

KNOT



NEWS

INTERNATIONAL GUILD OF KNOT TYERS - PACIFIC AMERICAS BRANCH

August 2000

Joseph Schmidbauer-Editor

Issue #23

I hope that everyone who attended the **Lots of Knots: A World of Knotting** knot exhibition felt that it was worth the trip. Everyone I have talked to since then has told me it was worth the effort. This makes me happy since I was very nervous leading up to the show, worrying about how it would all turn out.

The fun started on the Friday evening of the AGM. Due to a miscommunication with the museum director, we where not able to hold the meeting in the Brass Room of the Maritime Museum as planned. Instead, we ended up holding our gathering in the Marine Institute classroom right next door. It did not have the nautical drama that the Brass Room would have given us but it worked out very well indeed.

The Guild members that showed up for the AGM were:

Dan Callahan - Alaska
Lindsey Philpott - California
Kim Moore - California
Darrell McNurlan - California
Tom Gergen - California
Doug Corey - California
Joe Soanes - California
Mat O'Campo - California
Charlie Bell - California
Ed Morai - Maryland
Cliff Case - Mexico
Marie Ortiz - California
Randy Penn - Florida
Maggie Machado - Oregon
Skip Dickens - South Carolina
Jimmy Williams - California
Gary Sessions - Texas
Jon and Jane Waltz - Iowa

Ken Yalden - England
Brian Field - England
Richard Hodge - New Zealand
John Burke - Michigan

PAB 4th Annual General Meeting

The President of the PAB, Darrell McNurlan, opened the meeting by welcoming all the knotters present and thanked everyone for attending.

Joe Schmidbauer, Secretary of the PAB, also thanked everyone for attending. He then followed with a short history of the PAB and an explanation of its present status.

Lindsey Philpott, Treasurer of the PAB, gave a quick review of the Branch finances.

The election of Branch officer followed. Lindsey Philpott took on the job of Branch President. Joe Schmidbauer has assumed the multiple duties of Secretary/ Treasurer/ Librarian/ Editor *Knot News*. The setting up and maintenance of the Branch web page is being shared by Lindsey Philpott, Tom Gergen and Darrell McNurlan.



Ken Yalden, Chairman of the Guild, next did a talk on his 2K2 update. Last January, all Guild members were sent postcards and posters to help celebrate the Millennium as well as the 20th Birthday of the Guild in 2002. All Guild members are requested to help join in this celebration and to show that our guild is truly an International group.

Brian Field ended the evening very enjoyably as our guest speaker, with his topic being, "Magic, Medicine, Monkey's Fist and Marlinespikes: A Brief Look at 200 Years of Knotting." Everyone was entertained with Brian's encyclopedic knowledge of knots and knotting gained over a lifetime. He did a review of knots through history and showed how knots were an important part of man's culture up to the present age.



On Saturday, the knot exhibition began with the setting up of the awnings on the front lawn of the Museum. Everyone lent a hand and they went fairly quickly. Once the tables and chairs were brought out from the museum, everyone got their work ready for display or for demonstration.

Some additional knotters showed up for the weekend festivities:

Dr. Ross Munnerlyn - California
 Noah Munnerlyn - California
 Tom Mortell - California
 Tillie Easton - California
 Yvonne Chang - California
 Donald Tucker - California
 Dan Hatfield - North Carolina



Joe Soanes set up a riggers vice and showed the mysteries of wire splicing. He also had a table full of his tools: marlinespikes, prickers and pliers collected over a life time of work.

Yvonne Chang and Tillie Easton had a very impressive display of Chinese Knotting. They had a large selection of pieces for show and for sale. There were people constantly coming and going seeking to learn the secrets of this ancient art.

Dan Callahan was more than happy to show anyone who stopped by how to do a Lump Knot or an intricate Turk's Head. There were always three or four knotters surrounding him learning a trick or trading a new knot. Everyone was having a very enjoyable time of it.

Ed Morai showed his rose knots and Randy Penn spent the day tying balloons for the kids.

Cliff Case and Marie Ortiz both had displays of knotted picture frames and macramé.

Richard Hodge had an especially eye opening display with a chess set and chess board made entirely of knots. He also had a Bell Rope he made for the North American Branch, some Sea Chest Becketts and a large sampling of wire splicing.

