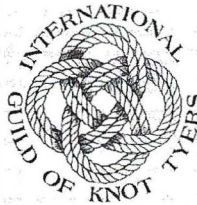


# KNOT



# NEWS

INTERNATIONAL GUILD OF KNOT TYERS - PACIFIC AMERICAS BRANCH

October 2000

Joseph Schmidbauer-Editor

Issue #24

## Scourge of the Seas: The Cat O'Nine Tails

*by Joe Schmidbauer*

This article originally appeared in the pirate newsletter *No Quarter Given* and is here reprinted by permission

*"Every man aboard knows the penalty. Fifty licks of the cat." He watched their faces. Fifty strokes of the knotted leather thongs could cripple a man for life. A hundred strokes was a sentence of certain and horrible death. "They have earned themselves the full fifty. However, I remember that these four fools fought well on this very deck when we captured this vessel."*

*"I am a merciful man," he told them. "Make it fifteen for each, Master Daniel, but comb your cat well between the strokes."*

*Unless Daniel's fingers separated the lashes of the cat after each stroke, the blood would matt them together and clot them into a single heavy instrument that would cut human flesh like a sword blade. Even fifteen with an uncombed cat would strip the meat off a man's back down to the vertebrae of his spine.*

*Birds of Prey*  
Wilbur Smith

Pirate crews, as a rule, were run on a democratic basis and flogging with the cat o'nine tails was rarely used to impose discipline in the ranks. Flogging was believed by all the major navies of the time to be an essential tool in getting men to do their duty. The purpose of the punishment was to shame as well as to inflict physical pain, with the public display

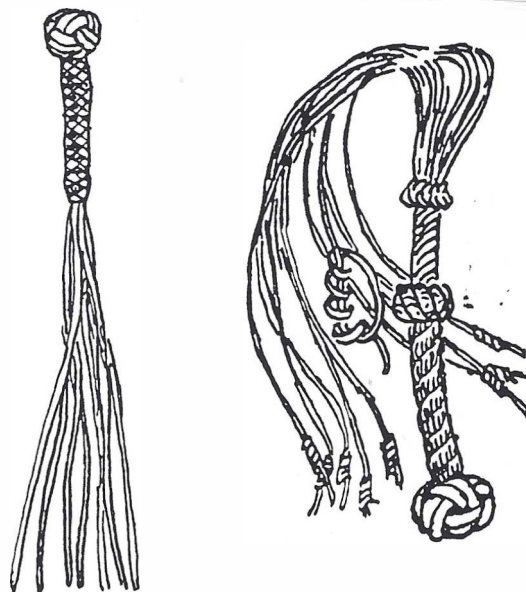
being deemed its most important part. The fear of the lash kept many a crew cowed and quiet.

On pirate vessels, flogging was only done by the Quartermaster on the Captain's order. This helped keep the captain in check because the quartermaster could refuse the order and put it to a vote by the crew, possibly to elect another captain.

Pirates might sometimes make an example of a captured officer by the liberal use of the cat.

To make sure that no man ever got an unjust punishment, it was dictated that all offenders got 40 strokes less one. This was known as Moses' Law. The name comes from the number of lashes that Jesus receives from Herod in the Bible. When you remember that 39 strokes from a lash that had 9 flails is in fact 351 lashes, most offenders were much the worse after the fact.

Flogging was abolished in the US Navy in 1852 and in the Royal Navy in 1871.





The huddled figure in the bows of the boat was that of a powerful man of thirty or thirty-five. He was stripped to his wide sailor's trousers of duck, and his bare arms were bronzed and tattooed. Stockings had been bound around his wrists, which were stoutly lashed to a capstan bar. His thick yellow hair was in disorder and I could not see his face, for his head hung down over his chest. His trousers, the thwart on which he lay huddled, and the frames and planking of the boat on either side of him were blotched and spattered with black blood. Blood I had seen before; it was the man's back that caught my breath. From neck to waist the cat o'nine tails had laid the bones bare, and the flesh hung in blackened, tattered strips.

"This man is dead, sir," the surgeon said solemnly.

"Dead?" the Captain said lightly, in his cultivated drawl. "Lucky devil! Master-at-arms, do your duty. Two dozen lashes, if you please."

