

Knot



News

INTERNATIONAL GUILD OF KNOT TYERS - PACIFIC AMERICAS BRANCH

September 2003

Joseph Schmidbauer-Editor

Issue #40

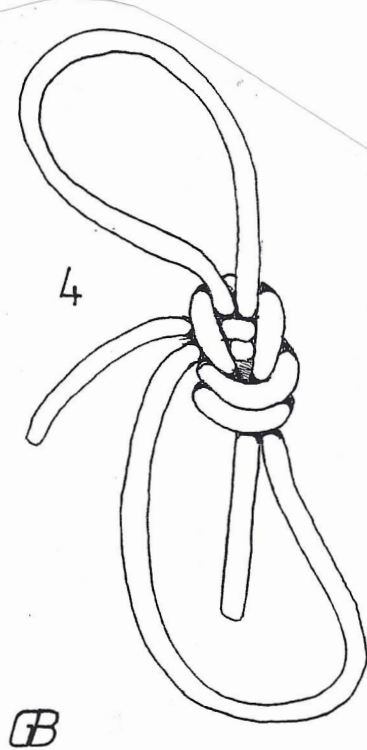
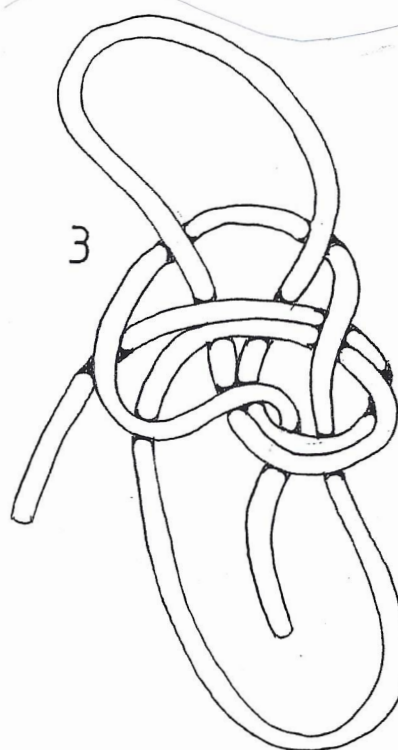
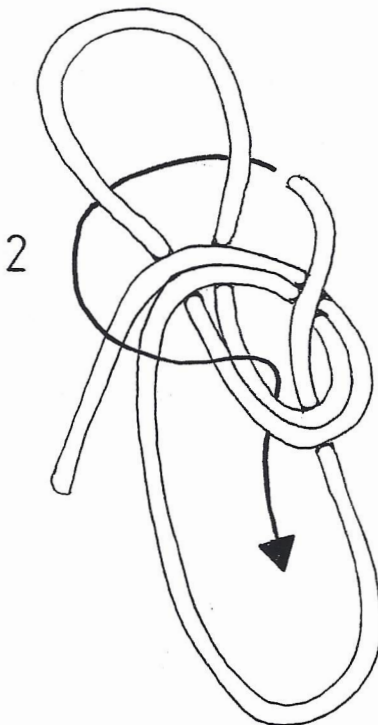
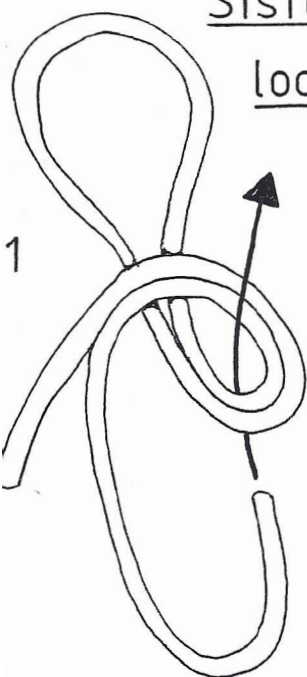
Sister Loops

from Geoffrey Budworth

I discovered this knotty curiosity in that excellent and original book *A Fresh Approach to Knotting and Ropework*, published (1992) in Australia by Guild member Charles Warner, and wonder what might be done with it. Perhaps it should be tied in a yard or two of flexible but hardwearing line and simply kept close to hand.