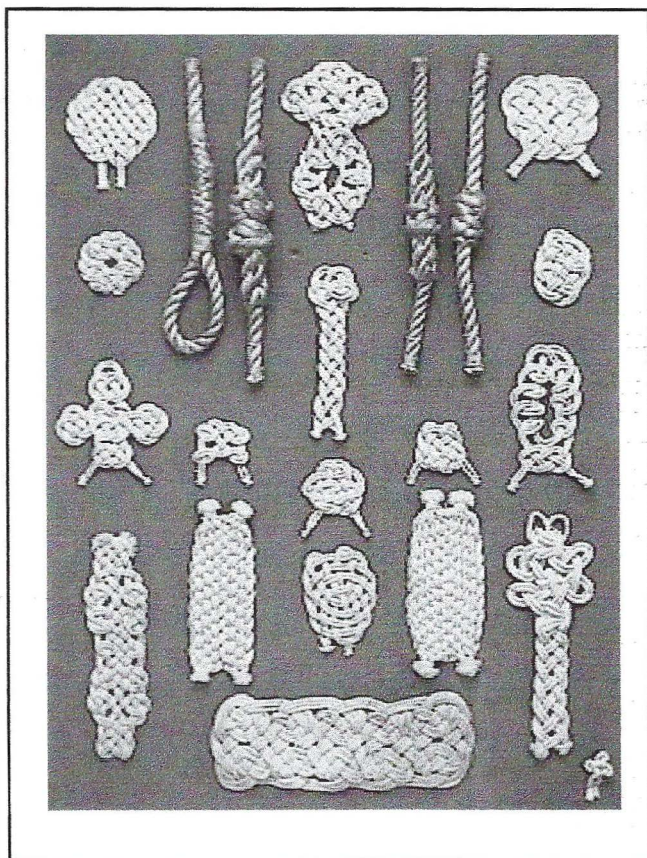
Doc Munnerlyn showed up with his large collection of rope, cord and string. He would give lengths of string away to any kid that took the time to learn to tie a knot. Some of the kids really took to it with a big grin and actually went away having learned something. Doc had some rope bounce out of his truck on the freeway on the way down to

the show. He recovered the rope but it was in a big tangle. Everyone spent some of their time helping to get it all undone.

Lindey Philpott worked at getting fourteen fenders ready for delivery to Doug Leen's tug boat in Seattle. The body of the fenders where complete but they still needed a Turk's Head put around the middle and the ends needed to be frayed out. It was quite a job and it took most of the weekend.

A number of knotters sent in samples of their work for our Branch collection or for use as a display during our show. Many thanks to: Des Pawson [Thames Boat Fender], Roy Chapman [Bell Rope], Bob Schwartz [Belt Buckle and Bell Rope] Colin Grundy [Paperweight] and Clint Funk [Box of Assorted Goodies].

I want to thank Dean Westervelt for loaning us his examples of Headhunter and Gaucho Knots. I also want to especially thank Mrs. Dorothy Hensel and Dr. Karen Hensel for their help in letting us borrow a knotboard from the personal collection of John "Jacknots" Hensel.



A raffle was organized to help raise some money for the Branch to help cover expenses. The Great Bob Solon came forward first with one of his wonderful handmade fids (see below). Colin Grundy was next with a very nicely done fancywork letter opener. During the show, some other members put in additional items to sweeten the pot. Brian Field gave one of his framed knotted crosses, Joe Schmidbauer donated a riggers knife and Dan Callahan threw in a key fob. We ended up raising a total of \$140 and many thanks go out to all who where involved.

