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HE SCARES BAD GUYS SILLY WITH THIS 6-FT. SNAKE

BAIL BONDSMAN Gary Cooper packs an unusual weapon — a 6-foot python that's helped him round up some nasty snakes!

"It's pretty doggone weird — a bail bondsman bringing in fugitives with the aid of a snake," he told *The ENQUIRER* with a chuckle.

Gary Cooper — yup, that's his honest-to-goodness name — has been in the business for 10 years. Five years ago he came up with the idea of using a snake to nail fugitives after he noticed how much people feared his pet python.

Cooper, 49, of Thomasville, Ga., has used his python Pete to help him nab 15 fugitives — including a three-time killer, rapists and drug dealers.

"I use Pete for only the most dangerous guys," said Cooper — who enlists the snake to petrify tough guys who aren't fazed by artillery.

"These are guys who are used to violence and guns. They're not used to a guy coming at them with a snake."

On the job, the married father of four carries Pete hidden inside an old bag tied to his waist.

"When I confront the fugitive, I say: 'Look, you have a choice. I've got a viper in my

bag. You can either come with me peacefully or I'm going to pull my viper out and we'll see what happens.'

"I never say it's a python — just 'viper.' That way they can use their imagination. They start thinking — is it a rattler? A copperhead? Or some other terribly venomous snake? And their eyes start getting bigger and bigger.

"When you look at him outside the bag, Pete doesn't seem to be that big for a python, but when he's coiled

up inside my bag he looks a lot bigger, and they start thinking, 'My God, what is that thing in that bag!'

"Then I reach into the bag, and they start having visions of me flinging this huge poisonous snake around their neck. Their eyes look like they're about to pop right out of their head!

"They are so distracted I just walk up to them and cuff them. The snake works like a charm every time. And the amazing thing is I've never yet had to get him out of the bag."

One time, Cooper went after a fugitive called "Junior" wanted for assaulting his wife.

"I found Junior at home, and he had his mama with him. Now Junior wasn't about to give himself up and I could see big mean ol' mama wasn't going to let him go without a fight.

"All I said was: 'Ma'am, I have come to apprehend Junior. I want you

to know I've got a viper in my bag. I don't want any hassle from you, because if you do I'm going to pull the viper out of my bag.' Then I went to reach my hand in my bag.

"Well, mama took off like she had roller skates with rockets on either side of them — and Junior whipped around and put his hands on the wall with his feet spread apart. He didn't say a word. He was scared stiff.

"It was hilarious. I had to fight not to burst out laughing."



HE ALWAYS GETS HIS MAN: Bail bondsman Gary Cooper shows off his python Pete, who gives fugitives the shivers.



TOUSSIE

MEMORY works best at age 25, but after that, it's all downhill. Yet you can easily avoid senility and keep your memory strong by using common sense. Read, do puzzles, solve problems, eat properly, exercise regularly. Those and other methods give your mind a workout.

— James McGaugh, Ph.D.,
Center for the
Neurobiology of Learning
and Memory, University of
California, Irvine