One might then: loop it through the collar of a lost dog (or other stray animal); improvise carrying handles for an awkward armful of store-bought goods; rescue that crew member accidentally overboard; restrain a young child in a public place. The uses could be endless as the loops themselves.

Sister loops



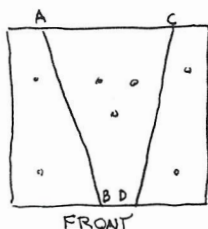
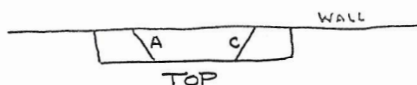
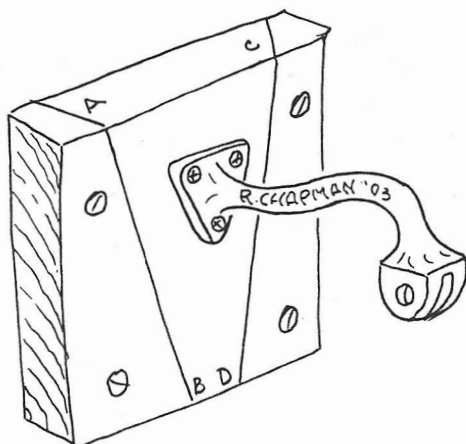
GB

What would you do with them?

Thinking of Knotting...

by Roy Chapman

I guess I collect bells. I like them because I can show off many different bell ropes. Besides, every door *needs* a door bell (even closets) right? And a door mat. I like to be able to take a bell down to polish it. Not every bell hanger is made to unfasten easily. Here is a great detachable mounting for bells, flagstaffs, plant hanger brackets and what have you. Best of all: hanging up a what-have-you this way is a great excuse to tie a set of knots. I like Thump Mat, ABOK #2360 and a matching door mat, ABOK #2274. You could get all spiffy and make a color matching bell rope too! To make the bracket takes only two saw cuts (any hand saw or mechanical saw)... A-B and C-D, in less time than reading this.



Since you cut it from one block the dovetail angles don't matter at all. Since you are covering it with a thumper the wood doesn't matter much... any handy scrap will work. Of course if you cut the angles with care you could snatch the front door bell and move it to the side door and change that with the garage bell and... and... and... drive your dog crazy and add some variety to your daily routine. See, a "little dingy" is more than just a small boat.

From the Secretary

September brings us to another new knot season. It is also the time again for our yearly "pledge drive". If your yearly PAB dues are due I have sent a reminder along with this newsletter. (If you did not receive a notice, then you are current in my records and don't need to worry about it for this year.) This is for PAB dues only. These still remain at \$15 a year. Our PAB bylaws require you to also be a current member in the International Guild of Knot Tyers, home based in England. I can handle these dues for you as well. The IGKT dues are still \$27 (£16). Remember that on January 1st, 2004 these dues will increase to £18. The total to you (for the present) is \$42.00. If you have any questions about your dues, or anything concerning the running and organization of the PAB, please feel free to contact me anytime at my email address: Koolkatz@prodigy.net or at my home phone (909) 737-4948 (mornings are best since I am on Second Shift). If you wish to write, my return address is on the back of this newsletter.

Our PAB Library continues to grow. I have been using our funds to purchase books on eBay. My watchword has been to get them as cheap as I can. We have also be blessed with a very generous donation by Geoffrey Budworth, a founder member of the Guild and world-famous knot author, of a 1938 edition of *The Yankee Whaler* by Clifford W. Ashley. This book is filled with full color reproductions of many of Mr. Ashley's marine paintings along with an account of his whaling voyage adventure in the 1920's.

So, along with *The Yankee Whaler* some of the other new additions to the library are:

How To Tie All Kinds of Knots by George Milburn.

The Book of Rope and Knots by Bill Severn.

The Art of Knots by Marc P.G. Berthier.

Modern Rope Seamanship by Colin Jarmin and Bill Beavis.

I am still working on getting a banner for the PAB so we can better advertise our presence at events and displays.

A flyer came in the mail from the Ocean Institute the other day describing the upcoming Tall Ships Festival. The dates they give are Saturday, September 6th and Sunday the 7th. I know we will be involved but I am lacking the details as I write this. The best person to contact would be our President, Lindsey Philpott, to find out the correct times to assemble and what everyone can do to contribute.

