



# Knot



# News

**International Guild of Knot Tyers  
Pacific Americas Branch**

**April 1998**

**Joseph Schmidbauer-Editor**

**Issue #10**

## **ROPECRAFT:**

**A STUDY IN ROPE AND KNOTS**

**by Mike Storch**

### **THE IMPROVISED RIDGEPOLE**

At times it is necessary to run a rope between two trees in order to set up a tarp or poncho for shelter. All too often this rope loses its tension and sags, but this need not be. The answer lies in a simple loop knot tied toward the center of the rope. The trick is to put the loop in before the rope reaches the second tree. By going around the second tree and then through the loop before applying tension, leverage can be gained. The rope can be made tight enough to act as a ridgepole.

There are several cautions to be considered. First, avoid any loop knot that becomes difficult to untie after tension is applied. Even some of the easier loop knots will become a problem when wet with rain. Untying the knot is important so the rope can be used for other things after it has

served its purpose. Even if you intend to break camp, hike down a trail, and re-use the rope for the same purpose the next time you set up a shelter, you may not find two trees the same distance apart as the previous two. The loop will now be in the wrong place and of little use. The ridge loop will untie easily under almost any conditions.

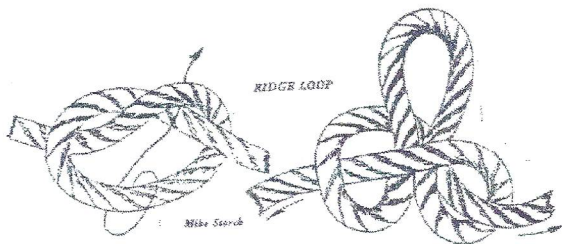
The next caution is being aware that too much tension can be applied with this system. When using thin line for the purpose, it is possible to exceed its limits and snap it. Likewise, even a fair-size line that is worn and weathered may be close to its breaking point. Just be aware of this applying tension so there will be no surprises.

The third and most important caution is to use some sort of padding under any rope where it wraps tightly around a tree. Rope is more easily replaced than a tree. A thin or very tight rope can have the effect of girdling a tree, especially a young or thin-barked species. The result will be much the same as if a porcupine munched on it. A piece of folded cloth or even some thick dead twigs spread between the rope and tree will



distribute the effects, and all will be well.

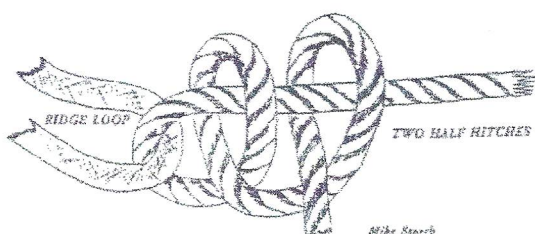
To tie the ridge loop, form a very loose overhand knot in the rope a few feet before the second tree. Pull a 'bight' through the crossed part of the knot, as in the sketch.



Once the bight is pulled through and the loop is formed as large as you want it, pull out on the two ends of the rope to set things snug. [Also known as an ARTILLERY LOOP or a MANHARNESS KNOT which was used mainly for its utility as a means of hauling field guns into position with man power - Editor]

The system: Tie the rope to the first tree, add a ridge loop a couple of feet before the second tree, continue around the second tree, and then pass the rope through the ridge loop. Pull back on the tail end of the rope to set the tension. What you have created is a primitive block and tackle. Allowing for some loss to friction, the ratio of power applied to pull received approaches two to one.

The finish: if there is enough rope to go back around the second tree, do so, and put two half hitches in close to the tree. This is the preferred method as it is easier to maintain tension while



putting in the two half hitches. If rope is scarce, put the two half hitches in at the ridge loop, as shown in the sketch. The drawback to this second method is that the two half hitches will be difficult to undo.

Another good place to use two half hitches? Sure! It's a great way to fasten the beginning of the rope around the first tree.

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## Library and Archive

Our Branch library continues to grow with more generous donations. These books are all available for browsing from the librarian.

*The Riggers Locker - Tools and Techniques for Modern and Traditional Rigging* by Brion Toss.

International Marine, 1992.

*Knotcraft - The Practical and Entertaining Art of Tying Knots* by Allan and Paulette Macfarlan.

Dover Publications, 1967.

