

# Knot News

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Joseph Schmidbauer-Editor

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## The Fid — Revisited

by Louie Bartos

### What Should a Fid's Taper Be?

This is a discussion that is packed with judgment and in many cases a vehicle for argument. I feel that the taper of a fid is a personal call, a judgment that is based on what feels good. I have used many different kinds of fids in many different places going back a long time. I have developed likes and dislikes that informs my judgment as to what makes a fid good or bad.

After some of the discussions in the papers of the IGKT regarding fids and the making of them, I sat back and pondered: "What would I judge to be a good fid?" From this came, what I as a real researcher would call a crude study on what good fid taper is.

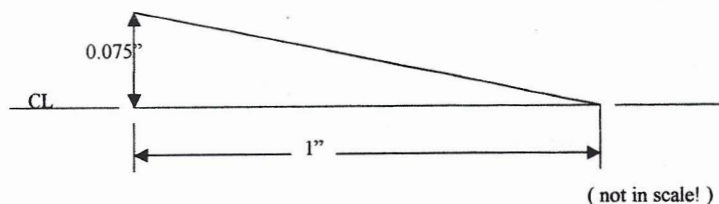
I started by testing all the fids I own, the ones that are being used daily in my sail loft as well as those that are antiques or made for me as gifts. Using a segment of line, in this case some half-inch, three-strand manila with a hard twist, I pushed each fid between the strands and then made a judgment call. Did it penetrate the lay easily or did it seem difficult to work between the strands? I rated the results from 1 to 10. I then expanded my research to other fids from museums as well as other personal collections. All in all I tried over 50 fids.

Each of the fids was measured to determine its taper. This was done for a large number of fids of different types and here are my results: the best rated *taper* for a fid is 0.075": 1" or there is 0.075 inches of radius to every inch of length.

Fig. 9.



Fig. 10.



To determine the diameter of a fid 10 inches in length:  $0.075 \times 2 \times 10 = 1.5$  inches.

This is the maximum diameter of the fid at 10 inches.

I have two fids, one a small standing fid and the other a bench fid that I use for expanding grommets, cringles and the like. These have a taper of 0.083" (radius): 1" (length). These fids have a very specialized use that requires the taper to be very close.



Fid

I did try several fids with a gradual or fine taper that is very nice to use but it takes a long fid to open the strands enough to make the tuck, especially in a line with a hard lay.

I once again would like to state that this "study" was totally subjective and with no "science" involved. This is a very interesting thread and I would enjoy any comments to improve our knowledge on the subject.

Cheers!

Louie Bartos is a Sailmaker in Alaska

**T**he CATHARPINS for swiftering in the lower Shrouds, are in many ships entirely laid aside. In this case, the Futtock Shrouds are seized to Bolts in an iron Strap, which goes around the lower mast.

This Method does away the necessity of BENTICK SHROUDS: and it leaves the lower Rigging free, to act in a direct line, from the Mast Head to the Chains.

Strong Objections, and not unreasonable ones, were made to this plan, when it was first adopted, viz. that the great Strain on the Mast, would lie immediately on that part, where a lower Mast generally gave, when carried away. This method, however of late, has been so frequently used, in Ships making long voyages, that sufficient proof appears to be afforded of its efficacy."

*The Young Sea Officer's Sheet Anchor*  
Darcy Lever

## By Any Other Name...

### My Experiences with Ply-Split Braiding

*By Maggie Machado*

**I**s there anything really "new under the sun?" I'm thinking probably not. Seems lately I'm finding many knotwork related techniques which have awakened dormant creative processes. For me, the most exciting one has been Ply-Split Braiding.

It has been seventeen years since I came across an article in a popular crafts magazine on a "new" craft. The author, Ben Ortiz, had named it *Tehido* (a Spanish word referring to most textile arts and crafts). The materials to us with this technique are to start with any number of twisted (not braided) cords. Laying them side by side open the plies with a tool then pass another cord through them. The process is repeated with the next set of twists below and continued for as long as needed to make a particular item. Some useful tools to help open the plies are latchet hooks, a Grip Fid (designed by Stuart Grainger), or what works for me, a piece of beveled and smoothed brass tubing. I call it my "hollow needle."

Although I was very interested in the technique and began a correspondence with the author, eventually I lost contact and was never able to reestablish it. So I filed away the magazine article, thinking that I would resurrect it when the time was right. Well, I believe that time has come.

A couple of months ago I had the bright idea to do an Internet search on "Tejido." That didn't help much, so I tried "split-ply weaving." This led me to Peter Collingwood's web site. His *The Techniques of Ply-Split Braiding* was published in 1998. There it was, the same basic technique that I had learned in 1984! According to Peter's research, the technique has probably been around for centuries, being used to make camel girths, straps and neck decorations.

