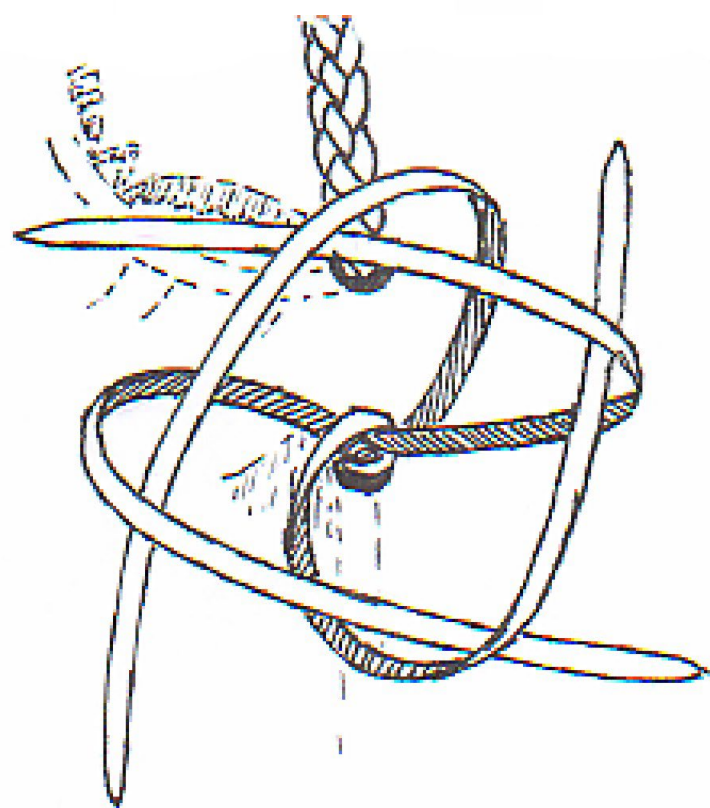
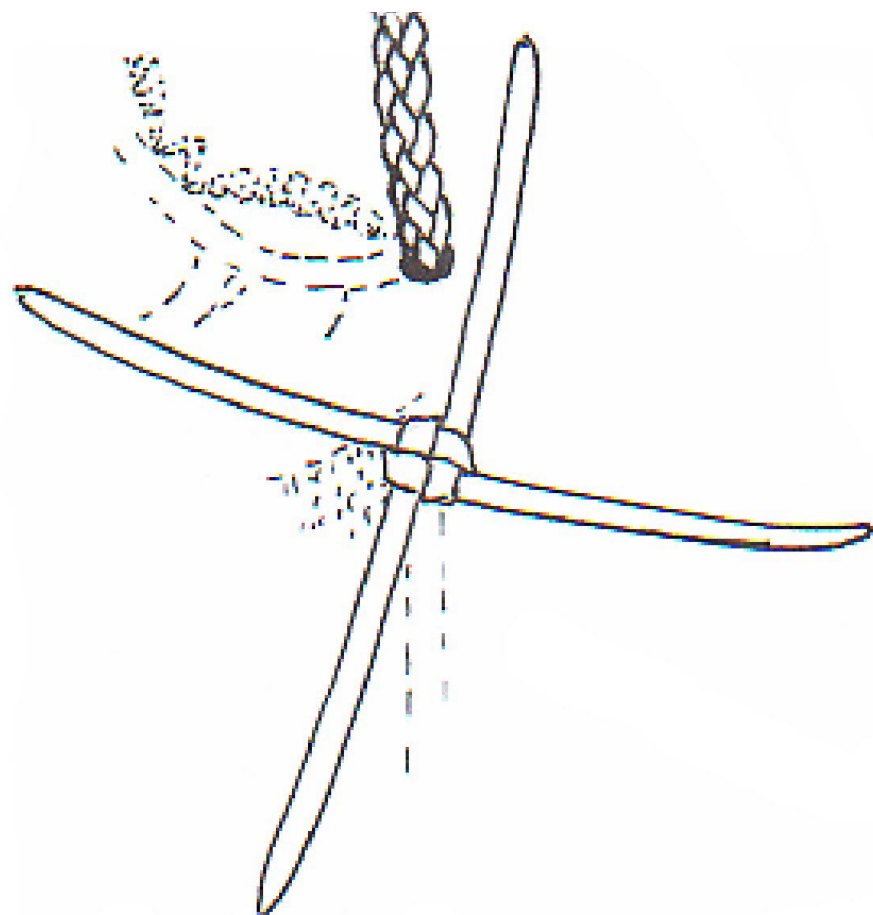
Pull the slack out of the braid. Once you've pulled the slack out, check and see if you can slip the hammer tie-down off the hammer. It shouldn't be too easy. The braid will continue to stretch, so you don't want to start too loose. There is enough give in the braid to have it good and snug.



You can see in this photo that I've unlaced the braid down to the surface of the holster and started the knot. You can't really see how to make the knot from photos, so I'll show you some more sketches. However, I did want you to see what it was goin' to look like in real life.