*Mutiny on the Bounty*

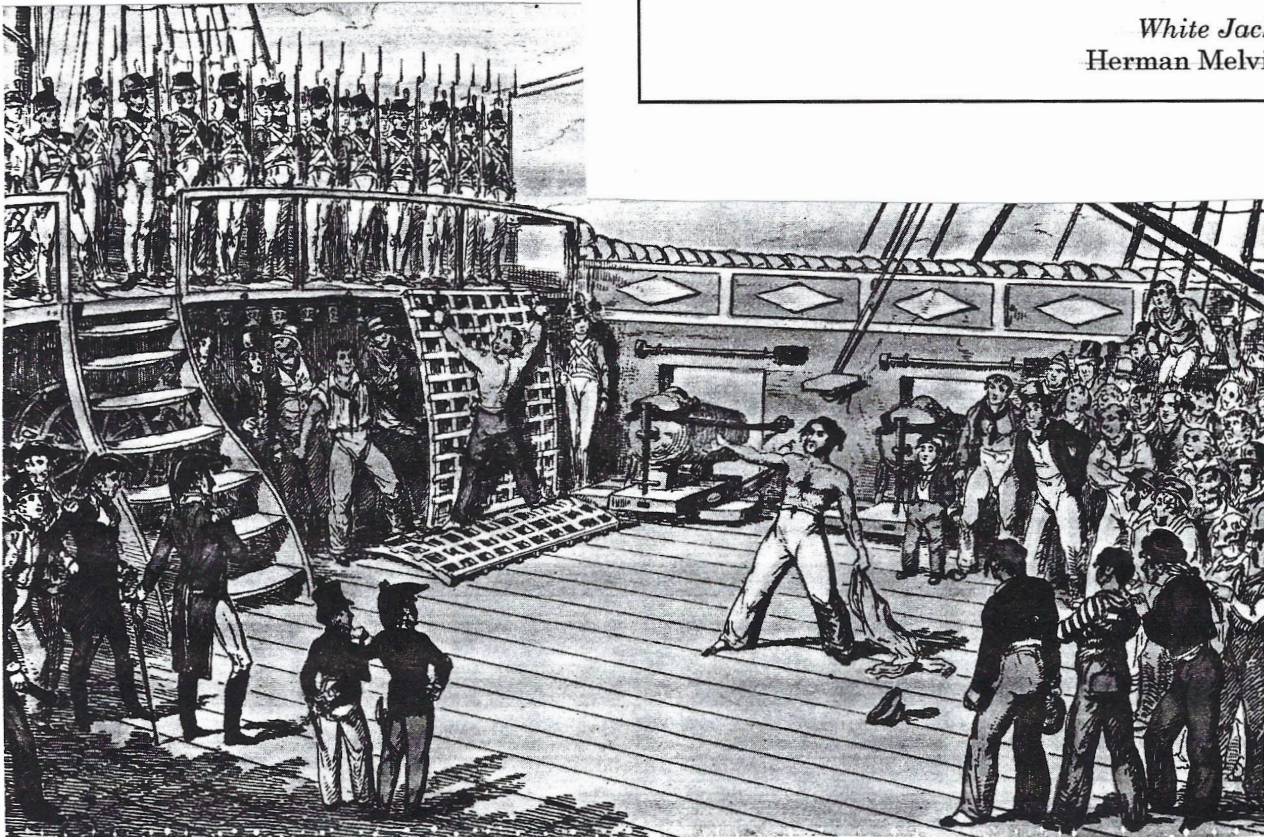
Charles Nordhoff & James Norman Hall

The crew was summoned together with the call, "All hands witness punishment, ahoy!" All members were required to watch the proceedings. The crew assembled in the waist of the ship around the mainmast. Officers stood together in a group on the starboard side with the Surgeon in front. The Master-at-Arms brought the prisoner forward to have the charges read to him by the Captain. Gratings were rigged on to which the prisoner was tied. This was to keep him from squirming away from the whip as well as a support against the force of the blow. The cats were kept in a red baize bag (Royal Navy) or in a green baize bag (US Navy) until ready for use. With the crew assembled, it was time to "let the cat out of the bag." The silence that overcame most men when contemplating their upcoming lashing made men wonder if the, "cat got your tongue?" Lots of space was needed by a brawny seaman to make a proper swing with this lash. If there was "no room to swing a cat" a larger area was needed for the arc of his arm.