*The Splicing Handbook-Techniques for Modern and Traditional Ropes* by Barbara Merry with John Darwin.

International Marine, 1995.

*Knots and How To Tie Them* by Walter B. Gibson.

Wings Books, 1961.

*Knots and Splices* by Cyrus L. Day.

International Marine, 1953.

All these were donated by Lindsey Philpott. Many thanks!

*Rigging* by Harold A Callahan.

Macmillan, 1940.

*Chapman's Nautical Guides-Knots* by Brion Toss.

Hearst Marine Books, 1990.

Both of these were donated by Joe Schmidbauer

Bell Rope - made in four sections over a chain core with rope filler. The eye is three strand coxcombing; three sections are covered with 4 bight 9 part Turk's



Donated by Tom Mortell

Please remember that the Branch has its own Guild logo shirts for sale. They are navy blue with the Guild logo in white on the left breast. We have both polo shirts and t-shirts. These are good quality shirts and all sizes are still available. Please contact Lindsey at (562) 595-8854 or at his e-mail address: [LindseyPh@aol.com](mailto:LindseyPh@aol.com) to place your order.

The extra point question was to see if you remembered Hooper's comment to

[illegible]

“The common saying that to hand, reef and steer makes a sailor, is a mistake. It is true that no man is a sailor until he can do these things; yet to ship for an able seaman he must, in addition to these, be a good workman upon rigging. The rigging of a ship requires constant mending, covering and working upon in a multitude of ways; and whenever any of the ropes are chafing or wearing upon it, it must be protected by ‘chafing gear.’ This chafing gear consists of worming, parcelling, serving, rounding, &c.; which requires a constant supply of small stuffs, such as foxes, sennit, spunyarn, marline, and the like, all which is made on board from condemned rigging and old junk. There is also a great deal of new rigging to be cut,



and fitted, on board, which requires neat knots, splices, seizings, coverings, and turnings in. It is also frequently necessary to set up the rigging in one part of the vessel or another; in which case it must be seized or turned in fresh. It is upon labor of this kind that the crew is employed in the 'day's work' and jobs which are constantly carried forward on board. A man's skill in this work is the chief test of his seamanship; a competent knowledge of steering, reefing, furling, and the like, being taken for granted, and being no more to be expected of an ordinary seaman. To put a marlinespike in a man's hand and set him to work upon a piece of rigging, is considered a fair trial of his qualities as an able seaman."

*The Seaman's Friend*  
Richard Henry Dana, Jr.

### Knots in the Kommunity

Lindsey has two knotting shows planned for the month of May. He will be speaking at the Banning House Museum on May 11th to the 15th from 10AM to 1PM.. On each of these days he will be speaking to five groups of fifty children each. He will involve the children in some knotting too with the theme 'You Make It, You Take it'

On the following Sunday, May 17th, Lindsey will have another demonstration at the Rancho Los Cerritos Museum to celebrate their Heritage Days. He will demonstrate 'How To Make Rope.' This will be done by hand not with a rope making machine. Anyone is welcome to help make these events a success.

### Beads, Beads, Beads

Mike Waring has stumbled upon a nice store for those who use beads with their knotting crafts. Here's the address:

C&S Beads  
El Toro Plaza  
Torrance, CA 90505  
(310) 375-5185

3/4 mi. South of PCH at Rolling Hills

### Los Angeles Maritime Institute

The napkin rings that were made by the Pacific Americas Branch a number of meetings back have been accepted by Anne Laskey of LAMI. We ended up with seventy-five of the buggers with a Guild label put in each one.

### Hempestree

The Hempestree Hemp Company has now opened up their own store. They sell a complete line of hemp products, especially that hemp twine that everyone likes to work with. I do hope some members will give them a try and see what they have to offer. Here's the address:

Hemtree  
5416 Village Road  
Long Beach, California

(562)938-7896 Fax: (562)938-7897

Web: [www.southland.net/hempestree](http://www.southland.net/hempestree)

E-mail: [hempestree@southland.net](mailto:hempestree@southland.net)

Store Hours: 11:11 AM 'til &:11 PM

Open 'til 9:00 PM on Wednesdays &  
Saturdays Closed Sundays

**Hemp is Hope  
Not Dope**

### Annual Meeting

Our plans go forward for the upcoming Annual Meeting in June. The advertising campaign will be getting off the ground soon, helping to drum up awareness up for our event.