There was also a reference to a fiber artist by the name of Linda Hendrickson, who to my delight and surprise, lives right here in



Portland, Oregon! I contacted Linda and obtained her booklet: *Great SCOT – A beginner's guide to ply-split braids in Single-Course Oblique Twining*. I have been eagerly ply-splitting ever since! I am now incorporating much knotwork into my original designs for jewelry and accessories. For anyone interested in the fundamentals of ply-splitting braiding, I heartily recommend Linda's booklet. She can be reached at Linda@lindahendrickson.com or phone (503) 239-5016.

It is an ongoing process of sharing, learning and teaching others who have similar interests. I would enjoy hearing from anyone who has an interest or experiences to share in ply-split braiding at maggiem@columbia-center.org.

To utilize the full spectrum of available colors, textures and sizes of materials, I am now making my own plied cords... but that is another story.

### From the Secretary

I talked to you in the last issue about the payment of Branch dues. I seem to have made the process more confusing than I could have, so let me try to explain it again. I put a moratorium on past dues while we changed Treasurers, transferred the bank account and sorted out the records. Everything is now complete and we are ready for regular Branch business. The 2001 Branch dues are requested from all Members. The dues are \$15 for a year. I thought it would be fairer if each member paid on the month they joined. Look at the enclosed PAB Membership List, find the month you were recorded as joining the PAB and send in your money during that month. While you are at it, check your email and phone number for correctness.

I can also send your International Guild renewal dues to England for you when your notice comes from Nigel. Remember, you need to be a Guild member first to be able to join the PAB. This is just a local Branch of the Guild after all. The Guild dues are £16 a year, which works out to some \$27 to help Nigel with the exchange rate on the

other end. You can send them your dues yourself to help save the PAB the postage and the hassle.

A few members questioned me about the article "Knot So Fast!" in the February KN. What was the reason, they asked, that a 28 second hourglass was used in timing the speed of the ship? Why not some other time? The seamanship books I referred to are mute on the why of it. When they calculate the distance between the knots on the line so "they bear the same proportion to a nautical mile (6080 feet) as the seconds of the glass bore to the seconds in an hour (3600)," they all seem to take the 28 second glass as a given. Does anyone out there know the right answer?

The IGKT—North American Branch is planning a get together this coming August called **NAB 2001** in Rockport, Texas. Please see the enclosed flyer for all additional information.

**W**e still have a good stock of Guild Supplies on hand:

Guild Tie – \$15.00

Guild Enamel Brooch – \$5.00

Guild Embroidered Patch £– \$3.00

*Breastplate Designs* by Brian Field – \$4.00

*Concerning Crosses* by Brian Field – \$2.50

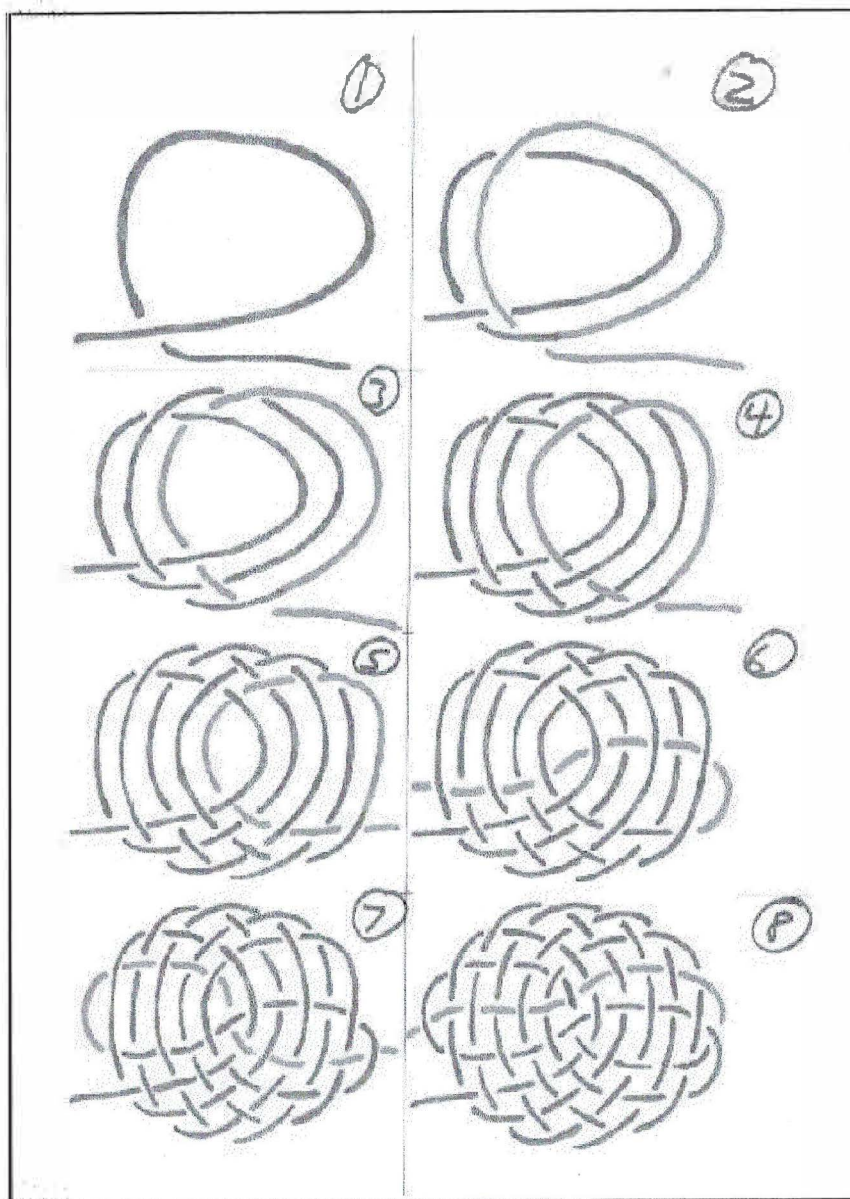
Star Knot Tie Tacks by Dan Callahan – \$5.00