The cat o'nine tails itself was a whip made from either leather or rope. It sometimes had a wooden handle to provide a firm grip, ending with the nine lashes of stout cord. The flails were from 12 to 24 inches long. Three blood knots were tied on each flail to increase the suffering of the victim. The knots were spaced from  $\frac{1}{2}$ " to 2" apart. Sometimes a lump of metal was added in the knot to give it more striking force.

Meanwhile, the boatswain stood solemnly on the other side, with the green bag in his hand, from which taking four instruments of punishment, he gave one to each of his mates; for a fresh "cat," applied by a fresh hand, is the ceremonious privilege accorded to every man-of-war culprit.

*White Jacket*  
Herman Melville





### From the Secretary

In the last issue of KN, I thanked the many members who donated their knotted items for display in our Branch knotwork collection. Unaccountably, I did not mention the wonderful knotboard sent to us by Carlos Albesiano of Caracas, Venezuela. It is a splendid piece of work with the many knots in white cotton cord on a black velvet background. Brass plates have the names written in Spanish and the whole is framed in cherry wood with metal corners. It would be a welcome addition to any collection.

Please remember, in any of your future correspondence to the Secretary, that his zip code has changed to **92880**. The old zip code no longer works with the post office.

Pieter van de Griend has decided to stop publishing his *Het Knoopeknauwertje* after the 25<sup>th</sup> issue in December 2000. What with his recent marriage (congratulations on that!) and numerous other commitments, he doesn't have the time anymore to put future issues together.

A few members have asked me about when their dues need to be paid. I have decided to put a moratorium on dues until we get the account transferred and settled with the new Treasurer. This will probably happen once we get our web site up and running again. We will also be going to a payment plan where you will pay your dues on the month that you joined. I have a master list of when everyone joined and I will publish it once we are business again. This way you will know when to send in your dues.

I got a request at one of our monthly meetings to reprint the Branch library list. Any one of these books are available to all Branch members for a "reasonable" amount of time. Just remember that they are a loan and not a gift.



### PAB Branch Library

#### **Donated in 1997**

*The Arts of the Sailor* by Hervey Garrett Smith.  
*The Knot Book* by Geoffrey Budworth.  
*Tying Strong Fishing Knots* by Bill Herzog.  
*The Essential Knot Book* by Colin Jarman.  
*The Art of Rigging* by George Biddlecomb.  
*The Rigging of Ships in the Days of the Sailsail Topmast, 1600-1720* by R.C. Anderson.  
*Creative Ropecraft* by Stuart E. Grainger.  
*Knots, Splices and Fancy Work* by Charles L. Spencer  
*Square Knot Book No. 3* by Philip C. Herwig.

*Knots* by Peter Owen.

*A Fresh Approach to Knotting and Ropework* by Charles Warner.

#### **Donated in 1998**

*Knots Useful and Ornamental* by Ron Edwards.  
*Turk's Heads* by Ron Edwards.  
*Encyclopedia of Knots and Fancy Rope Work* by Raoul Graumont and John Hensel.  
*The Riggers Locker-Tools and Techniques for Modern and Traditional Rigging* by Brion Toss.  
*Knotcraft-The Practical and Entertaining Art of Tying Knots* by Allan and Paulette Macfarlan.  
*The Splicing Handbook-Techniques for Modern and Traditional Ropes* by Barbara Merry with John Darwin.  
*Knots and How To Tie Them* by Walter B. Gibson.  
*Knots and Splices* by Cyrus L. Day.  
*Rigging* by Harold A. Callahan.  
*Chapman's Nautical Guides-Knots* by Brion Toss.  
*Knots and Physics* by Louis H. Kauffman.  
*Knots and Applications* Louis H. Kauffman (Ed.)  
*Turk's-Head Knot Tips: A Knot Tier's Guide To The Turk's-Head Knot* by Tom Hall.  
*Notes on Knots* by Pieter van de Griend.  
*Knots and Rope Problems* by Pieter van de Griend.  
*The Hamlyn Book of Knots* by Geoffrey Budworth.  
*Knotlore* by Geoffrey Budworth.  
*Marline-Spike Seamanship* by Leonard Popple.  
*The Complete Rigger's Apprentice: Tools and Techniques for Modern and Traditional Rigging* by Brion Toss.  
*Tassels: The Fanciful Embellishment* by Nancy Welch.  
*Celtic Knotwork Designs* by Sheila Sturrock.  
*The New Encyclopedia of Knots* by Derek Avery.  
*Knots for Climbers* by Craig Luebben.  
*Practical Fishing Knots* by Mark Sosin and Lefty Kreh.  
*Knots for Hikers and Backpackers* by Frank Logue with Victoria Logue.  
*Making Discoveries in Knots* by Ham Gerber.  
*Knots and Splices* by Steve Judkins and Tim Davison.  
*Macramé* by Lynn Paulin.  
*Step by Step Macramé* by Mary Walker Phillips.  
*Macramé Creative Knot-Tying: Techniques and Projects* by Susan S. Lampton.  
*The Marlinespike Sailor* by Hervey Garrett Smith.  
*The Art of Knotting and Splicing* by Cyrus Lawrence Day.  
*More Bush Leatherwork* by Ron Edwards.  
*Cowboy Roping and Rope Tricks* by Chester Byers.  
*Sling Braiding of the Andes* by Adele Cahlander.