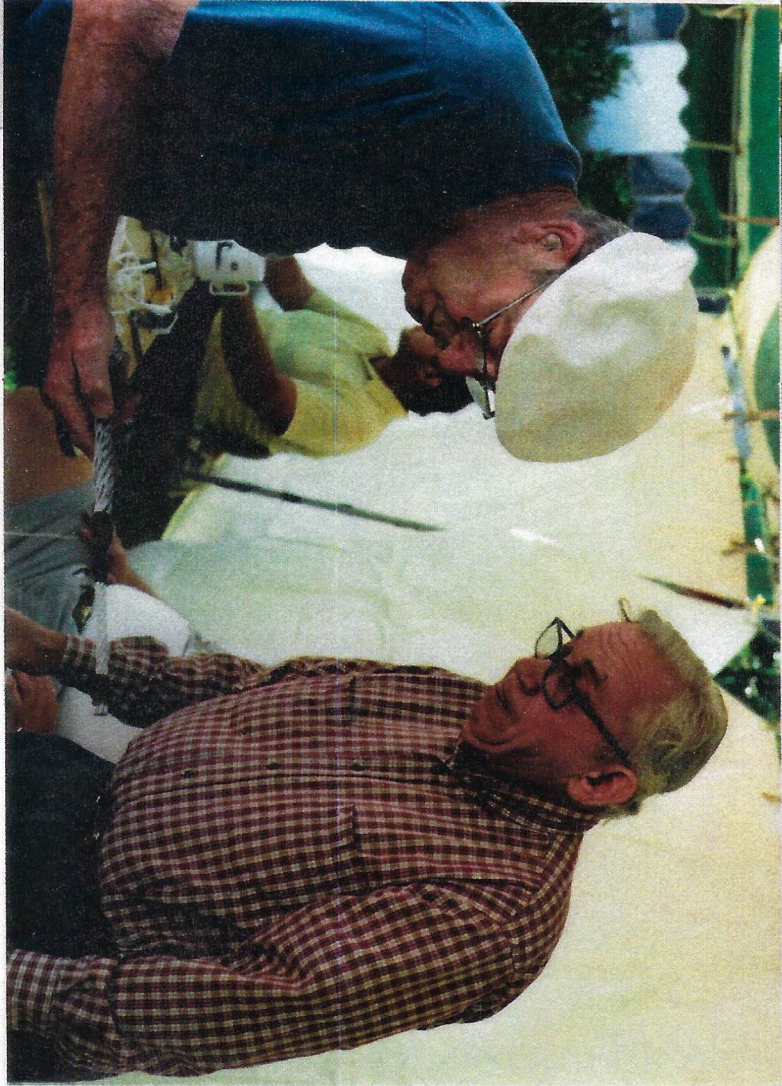
After it was all said and done, a number of comments came in about what people felt about the "Lots of Knots."

Brian Field of England:
"First, a very big thank you to everyone for having made it possible for me to visit the LA meeting. I can't start to say how much pleasure it gave me to meet so many people who were just names in a membership list or e-mail correspondents.

I was very impressed by the quality of much of the work, some of which was the equal of anything I have seen over here. I am also starting to realize the problems you have in the USA which we don't have over here due to the smaller size of the UK. My own local group meets every couple of months and nobody has a round trip of more than 80 miles. The distance that people are willing to travel to the LA meeting was a tribute to their enthusiasm and to your success in building such a strong local group. This makes your work in the PAB much more impressive and I am really impressed that you manage to run any meetings, let alone regular ones!

There are so many moments that will stay in my memory. Flying over the Canadian Arctic at 30,000 feet in perfect visibility and seeing features that I had only read about in text books, or seen on film, was something I shall never forget. I remember arriving in LA to find that there really are palm trees in the center strips just like in the films. Pavements [i.e. sidewalks] do exist although no body seems to walk on them and those suburban lawns do look as though they have a daily manicure!

My wife says I seemed much better after my trip to the States, despite the jet lag and



lack of sleep on the return journey. Due to an oversight on my part, I found myself giving a talk to a local group within 24 hours of my return. Once that was over, I slept for 48 hours and got back to normal.

My trip to Texas was equally impressive and I learned a lot about the problems of the Guild in the USA and I came away with a few ideas that, I hope, can be put into practice to the good use of everyone. I also learned the difference between Lies, Truth and Texas Truth! So many things will remain in my memory, but above all, I will always remember the hospitality extended to me by all whom I met, and the many acts of kindness I received from everyone."

Dan Callahan of Alaska:

"Yes, the meeting was a nice one except two days wasn't enough time! I never did get a chance to visit the museum. Next time I'll know where to stay and I'll plan on being there several days early so I can get to see the sights.