I would also like to request that all members think about contributing, in whatever way they can to our *Knot News* newsletter. We are up to issue number 40 and I myself would like to see issue number 50, but it cannot be done with out something from you help to fill up those empty spaces. I'm not sure if my editorial enthusiasm will continue past a 50th issue but it is something to shoot for in the mean time.

Need some suggestions on what to contribute? How about: a piece on the splicing of cable needed for the cable cars in San Francisco; the different ways to create a bell rope; the de-rigging and re-rigging of a tall ship; how to make horse tack; knot theory and mathematical knots. The ideas are only limited by the imagination of the individual knoter. So how about it? Don't delay start today!

Pictures are also welcome (in digital form if possible) showing our members in different parts of the country. Pictures of your latest project would also fit the bill very nicely.

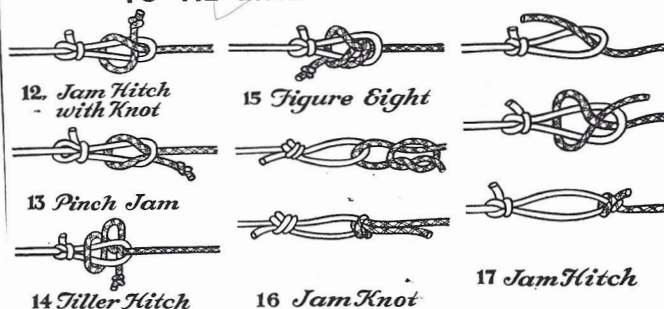
And while I'm thinking of it, our member in Virginia, Marty Combs, has made a very fine video on how to construct several different types of Boatswain Lanyards. The videos are well done and show in clear details how to go through each step in making a lanyard. He also shows how to expand the Turk's Head Knots and the Footrope Knots that are used in making the lanyard. The price is \$10.00 and well worth the price. The video is about 2 hours long and is only available in VHS format. If interested please contact Marty at Roundturn@hotmail.com or call him at (757) 638-5089.

Sometimes it's Hard to be a Knotter

observes Geoffrey Budworth

- Don't you just hate it when they say: "You must have been a sailor"? (Unless, of course, you were one).
- The cord you didn't buy will NOT be there when you have second thoughts and go back for it.
- If at first you don't succeed, tie, tie and tie again.
- When some one asserts: "I know six different ways to tie that knot" - run and hide.
- If ends were meant to be buried, the gods would not have given us tassels and fringes.
- If tassels and fringes were ideal, the gods would not have given us wire loops and hollow needles.
- When someone claims: "I've invented a new knot," be skeptical but not scornful... he or she just might have done so.
- To learn a Matthew Walker [substitute here the name of whatever knot you have been avoiding], one must tie a Matthew Walker [or whatever].
- Cutting lines into lengths that are too long is almost as costly as cutting them too short.

TO TIE LINE TO LEADER



Branch Bits

Back on June 13th I was contacted by Phyllis Tortora, [Professor Emeritus, Queens College, City University of New York] with this request: "I have been asked to assist in the preparation of a 3 volume reference work for Scribner Publishers that is called *Encyclopedia of Clothing and Fashion*. One of my tasks is to help locate potential authors for entries in the area of textiles. We are seeking an author for a 500-word entry on knotting. Authors will be paid a small fee. For a 500-word entry, for example, the fee is \$75.

Can you suggest someone from your organization that might be an appropriate author for this section? It should deal with the historic background of knotting and with fashion applications of this technique. If you can suggest someone, please send me information about how to contact them, and one of the coordinating editors will send them an "official" invitation to participate and specific instruction.

I look forward to hearing from you soon"

Our PAB President, Lindsey Philpott, gladly accepted the challenge of writing the asked for article and I republish the letter here in full to show how the Guild is becoming *the* organization to turn to for any information about knots and knotting.