#### **Donated by 1999**

*Braiding and Knotting: Techniques and Projects* by Constantine A. Belash.  
*Square Knot Handicraft Guide* by Raoul Graumont and Elmer Wenstrom.  
*The Handicrafts of the Sailor* by Steven Banks.  
*The Ashley Book of Knots* by Clifford W. Ashley.  
*The Handbook of Knots* by Raoul Graumont.  
*The Book of Ornamental Knots* by John Hensel.  
*Handbook For Riggers* by W.G. (Bill) Newberry.

*The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Knots and Ropework* by Geoffrey Budworth.

*Handbook of Seaman's Ropework* by Sam Svensson.

*Encyclopedia of Knots and Fancy Rope Work* by Raoul Graumont and John Hensel.

*String Figures and How to Make Them: A Study of Cat's Cradle in Many Lands* by Caroline Furness Jayne.

*Fisherman's Knots and Nets* by Raoul Graumont and Elmer Wenstrom.

*Knots, Ties and Splices* by J. Tom Burgess.

*Knight's Modern Seamanship* by Austin M. Knight.

#### **Donated in 2000**

*Knots and Splices: A Very Complete Work* by Captain Jutsum,

*Knots Ties and Splices: For Seafarers, Travellers and All Who Use Cordage* by J.T. Burgess as revised and rewritten by Commander J. Irving.

*Square Knot Book No. 3* by Philip C. Herwig.