Some of the best knotwork at the meeting was not "fancy knotwork" but "rigging work." There was an old-time rigger there by the name of Joe Soanes who showed his expertise at splicing and rigging work that was first rate! Other PAB members were working hard during the meeting making tugboat fenders and bumpers that were also first rate."

Randy Penn of Florida:

"Thanks for putting on such a great show. I was glad I came."

Gary Sessions of Texas:

"I have been remiss in not congratulating you and the PAB for a job well done. I really enjoyed the fellowship and knotting displays. Some day maybe the Texas Branch can host a meeting.

I think Brian really enjoyed his short visit to Texas. He did get to visit Sam Lanham and another of our members, Ed Baker. We just let him do as he wanted - rest, eat, talk or tie knots! Wayne told me he bought a western belt with a huge buckle to take back to England."

It was the fellow on the end of the rope in one of mankind's oldest game - tug o'war - who gave us the television title of "anchor man."

The principle of a knot is that no two parts which lie adjacent shall travel in the same direction if the knot should slip. Knots are employed for several purposes, such as, to attach two rope ends together to form an enlarged end on a rope, to shorten a rope without cutting it, or to attach a rope without cutting it, or to attach a rope to another rope or object. Desirable features of knots are that they may be quickly tied, easily untied and will not slip under a strain. In a number of cases a toggle is used either to aid in making the knot or make it easier to untie after a strain has been applied.

Tubbs Cordage Company

From the Mailbag

Geoffrey Budworth of England writes: "Many thanks to *Knot News* contributors Stephen Arnold [KN#12] and Joseph Schmidbauer [KN#19] for their dissimilar yet equally fascinating word sketches of Raoul Graumont and John Hensel, the like of which - as far as I know - have never appeared in print before. What surprised me was how relatively young both men must have been in 1939 when their monumental *Encyclopedia of Knots and Fancy Rope Work* was published. I had always assumed that a couple so obviously masters of their crafts were middle-aged (at least); but from data in the two texts, it looks as if neither was much older than 30 - if that - at the time of their collaboration. To my mind, that makes their achievement even more admirable."

Dr. Karen Hensel of New York helped me fill out the biography of her famous Dad and his family: "John Hensel died on May 13, 1999 after battling a rare form of cancer - cancer of the thymus (only 21 cases had ever been seen in the U.S.) and I suspect he is up there somewhere with that great smile he always wore when in the presence of knots and knotters. My parents were married for 58 years and mother is finding it extremely difficult being without him - they were an incredible team

beginning with her helping type the manuscripts for the books.

No, that is not me in *The Book of Ornamental Knots*, the model is my sister, Lillian. She is a gemologist and lives in South Carolina. I'm the middle child and have taught school - have been a curator at the NY aquarium and am now the director of six museums in East Hampton [Long Island, NY] under the banner of the Historical Society - including a small marine museum! The eldest lives in Northern California and is a sales rep for Wrangler Jeans.

You, no doubt, will be horrified to know that none of us have been bitten by the knot bug..... Lillian and I went through periods of obsession with square knots and carrick bends and have the perfunctory belts and bangle holders... but somehow his particular brain configuration coupled with his life story led to his brilliance, talent, concentration and productivity. His knotting domain was so far above anyone's comprehension it kept us out of his realm and his studio - much to his dismay. He always tried to keep us interested and I think his happiest moments were when we asked him to show us how to tie a particular knot. I vaguely recall very early knot lessons that went awry and feeling totally disinterested as I had him to do the work ... this, coupled with galloping dyslexia, kept me doing everything backwards! Poor Dad - no sons and spastic daughters!

Wayne Lewis of Texas sent this in after his vacation getaway: "Just returned from three weeks in the UK. Had a great time. Let's don't do it again. I am beat.

The UK has no ice, no air conditioning and no ice tea! That one island has 75 million people on it and they are all on the roads at the same time. They talk funny, drive on the wrong side of the road and most of the roads were built 1,500 years ago. Everything over there is really old, or at least older than I am. I do not want to ever see another castle or cathedral ever again. Kay wanted to see it all and made a pretty good dent in doing so in the Southern part of the country."