### From the Mail Bag

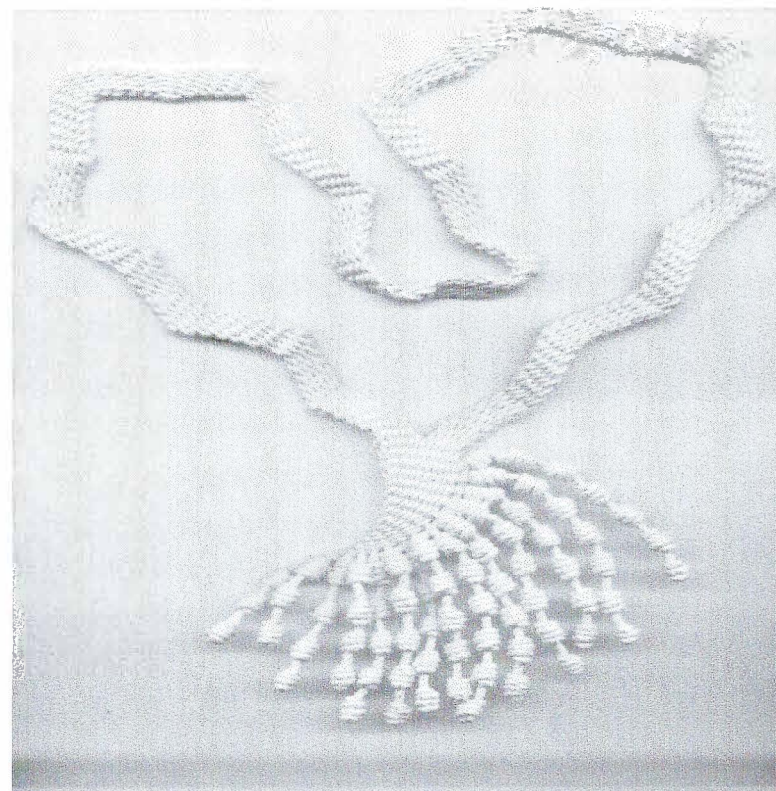
*Stuart Grainger* of England asked me to pass along this announcement:

"I feel I should let you know that, for medical reasons, I am obliged to cease trading in my knot books and I have passed the responsibility to Bruce Turley, Supplies Secretary of the IGKT. He will undertake future publication and distribution of *Ropefolk*, *Turkshead Alternatives*, *Knotcraft*, and *Knotted Fabrics*. *Creative Ropecraft – 4th Edition* is the responsibility of the publisher Adlard Coles Nautical of 35 Bedford Row; London, whose sole agent in the USA is Sheridan Books; 145 Palisade Street; Dobbs Ferry, New York 10522.

Best Wishes and many thanks."



← Five Loop Mat courtesy of  
Marty Combs — Coos Bay, Oregon



↑ Ply-Split Braiding  
by Maggie Machado — Oregon