Here you see how each lace is goin' to slide through a loop made by the next lace. Once you have them lined up loosely like this, systematically tighten each one of them up, re-tightening them a couple of times to get them all at an even tension.



When you have 'em all tightened down, the begriming of the knot will look like this. On the holster it will look like this.

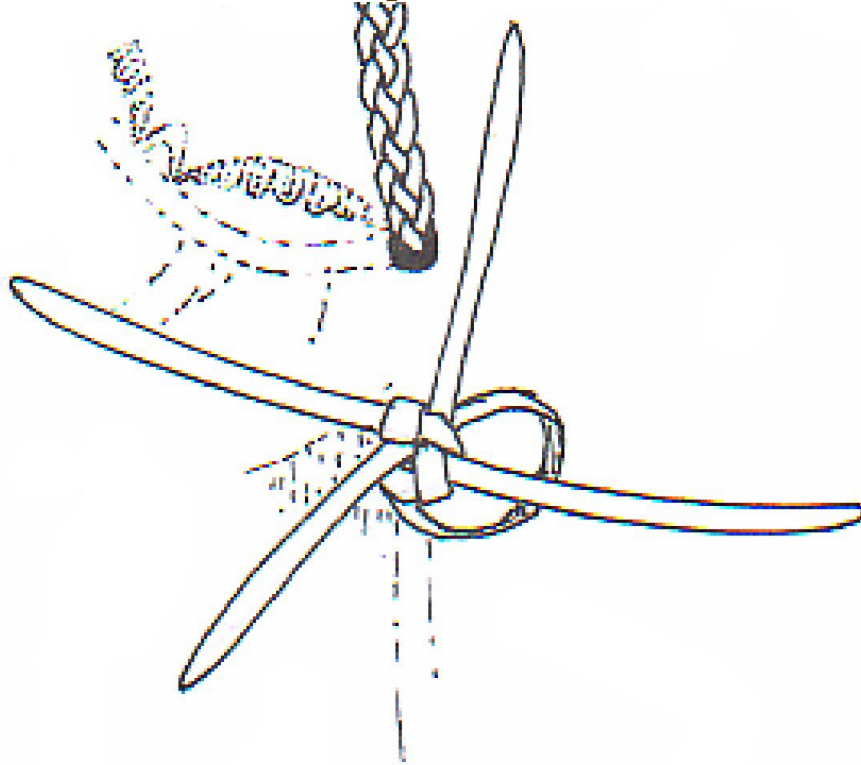


Pull some slack out of the braid so you can work away from the surface of the holster like this. You will notice I'm using a modeling tool to loosen the begriming of the knot so I can thread the laces through. Again, it is difficult to see in photos, so I'll show you sketches.



Pick a lace to start with. Going counter- clockwise, on the other side of the next lace, make a space up from the bottom of the knot that the starting lace can loop up under, and come out the center of the knot.

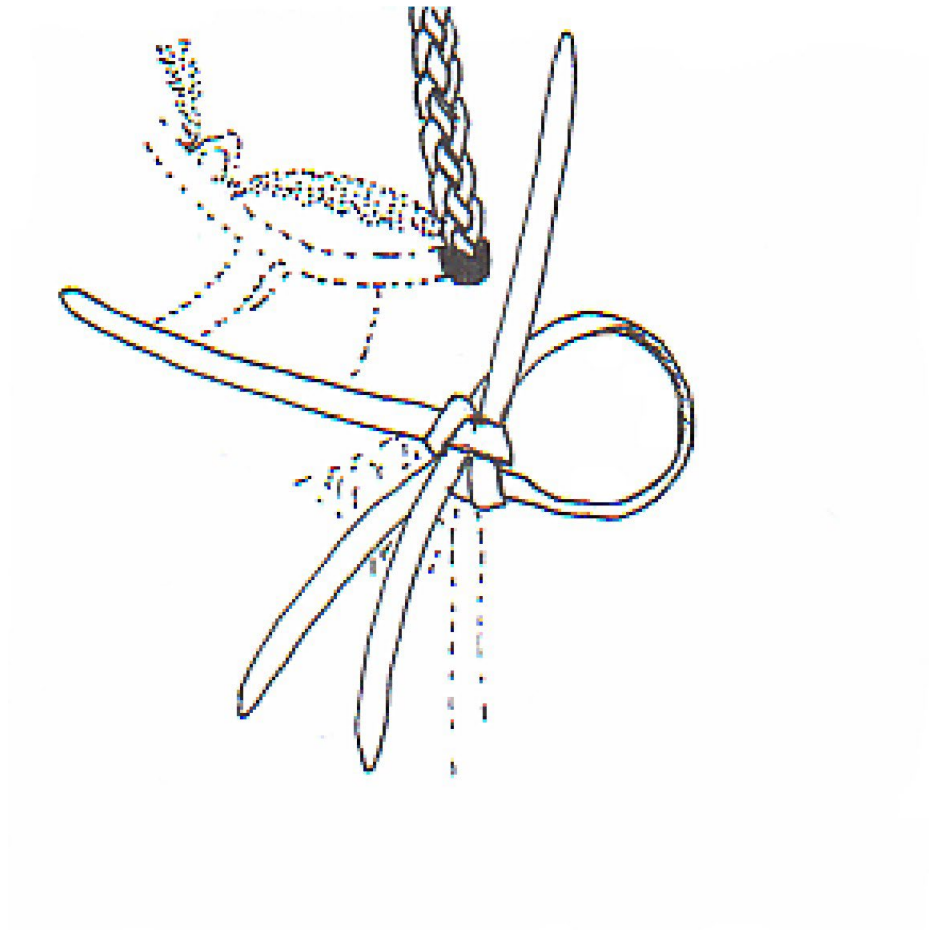
In this illustration, you see how the begriming lace has passed under the next counter-clockwise lace and come up from the other side into the center of the knot.