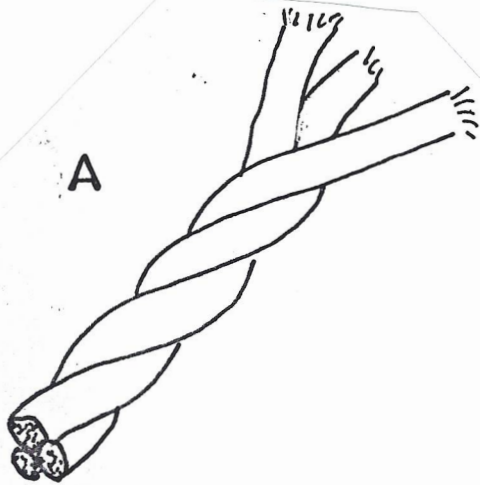
From a little practiced craft back in the '70's (except for that macramé), knotting has re-blossomed to a very alive and dynamic past time here in the 21st century. Just look at all those new knot books that clutter the store shelves. It seems like a new one comes out every week. I would like to see this continue, with our help, for many years to come.

Rope

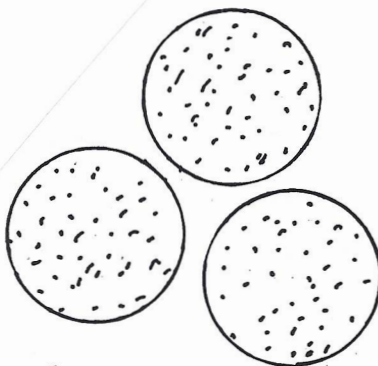
by Percy Blandford

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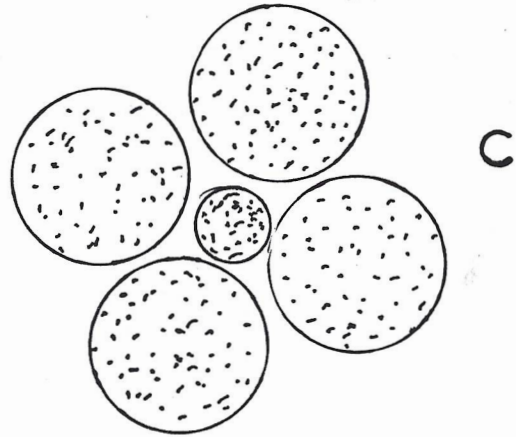
Man has made rope from the earliest days. At least from the Middle Ages it has been usually three-strand laid up right-ended. As you look along the rope, the strands twist away from you to the right [A].



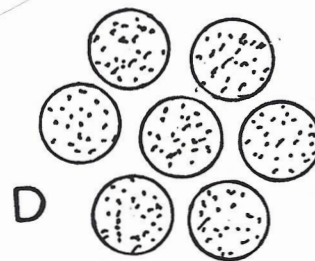
Fibers are twisted together left-handed to make strands, which are then twisted together right-handed to make the rope. The choice of three-strands is because in a section through the rope the strands fit together and the rope keeps its shape [B].



There have been four-strand ropes, but they need an extra strand straight through the center to maintain the shape [C].



The next step in number to give close fits with strands of equal section is seven [D] and this is the configuration used for most wire ropes. The central strand is straight and the other six twist around it.



There have been ropes laid up left-handed. If the load or platform is slung by four ropes, there is less risk of the whole thing twisting if two ropes are laid up right-handed and two left-handed.

All sorts of materials have been used to make ropes. In recent years plastic has taken over and nearly all ropes are synthetic. In the days of the square-rigged fighting ships, nearly all the rope for standing rigging (to hold things up) and running rigging (to control the sails) was made of hemp. A ship would carry miles of it (even more kilometers, if that is the way you think now).

Later sailing ships had ironrope standing rigging, with six strands around a straight hemp heart. There is none of it now. Wire rope for standing rigging, as well as where movement is needed, is flexible seven-strand steel.

Until recently, hemp was the most popular material for fiber rope. Sisal grass made the cheaper ropes. The best yacht rope was manila from banana plantains. Coir (whiskers of a coconut) made a rope that would float and had some elasticity, but it was not very strong, so ropes had to be large to take a load. I can remember tugs and barges on the Thames tideway using coir tow rope.