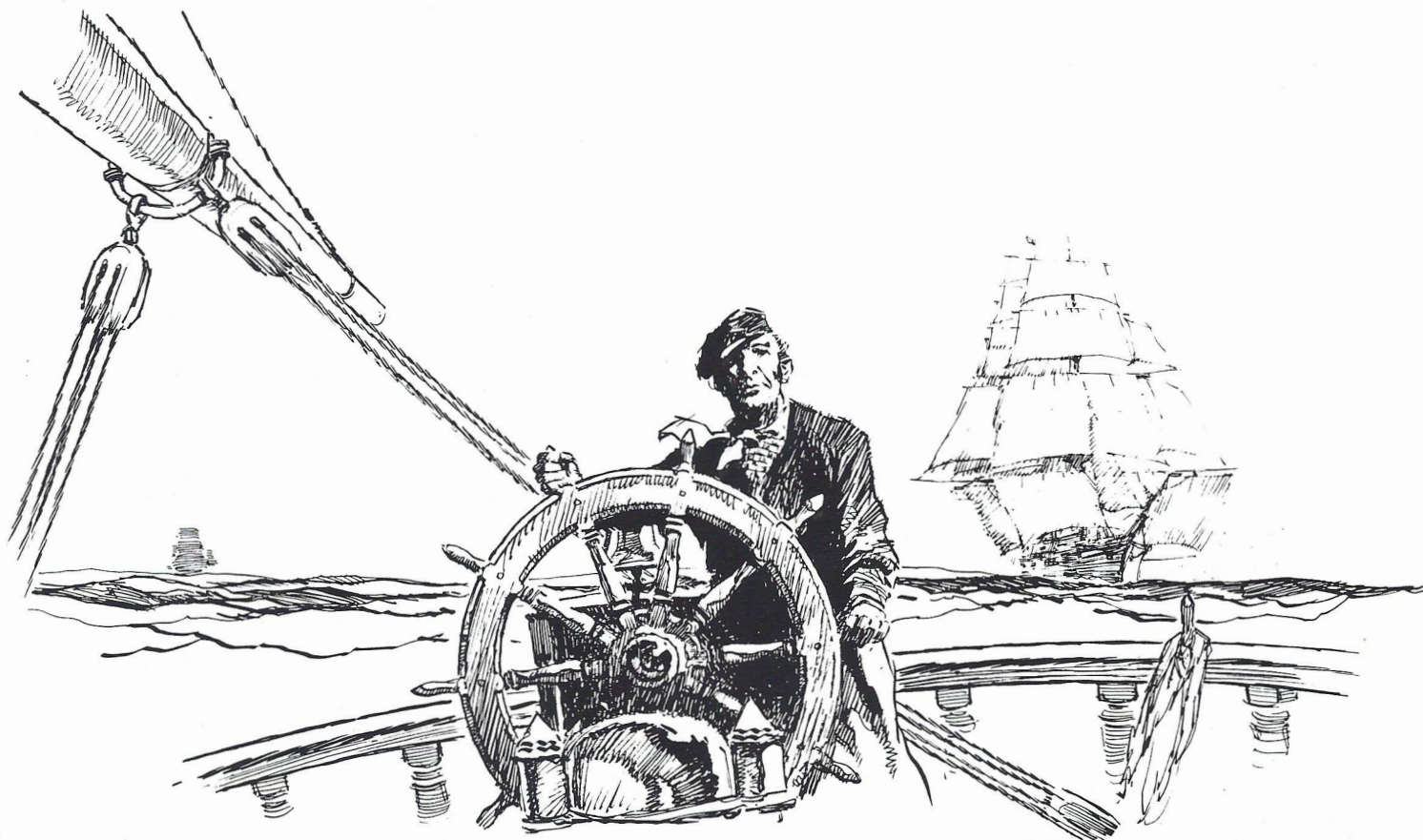
*Splicing Wire and Fiber Rope* by Raoul Graumont and John Hensel.

*Knots and Splices* by Percy W. Blandford.