One of the more interesting moments of the meeting will be the election of officers for the next year. So far Darrell McNurlan has volunteered to carry on as President for another year. Joe Schmidbauer has another year to go on his term as Secretary. The Treasurer and Librarian positions are open ready for someone to fill.

There are also those much sought after Branch Board posts that need to be filled too. Do you want to be one of the knotting elite? The few, the proud!



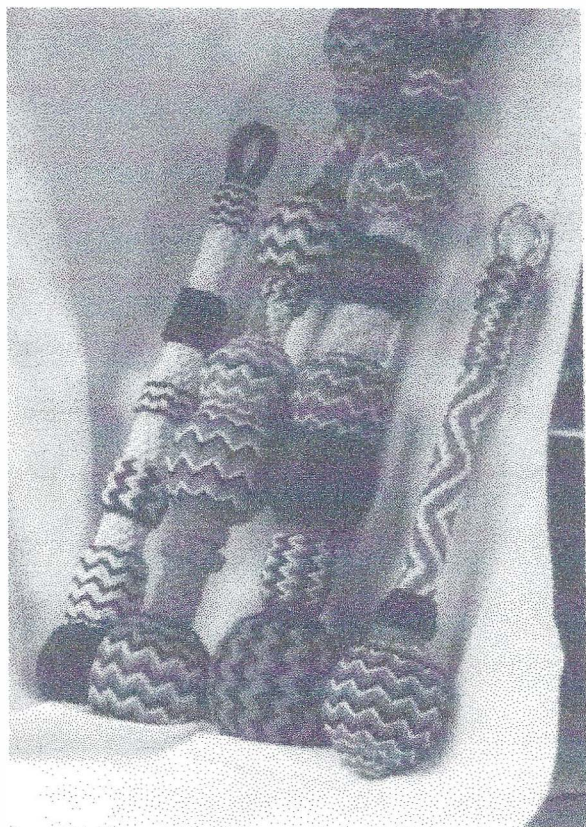
Anyone wishing to occupy any of these positions is requested to notify the Secretary immediately. This is so the proxy ballots can be sent around in a timely manner to those members unable to attend the meeting.

If there are any subjects for discussion that any member would like to put on the agenda for the meeting, please try to get it to the Secretary by early June.

### Branch Bits

Louie Bartos of Alaska wrote to tell me that since last fall he has been writing a one page article called "The Knot of the Month, or Why Knot?" in his Yacht Club newsletter. He gives the background, use differences and how to tie it. Good show, Louie!

I wish to thank Bob Schwartz of Spokane, Washington for sending me those corrections to Ashley I mentioned in *Knot News* a few weeks back. If there is interest in seeing these, I'll contact Nigel in England to



see if I can publish them here. Let me hear from you.

Here's an image from the archives. I got it over the Internet from Dan Callahan in Anchorage but it looks like some off Pieter van de Grien's work or, at the very least, one of his many accomplished Dutch knotting companions. I hope the quality of the work comes through the printing and copying. If anyone has some information on these bell ropes, we'll print it in a future issue of *Knot News*.

Joseph Conrad is a favorite of mine and, on a recent rereading, I found myself carried away again by his magnificent way with words. Although this doesn't have much to do with knotting, I'd like to share just a sample of his style:

"No doubt a fair amount of climbing up iron ladders can be achieved by an active man in a ship's engine room, but I remember moments when even to my supple limbs and pride of nimbleness the sailing-ship's machinery seemed to reach up to the very stars.

For machinery it is, doing its work in perfect silence and with a motionless grace, that seems to hide a capricious and not always governable power, taking nothing away from the material stores of the earth. Nor for it the unerring precision of steel moved by white seam and living by red fire and fed with black coal. The other seems to draw its strength from the very soul of the world, its formidable ally, held to obedience by the frailest bonds, like a fierce ghost captured in a snare of something even finer than spun silk. For what is the array of the strongest ropes, the tallest spars, and the stoutest canvas against the mighty breath of the infinite, but thistle, cobwebs, and gossamer?"

*The Mirror of the Sea*

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The next monthly meeting of the Pacific Americas Branch of the International Guild of Knot Tyers is scheduled for Tuesday, May 12th at the Los Angeles Maritime Museum in San Pedro, California. We will be gathering in the rear classroom this time, if all goes as planned. Hope to see you there!



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