

# Knot



# News

INTERNATIONAL GUILD OF KNOT TYERS - PACIFIC AMERICAS BRANCH

October 2001

Joseph Schmidbauer-Editor

Issue #29

*From the Ditty Bag:*

## A Pricker/Heaver

*by Roy Chapman*

Speaking of safety: IGKT and Roy Chapman disclaim any responsibility for personal injury resulting from an attempt to follow any instructions given by us. Making things is dangerous. The tools and chemicals used to make things are dangerous. It is your responsibility to wear protective clothing, safety glasses, boots, aprons, gloves and respirators as may be necessary to avoid injury. Lets work smart, if you heat something darned near red hot and drop it down your cowboy boot, it will burn through your foot before you can take the off the boot. Think about what you are doing.

Now, onward: I have tried to write these essays to the knot tyer who isn't a machinist or iron smith, has only minimal tools and little or no training. I hope I am succeeding. I suggest that you can always learn a new skill or two in the process of pursuing your knotting. Don't be afraid to try to make some tools. This one is one that requires a little more effort.

One of the problems that face all of us is how to tighten fancy knots, multistrand lanyards, buttons and the like. The "pricker" is the traditional tool and almost any little pointed bit of metal, like an awl or ice pick, will work. The "heaver" is used to apply more pull than you can with just a pricker. It has a multi-faceted cross-section, which allows you to grip the cord with your thumb. If that isn't enough then a "round turn" about the heaver has enough nip to pull

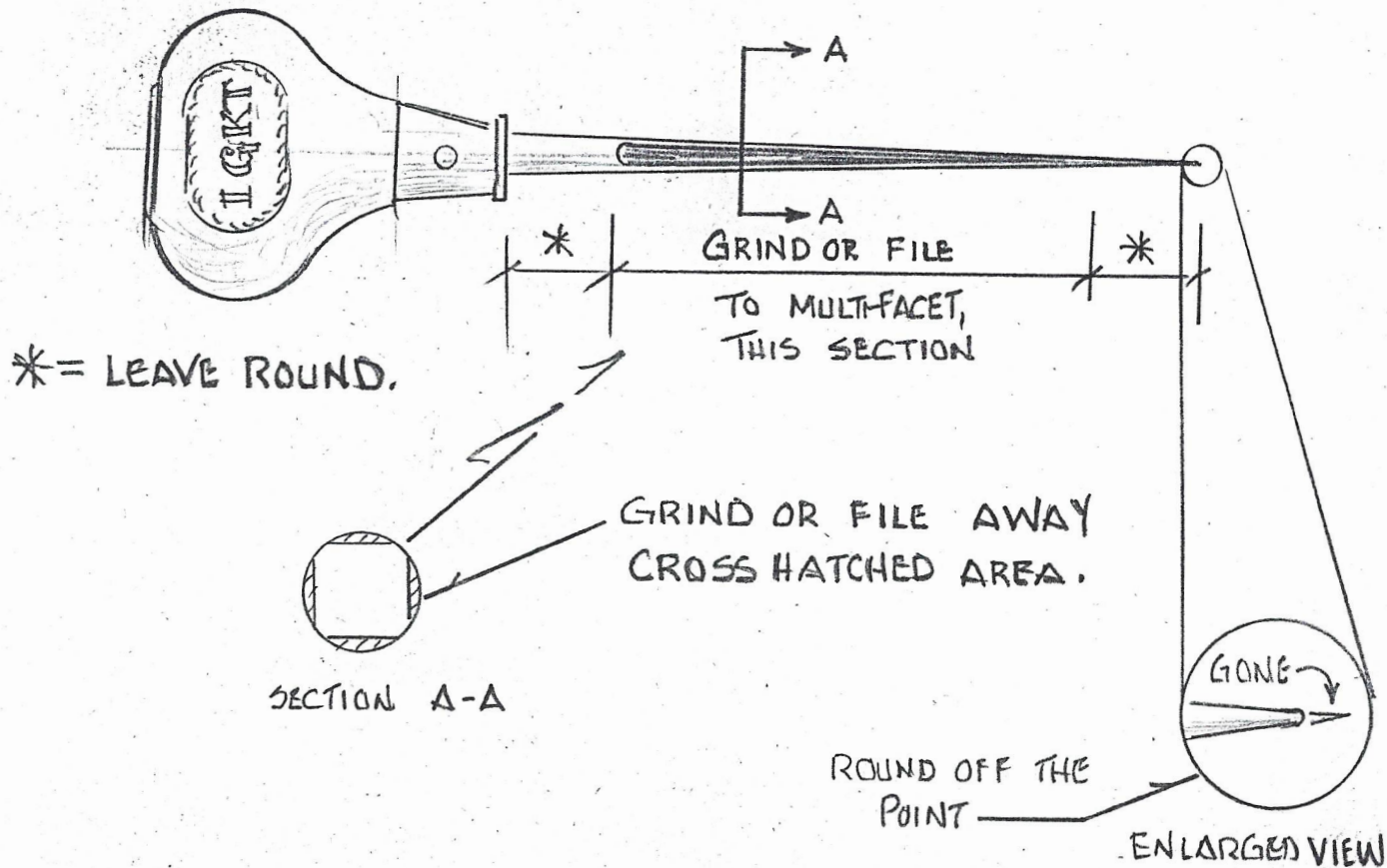
the slack out of your knot. Most old heavers are too big to work small cord comfortably. I offer you a "Pricker/Heaver" as having the best attributes of both, being perfect for small stuff. When working with 550 cord, sash cord and the like I couldn't find a nicer tool for getting my knots tight. Follow the diagrams and the text and you can have a dandy one of your own. Use it as in ABOK #2029 and #130.