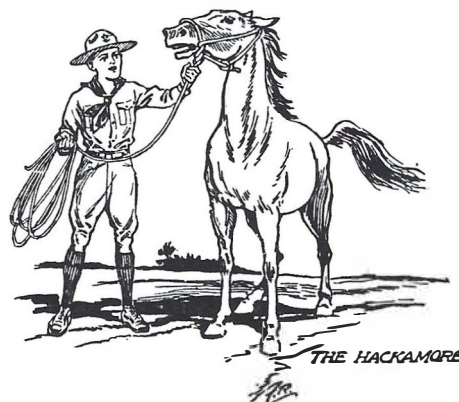
Bob Solon of Toledo, Ohio sent in this update: "I have been volunteering on the SS John W. Brown [a WWII Liberty ship] which was here in Toledo for rivet work. I did some fancy work on the bridge, monkey bridge and in a couple of the focsle crews quarters. It

was just some Grapevine Hitching with a double clove hitch at each end. The ends were covered with Turk's Heads. I took a small can of white Rustoleum and cut it with mineral spirits - like water. I soaked the work with it and it dried nice and white. If I had more time I might have coated it with clear polyurethane, the kind that's supposed to resist ultra violate rays and phaser blasts. I also did back splices for the life boats. I am glad I got that out of my system!"

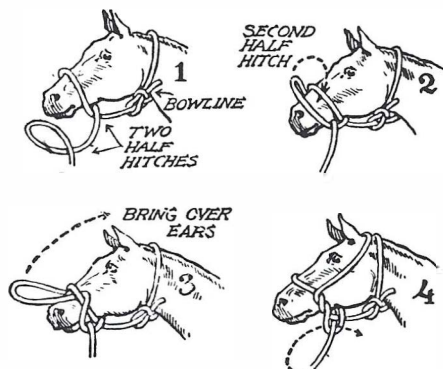
After all, what line is better than well-laid manila? It looks clean, smells nice, dries quickly, is easy on the hands, and after a few days' use becomes beautifully flexible, coiling neatly without kinks of figure-eights. It is dependable, too."

The Ropemakers of Plymouth
Samuel Eliot Morison

The Hackamore



Directions for Making



Branch Bits

Louie Bartos, a sailmaker from Alaska sent in this letter: "The last *Knot News* was interesting, especially the running comments on the making of fids and fids in general. I would like to make a few comments that will, I'm sure, create a lot of disagreements.

Fids I have many of, all shapes, woods, materials and ages. I also have working fids, not just historic relics. Fids are not just for "splicing line," they have many other uses, especially for me. They expand grommets (had tied), they expand cringles, round out and center grommets when sewing them into a sail or bag, etc., to name a few. The remark of not using them for splicing line, I would like to add this comment. When I have to splice 4.71 inch boltrope or larger (circumference, that is, or 1.5 inch diameter) I prefer an "old fashioned" fid, for me it is easier.

I love old fids and I used several over time. They have a great feel, especially one I have, and I've tried to duplicate it exactly but it still doesn't feel the same. I don't know what the wood is, no one can figure it out without taking some out, which I won't allow. But whatever it is, it's hard as steel and not as heavy as Lignum Vitae and dark like Ebony. I also have an interesting fid made of ebony.

What is the optimum or the best slope or taper for a fid? The best working fid I have, and use, for splicing is made of Lignum Vitae and is asymmetric in longitudinal taper and oval in diameter up to about half its length and then goes round. It was made for me years ago and I prize it even though it is not antique. The other good ones I have are WWII Navy fids that were given to me by a (at the time) very old sailor, about 48 years ago. They have a very good taper."

Bob Solon of Toledo, Ohio made this reply to Terry Ridings letter in KN#22: "Mr. Ridings is entitled to his opinions and assumptions.

If he feels that my fids have an air of attitude of mystery and reverence developing around them, that is his affair. How the "mystique" of my fids makes things unavailable and discourages people to try is beyond me.