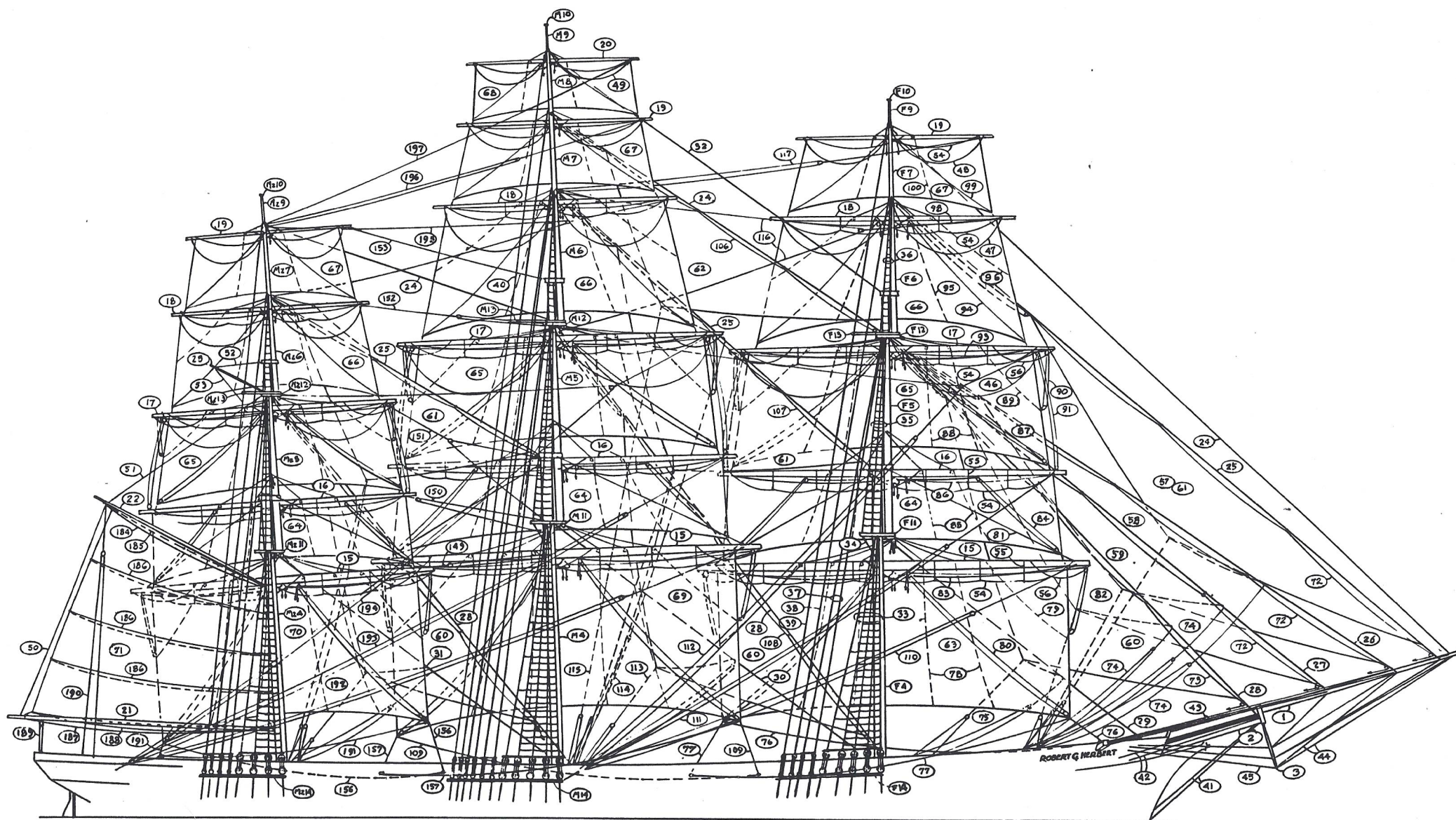
To check out any of these books feel free to contact the Branch Librarian, Joe Schmidbauer, at (909) 737-4948 or at [Koolkatz@prodigy.net](mailto:Koolkatz@prodigy.net).

The messages in the form of numerical data came to the Inca on pieces of string called *quipus*. The quipu only recorded numbers (as knots arranged like our decimal system) and I would dearly like to say, as a mathematician, that numbers are as informative and human a symbolism as words; but they are not. The numbers that described the life of a man in Peru were collected on a kind of punched card in reverse, a Braille computer card laid out as a knotted piece of string. When he married, the piece of string was moved to another place in the kinship bundle. Everything that was stored in the Inca's armies, granaries and warehouses was noted on these quipus. That fact is that Peru was already the dreaded metropolis of the future, the memory store in which an empire lists the acts of every citizen, sustains him, assigns him his labors, and puts it all down impersonally as numbers."

Jacob Bronowski  
*The Ascent of Man*







SPAR, RIGGING, AND SAIL PLAN (*Braces shown for one side only*)

# Nomenclature

## SPARS

(F: foremast; M: mainmast; Mz: mizzenmast; e.g., F4 is Fore lowermast. Yards take the name of their mast)

1. Jibboom
2. Bowsprit
3. Martingale boom (dolphin striker)
4. Lowermast
5. Topmast
6. Topgallantmast
7. Royalmast
8. Skysailmast
9. Pole
10. Truck
11. Top
12. Topmast crosstrees
13. Backstay spreaders
14. Channel
15. Lower yard
16. Lower tops'l yard
17. Upper tops'l yard
18. Topgallant yard
19. Royal yard
20. Skys'l yard
21. Spanker boom
22. Spanker gaff
23. Signal, or monkey, gaff

## STANDING RIGGING

(Except for the jib stays, takes the name of the mast it supports)

24. Royal stay
25. Topgallant or flying jib stay
26. Outer jib stay
27. Inner jib stay
28. Topmast stay
29. Fore stay
30. Main stay
31. Mizzen stay
32. Skys'l mast stay
33. Lower shrouds
34. Futtock shroud
35. Topmast shrouds
36. Topgallantmast shrouds
37. Topmast backstays
38. Topgallant backstays
39. Royal backstays
40. Skys'l mast backstays
41. Inner and outer bobstays
42. Bowsprit shrouds
43. Jibboom guys