Cotton makes a soft pliable rope. Silk and human hairs have been used. At a meeting of the IGKT a rope was made from toilet paper and a bus pulled with it.

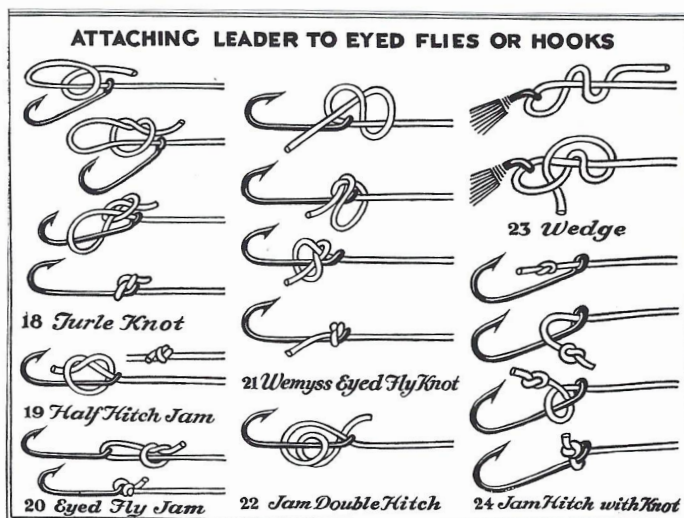
Today, just about all ropes and cordage are synthetic. Ropes made from natural materials are built up from a large number of short fibers and their exposed ends give the rope a hairy feel. Synthetic rope strands are made up of filaments running the whole length of the rope, so there are no projecting ends and the rope feels smooth.

The materials used for synthetic ropes have chemical names and there is a tendency to use more easily recognized trade names, the commonest of which is Terylene. It is wrong, as sometimes is done, to lump all synthetic ropes together as "nylon". There are nylon ropes, but they stretch and will absorb some water. All other synthetic ropes have minimal stretch and are waterproof. The elasticity of nylon rope is an advantage in towing and anchoring.

There have been braided ropes, for at least 100 years. It is because of the coming of the synthetic ropes and their machinery that some attractive braided ropes have appeared. The outsides have a round plaited form. This might be around another round plait and a core of three-strand rope or straight fibers. Braided ropes are difficult to splice, but ways have been invented.

If you are unsure if a rope is natural fiber or synthetic, put a match to its end. If it chars, it is natural fiber. If it softens and melts, it is synthetic. Most synthetic three-strand rope will unlay itself rapidly when cut and it is difficult to put back together properly again. There are heated cutting devices that melt the ends of cut strands together to prevent unlaying. If you cut this rope with an ordinary knife, put adhesive tape around each side of the cut and be ready to heat the cut ends with a match or cigarette lighter, then wet your finger and thumb and press the hot end together to seal it. If you do not wet your finger and thumb, you will know why.

The smoothness of modern synthetic rope and cord bring a problem to knotting. If you were brought up on the Scout Tenderfoot knots, think again. They could slip and an extra turn or twist is advisable.



From the Mailbag

[In KN #38 I had a bit of trivia about the Brass Monkey supposedly carried aboard ships of war in the 1700's and 1800's. There was also some discussion about these BM's by Bob Solon and Louis Bartos. I received further comments in the mail to continue the debate:]

Dan Peisker of California wrote: "My theory on the Brass Monkey, this business of 'freezing off' is the only thing that sounds unlikely to me. Cannon and especially their munitions (powder and balls) had to be stowed as dry as possible. They were never on deck until needed. Salt air and spray are murder on iron. The balls, the powder and even the bore of the cannon were as protected as possible. When it came time to fight, the placements were ready for cannon, for powder and for balls in the form of a 'Brass Monkey' attached to the deck. Does this mean we are so short of historical records that we don't know? A search of naval history might be in order on one of those super-high-powered, extra-special, heavy-duty computers!"

Roy Chapman of Washington also wrote: "Mr. Bartos is quite right right, the coefficients of expansion don't differ enough to make the balls climb off the 'Monkey'. And Solon is right... who fights in sub-zero? Maybe the French?