The easiest "Pricker/Heaver" (hereafter "PH") that I offer is one made from a high quality awl. Stanley Tools, Sears et al. offer good ones. A garage sale may offer one. You will need to alter the shape of the spike by filing or grinding. If the spike is very hard you may not be able to file it, you will then have to use some form of grinder (power tool) or abrasive cloth or stone (hand work). If the awl is plated bright with chromium or some such you will need to remove ALL the plating while you are reshaping it, for the sharp edges of the plating will cut both your cord and you. Try not to get one made in China.

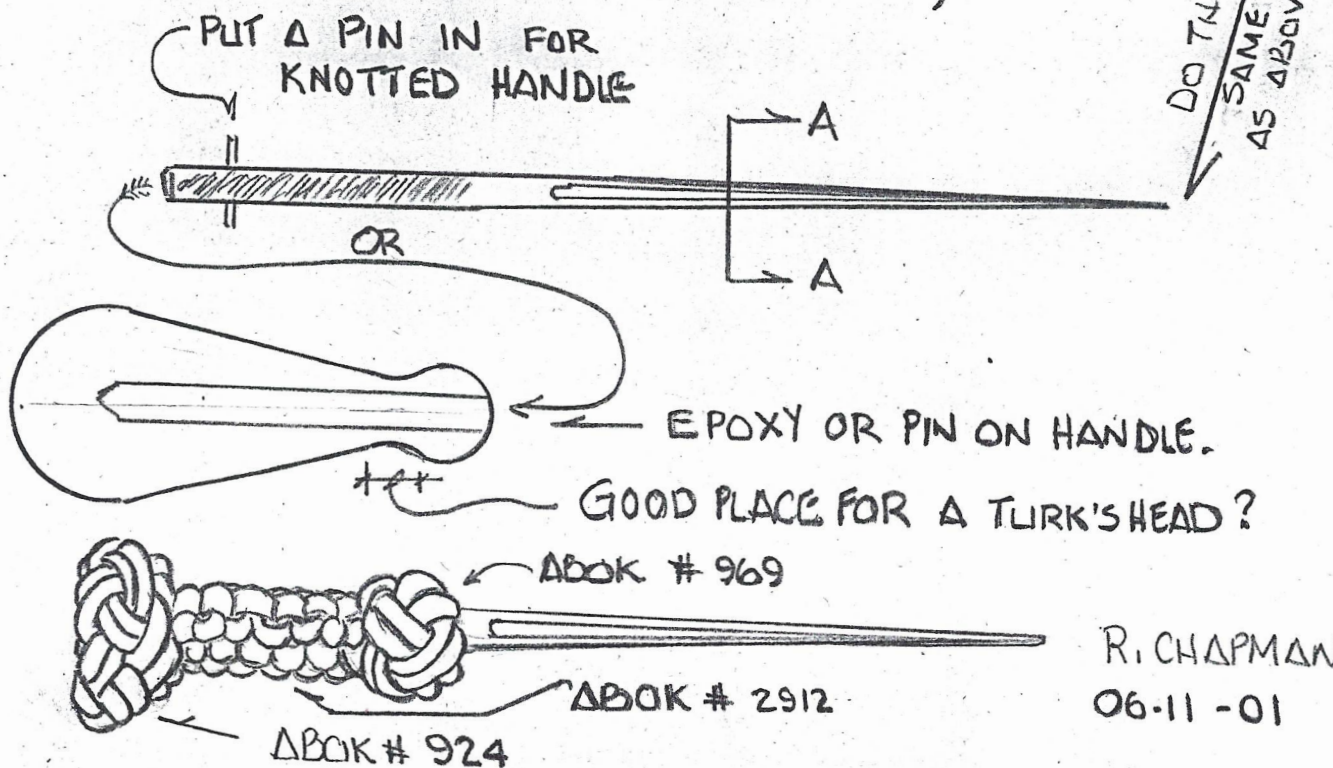
The second two designs are made from a discarded (or new if you must) "chain saw" or other round file (a worn out "ordinary left-handed low-faring zincfeldt reamer" .... would work, if you can find one) good garage sale stuff, or "begged" from a saw shop. These PH's based on an old file, require more tools to make; at a minimum you will need to "draw" the temper with some sort of heat source, such as a propane torch, gas range or charcoal fire. Files are made quite hard but they are very brittle. To make a useful knotting tool (and to be able to remove some metal while making the tool) you must partially or totally "anneal" the file. If you plan to complete your PH by grinding or filing you can draw the temper by heating it to between 550