44. Inner and outer martingale stays
45. Backropes
46. Upper tops'l lift
47. Topgallant lift
48. Royal lift
49. Skys'l lift
50. Spanker boom lift
51. Spanker gaff span
52. Signal gaff lift
53. Signal gaff vangs
54. Footrope
55. Stirrup
56. Flemish horse

## SAILS

(Square sails take the name of the mast they are on, and staysails take the name of the stay from which they fly)

57. Flying jib, or fore t'gallant stays'l
58. Outer jib
59. Inner jib
60. Topmast stays'l
61. Topgallant stays'l
62. Royal stays'l
63. Fore course or fores'l
64. Lower tops'l
65. Upper tops'l
66. Topgallantsail
67. Royal
68. Skys'l
69. Main course or mains'l
70. Crossjack
71. Spanker

## RUNNING RIGGING

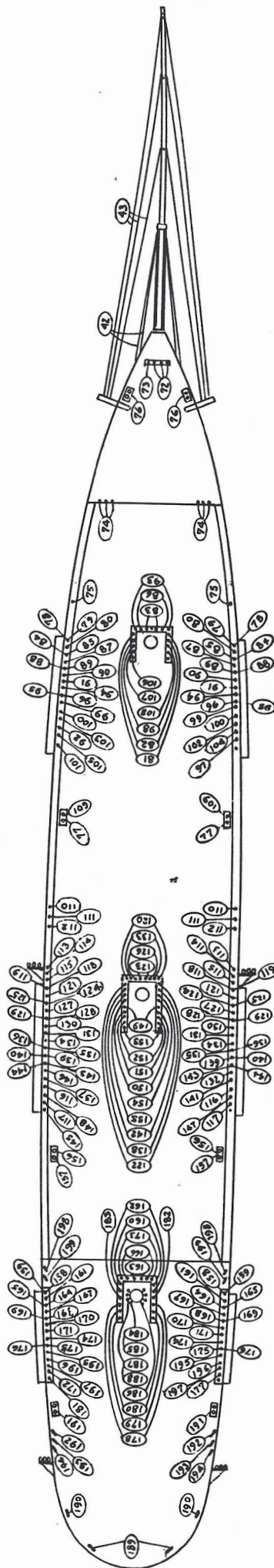
(Takes the name of the sail or yard it controls)

72. Flying, outer, and inner jib downhauls
73. Fore topmast stays'l downhaul
74. Flying, outer, and inner jib sheets
75. Fore topmast stays'l sheet
76. Fore tack
77. Fore sheet
78. Fore buntline
79. Fore leechline
80. Fore clewgarnet
81. Fore topping lift
82. Fore reef tackle
83. Fore lower tops'l sheet
84. Fore lower tops'l clewline
85. Fore lower tops'l buntline
86. Fore upper tops'l sheet
87. Fore upper tops'l clewline
88. Fore upper tops'l buntline
89. Fore upper tops'l leechline

90. Fore upper tops'l reef tackle
91. Fore upper tops'l downhaul
92. Fore upper tops'l halyard
93. Fore topgallant sheet
94. Fore topgallant clewline
95. Fore topgallant buntline
96. Fore topgallant leechline
97. Fore topgallant halyard
98. Fore royal sheet
99. Fore royal clewline
100. Fore royal buntline
101. Fore royal halyard
102. Fore topmast stays'l halyard
103. Inner jib halyard
104. Outer jib halyard
105. Flying jib halyard
106. Main royal stays'l downhaul
107. Main topgallant stays'l downhaul
108. Main topmast stays'l downhaul
109. Main tack
110. Fore brace
111. Fore lower tops'l brace
112. Fore upper tops'l brace
113. Main topmast stays'l sheet
114. Main topgallant stays'l sheet
115. Main royal stays'l sheet
116. Fore topgallant brace
117. Fore royal brace
118. Main buntline
119. Main leechline
120. Main topping lift
121. Main clewgarnet
122. Main reef tackle
123. Main lower tops'l sheet
124. Main lower tops'l clewline
125. Main lower tops'l buntline
126. Main upper tops'l sheet
127. Main upper tops'l clewline
128. Main upper tops'l buntline
129. Main upper tops'l leechline
130. Main upper tops'l reef tackle
131. Main upper tops'l downhaul
132. Main upper tops'l halyard
133. Main topgallant sheet
134. Main topgallant clewline
135. Main topgallant buntline
136. Main topgallant leechline
137. Main topgallant halyard
138. Main royal sheet
139. Main royal clewline
140. Main royal buntline
141. Main royal halyard
142. Main skys'l sheet
143. Main skys'l clewline
144. Main skys'l buntline