I'll put my oar in now and row a bit: I love artifacts. I found an arrowhead while plowing. There are Roman coins in the dirt of England. I have owned expended bullets from battlefields of the American Civil War. And I had a cartridge case from the Little Big Horn (although I may have misplaced it two or three divorces ago). They even found some fiber and clothing on the remains of an early European man, recently found frozen in the Alps. Pretty simply put: I have seen hundreds of cannon made between 1600 and 1800 and thousands of cannon balls but not one 'Brass Monkey'. Although I believe in many things that I haven't personally seen or handles (careful... don't let your mind

wander too far on that one) but I don't believe in 'Brass Monkeys' because I ain't seen one!"

Thinking of Knotting...

by Roy Chapman

In ABOK, Chapter 9, CWA says "The strands of Multi-Strand Buttons are almost always canvas-covered before the knots are tied. After they are tied the canvas covering is generally filled (hardwood filler) and painted." I have tried about everything to fill canvas and cord from shellac, to thinned varnish, thinned glue and boiled linseed oil. I even tried egg white (notice I didn't say everything worked well.) Right now I am trying to 'fill' some cotton cord, preparatory to having some knots cast in brass. The whole idea of filling is to remove some of the texture, to get rid of the 'fuzzy' look. It was during this project that I remembered using stuff called 'Water Glass' when re-canvassing a canoe. I then used the leftover filler doing some covered knots. For a guy who can't remember breakfast, I was happy to dredge up something useful from 45 years ago. Shortly I happened into my not so local, local marine supply store. Sure enough, they had 'Water Glass', or as the label says: "Sodium Silicate Solution, 33.5 degree Baume". The gallon cost me \$3.95. It is a liquid product (don't ask me what the solvent is, probably makes your toes fall off). You can brush, dip or swab it on. At first it sort of beads up or just lies there and doesn't seem to soak in (or even level out), but then it is 'gone' and in a few hours it is dry. The cotton cord or canvas covering is then hard, semi-rigid, with most of the threads fused and smooth. Ready for paint. Or in my present case ready for the molding agent. Water Glass isn't the only filler to use on knot work. However it is cheap, has awesome shelf life (unopened or well sealed it will keep for decades... unlike shellac, which is dated) and it dries to a glassy finish. It is actually quite brittle and can shatter, but that makes picking and digging it out where it filled in too much at least possible... not a bad thing, I guess.

IGKT-PAB Meetings

Monthly Meetings are held at the Los Angeles Maritime Institute, which is right next door to the Los Angeles Maritime Museum, Berth 84, at the Foot of Sixth Street in San Pedro, California.

The meetings are on the second Tuesday of each month (except July and August) from 7:00 to 9:00 PM.

The 2003 meeting schedule is:

September 9th, October 14th

November 11th and December 9th

Knot Events and Displays

Tall Ships Festival

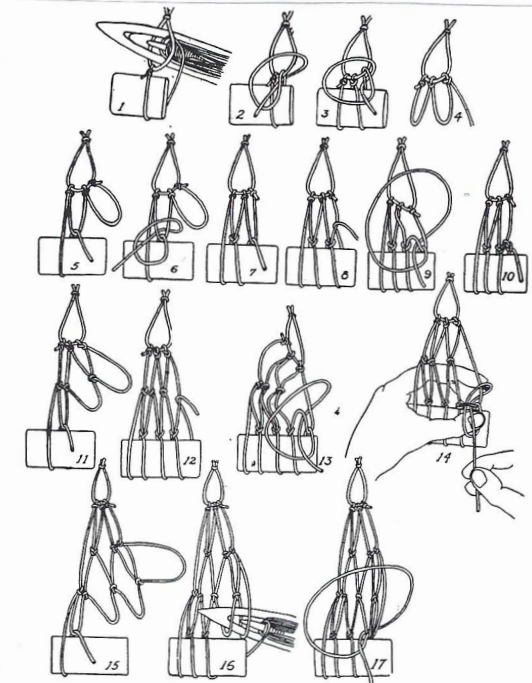
Dana Point Harbor, California

September 6th and 7th

Fisherman's Fall Festival

Ballard Bridge, Seattle, Washington

September 6th



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1805 Kingsford Drive

Corona, CA 92880-7311 USA