# A "PRICKER/HEAVER"

FAST VERSION: USING A COMMERCIAL AWL;



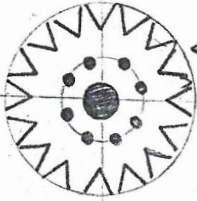
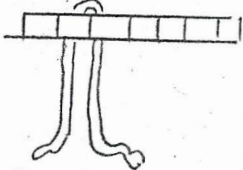
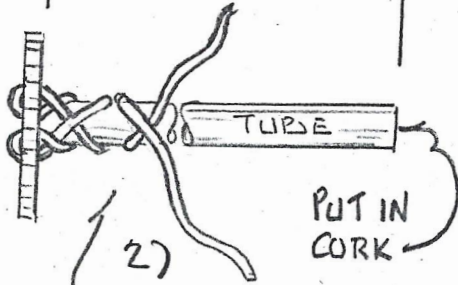
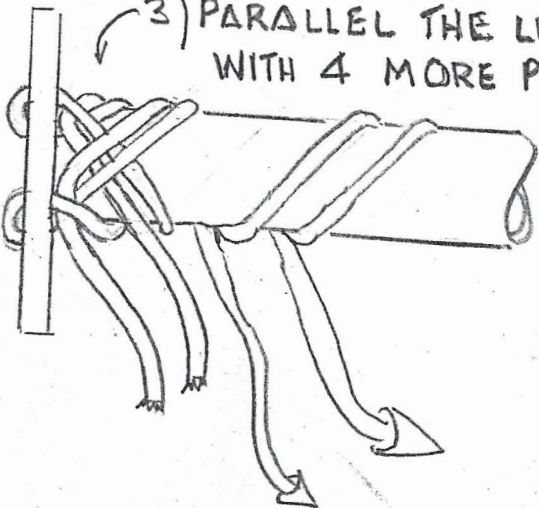
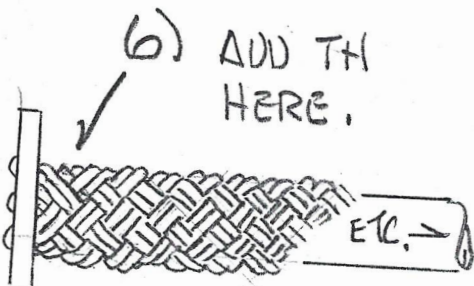
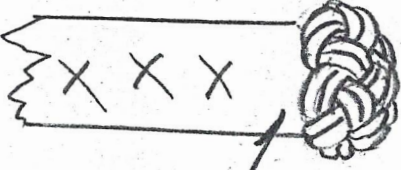
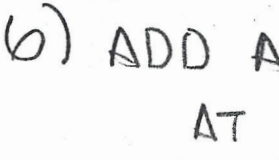
RECYCLED VERSION: USING AN OLD FILE,

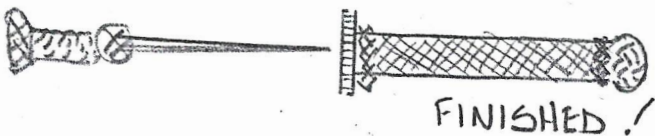


R. CHAPMAN  
06-11-01



# MAKING KNOTTED SHEATHS— FOR THE "PRICKER/HEAVER"—

- 
- ← CUT AND PUNCH  
THEN 'PINK' A  
LEATHER WASHER
- 1)  LACE CORD THROUGH ADJACENT  
HOLES, 4 PIECES (8 ENDS).
- 2)  LONG ENOUGH  
TUBE  
PUT IN  
CORK  
COACHWHIP 8 STRAND  
FOR AN INCH  
OR TWO.
- 3)  PARALLEL THE LEAD  
WITH 4 MORE PIECES (8 ENDS).
- 4)  ADD TH  
HERE.  
ETC. →
- 5)  WALL 8 PAIRS AND CROWN  
8 PAIRS AS ABOK # 954  
USING EACH PAIR AS IF  
IT WERE A SINGLE STRAND,  
DO NOT DOUBLE THE LEAD.
- 6)  ADD A COLORFUL 3X7 2 PLY TH.  
AT EACH END.