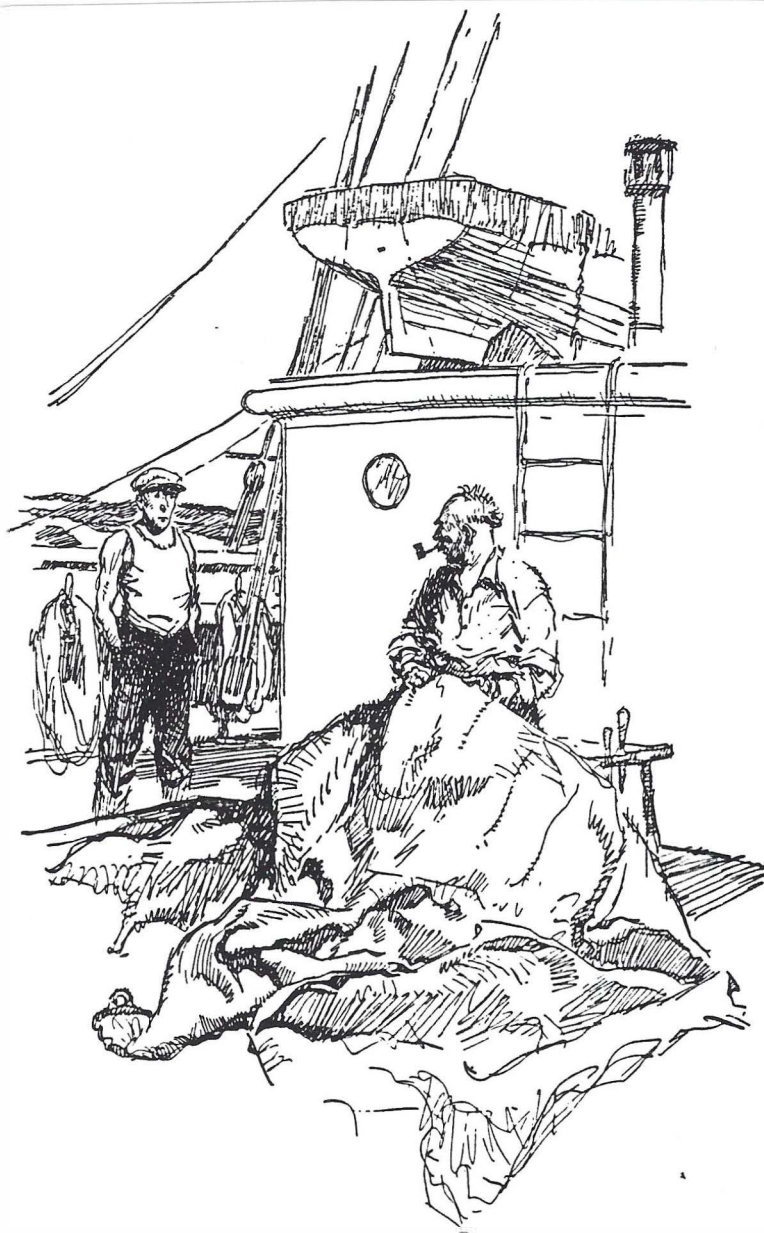
I compliment him on making "what must be dozens" of Lignum Vitae fids and am envious of the fact that he didn't experience

a single check. That is quite an accomplishment. However, there is a reason that Lignum Vitae is often shipped with a wax coating and it has nothing to do with what he assumes is my lifestyle. Did I say that I lived in an overheated apartment?

I volunteer in a 135 year old working museum. I demonstrate turning on a century old lathe, driven by a line shaft, using wood that I cut on the mill's 56" saw in 1997. It's fun. Often I make fids.

Using a Surform tool (made by Stanley) to shape fids is Mr. Ridings way. Using a lathe is mine. Perhaps the making of fids on a lathe is what lends mystique to the process. If so, that is fine with me. Making Lignum Vitae fids is a challenge and can be fraught with frustration. The end product is worth it, no matter how it is made.

Good fids to all."



Monthly Meeting Schedule

Meetings are on the second Tuesday of the month in the LAMI classroom next to the Maritime Museum in San Pedro

September 12th

October 10th

November 14th

December 12th

The **Tall Ships Festival** at Dana Point will be on Saturday, September 9th and Sunday, September 10th this year.

Volunteers are needed to help work the displays. We hope you can meet us there and join in the fun. Let either Lindsey or myself know if you will be able to make it.



KNOT NEWS

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