Now, take the next lace, counter-clockwise from where you started, and do the same thing on the far side of the next counter-clockwise lace.

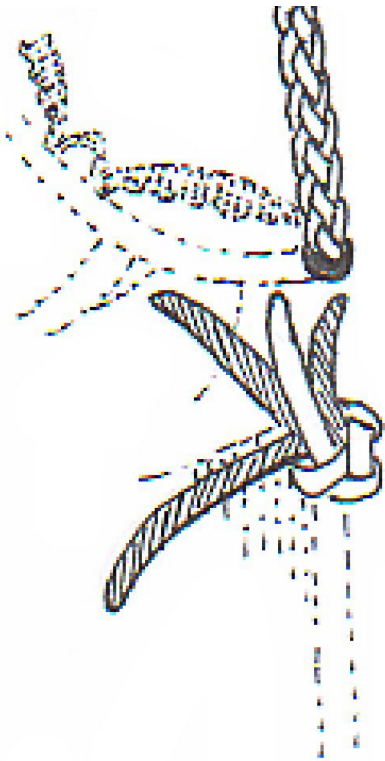
In this illustration you see the two laces sticking up from the center of the knot.

Continue this process until all the laces are run up, and through, the center of the knot.



Here you see all four laces coming up from the center of the knot. The knot has been stretched out in the process. You must gently pull on each of the lace to tighten the knot back up. Continue this over and over again until the knot is good and tight. Try not to break any of the lace in the process.

I usually keep pullin' 'em tighter each time around till I snap one off. Then I figure it's time to just trim 'em all off.



Here is what the actual knot looks like when you are almost finished. Notice I only have three laces left.



Trimmed off, it looks like this. Pull it tight to the hole and check to make sure you can still get the hammer tie-down over the hammer of your revolver. If not, start this part all over again with new lace.



The skirt may take some explanation, so I'll cover that here.

If you will look closely, you will see there isn't a hole punched on the loose end of the loop. It is marked from the pattern, but not punched. Because leather thickness varies, I don't punch that end till the other is riveted down.

I've got the loop around the holster as tight as I can get it, and I'm markin' it through the hole in the skirt.

As it turned out, it was pretty close to the originally marked hole.



If you look real close, you can see where the mark I made through the skirt is. However, I am punching my hole where the original hole on the patter is. Experience has taught me that even if a loop is a little too tight, the holster can be forced through. However, if it is loose there 'aint nuthin' you can do about it but start over.



Here's the finished holster. As you can see, the holster went through the loop just fine and fits snug.

On Crowe's rig I took a brown colored pencil and "dirtied" the stitching so it wasn't so white.



On the "Hand of God" pattern, I lay out the stitchin' holes for .45 cal. loops. I don't include any other loops, since this pattern is all about makin' a rig as close to possible to the one in the movie.

However, other loops can be adapted from other patterns.

Anyway, here you see I started my stitchin' in the second hole, and went back up through the first. This way, there is two strings carrying the heavy load of the first stitch over the loop.



Hand stitchin' with two needles on each end of the 7-strand linen thread (hand waxed with organic bee's wax), both strings pass through the first hole in the loop. One string is on the back of the belt, the other comin' out the front of the loop.



Stitch down the pre-spaced holes and the first edge of the first loop is sewn down. Now, stitch across the bottom of the loop as shown, and you are ready to stitch up the other side and make the first loop.



Stitch up the second side of the loop and it's done. Then, stitch across the top to start the next loop. Keep that up till you get to the other end.

Number 12 copper rivets finish off the ends of the loops. I used a domer on 'em to make 'em look real nice.



I used nicked double-cap rivets to attach the keeper. Here, you see I've already riveted down one side.



To rivet down the other side, I place my iron plate between the belt and the keeper. This way I can securely hammer the caps on without marring the keeper.

With this rig for Russell Crowe, I laid-out the cartridge loops a little looser than with my ordinary cartridge belts. With a belt that is goin' to be used, it should have tighter loops to make sure you don't loose ammo you will need. With Crowe's rig, I wanted loose loops that would be quicker to reload on film.