145. Main skys'l halyard
146. Main topmast stays'l halyard
147. Main topgallant stays'l halyard
148. Main royal stays'l halyard
149. Crossjack brace
150. Mizzen lower tops'l brace
151. Mizzen upper tops'l brace
152. Mizzen topgallant brace
153. Mizzen royal brace
154. Mizzen topgallant stays'l downhaul
155. Mizzen topmast stays'l downhaul
156. Mizzen tack
157. Main sheet
158. Crossjack buntline
159. Crossjack leechline
160. Crossjack topping lift
161. Crossjack clewgarnet
162. Crossjack reef tackle
163. Mizzen lower tops'l sheet
164. Mizzen lower tops'l clewline
165. Mizzen lower tops'l buntline
166. Mizzen upper tops'l sheet
167. Mizzen upper tops'l clewline
168. Mizzen upper tops'l buntline
169. Mizzen upper tops'l leechline
170. Mizzen upper tops'l reef tackle
171. Mizzen upper tops'l downhaul
172. Mizzen upper tops'l halyard
173. Mizzen topgallant sheet
174. Mizzen topgallant clewline
175. Mizzen topgallant buntline
176. Mizzen topgallant leechline
177. Mizzen topgallant halyard
178. Mizzen royal sheet
179. Mizzen royal clewline
180. Mizzen royal buntline
181. Mizzen royal halyard
182. Mizzen topmast stays'l halyard
183. Mizzen topgallant stays'l halyard
184. Spanker head outhaul
185. Spanker head inhaul
186. Spanker brails
187. Spanker clew outhaul
188. Spanker clew inhaul
189. Spanker sheet
190. Spanker vang
191. Mizzen sheet
192. Main brace
193. Main lower tops'l brace
194. Main upper tops'l brace
195. Main topgallant brace
196. Main royal brace
197. Main skys'l brace
198. Mizzen topmast stays'l sheet
199. Mizzen topgallant stays'l sheet

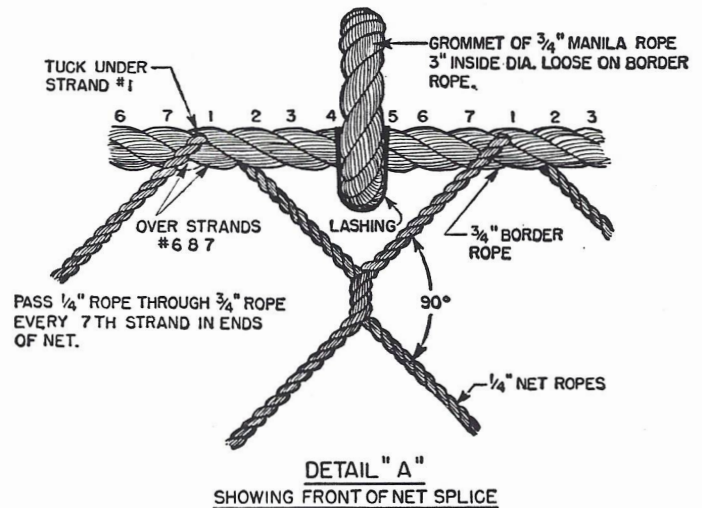


BELAYING PIN PLAN

### Monthly Meeting Schedule

We meet in the LAMI building next to the Los Angeles Maritime Museum in San Pedro, California. Meetings run from 7:00 to 9:00 in the evening. The gatherings are very informal. We try to keep the business to a minimum and to make the most of the knot sharing and swapping.

Meetings are on the second Tuesday of the month from September to June. The next scheduled meetings are November 14<sup>th</sup> and December 12<sup>th</sup>. We hope you can make it!



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