R. CHAPMAN  
07-10-01



and 600 degrees Fahrenheit and letting it cool naturally, in open air. How are you going to know the temperature? The ideal temperature for you to heat it to will produce a blue tint on a polished spot on your file. Polish a spot with emery cloth. As you uniformly heat your old file the spot you polished will go through several color phases. Starting with a very pale yellow [430F], light yellow, pale straw yellow, straw yellow, dark yellow, yellow-brown, brown-yellow, spotted red-brown, brown-purple, light purple, full purple, dark purple [550F], full blue, dark blue, and, finally, light blue [640F]. You can stop heating when you see any of the "blue" colors. If you stop before then you may not be able to file your PH to shape and it may still be too brittle to use safely. If you want to "pin" the handle on you should heat the spot for the pin all the way to red, and let it cool naturally, so that you can drill a hole with normal tools. If you go beyond 640 degrees the polished spot will no longer show "color" but the whole tool will begin to glow a dull red. If you keep heating it will glow up to bright red, yellow and finally white. You don't want to do that. When the PH cools you can file it to shape, but if you went beyond the "blue" colors it may be too soft and will easily bend in use. If that happened you would need to re-temper it as described after the "forged" version.

If you are forging your PH you will need a hammer and some sort of anvil (old railroad steel or other discarded heavy steel is nice). You will need to repeatedly get to that bright red and yellow heat so that the steel becomes plastic and easy to move. You could even practice pounding some modeling clay to get the technique right before you even start with metal. The hot steel will move just about like clay and you can see where to hit it to make a tapered spike. If you forge a PH you will need to "re-temper" when you are done forging. To do that, heat it bright red and quench it in water. Polish a spot and reheat it to one of the "blue" colors and allow it to air cool. If you drop it to a hard floor it should "ring" not clunk but if you try to bend it by hand it should feel very "springy" (careful now, it is still brittle enough to possibly break before it bends very much). Just as an example I can bend the one I just made with my bare hands. Just barely. I can feel it flex, and when I go beyond the "springy feel" and it takes a "set" at a new angle. This amount of softness is good. You mostly can't exert enough force tying a knot to bend it but if you did bend it by accident you

could straighten it. Were it to be so hard it would break instead of bend you would be out all your efforts making it and mad at me, too. Go ahead and flex your PH now, before you put any time into making a handle. If it is too soft then heat, quench and draw temper again. If it is too hard it will break. Of course I want you to tie a knotted handle... but a nice wooden one looks good too, if you would rather. Play with (i.e. tie knots with) the PH for a few days before you decide on the handle shape and size. It needs to fit your hand and working style. With our flattened surfaces you will find you can really pull that stand tight. Better knotting.

OK so now you have this dandy Pricker/Heaver and every time you put it in your ditty bag it pokes a hole, so you started putting a wine cork on it, but that looks shabby, right? Here is a wonderful little sheath to make for your P/H. I used an old aluminum archery arrow. You can use any tubing that comes to hand. Cut it just a bit longer than your P/H. I used the sharpened scrap from the arrow to make a punch. I then punched out some "cork biscuits" to fill the bottom end of my good tube so that the P/H couldn't rattle about at the pointed end. The pinked leather washer will keep the handle end from moving. Just don't get overenthusiastic when you punch the center hole and your P/H will fit perfectly. Follow the diagrams and coachwhip the eight ends. Then introduce four more strands for a total of sixteen ends. I used a sail needle to bring the new strands up to a point where I stopped with the original eight. I found this easier than starting the whole thing with eight pairs and trying to keep it tight. If you are better at it than I you can start right out with eight pairs. When the new eight catch up with the first eight then work the whole thing as eight pairs. When your coachwhipping reaches the end put a temporary stop on it and make the "wall and crown" knob. You can trim the ends short or leave a bit if you are going to add a Turk's Head. I trimmed them and added the Turk's Head anyway. Made one TH for the other end too. Shellac (one dipped coat) and varnish till your hearts content. Try not to get too much varnish or shellac on the leather so it is still a bit soft when done. No more holes in your ditty bag. No more unsightly cork stuck on the end of your bright new P/H. Please note that you could flatten the tubing, put a slot in the leather washer instead of a hole and



make a nice little knife sheath, if you are so inclined. This is just a sweet way of making sheaths that are super safe.

### From the Secretary

This might very well be your last issue of *Knot News*. I have not received the asked for PAB dues renewal from a number of you and the time is running out. The next newsletter will be out in early 2002 and members need to be current in order to continue enjoying this benefit of PAB membership. Everyone on this list is in the new 2001/02 Guild membership list so you are current (as far as I know) with your Guild membership. If your name appears in the list below, please consider if you wish to remain in our ranks or knot.

#### Alaska

David "Deuce" Audette

Louie Bartos

Keith Hudson

#### California

David Clark

Dean Cole

Marilyn "Winkie" Fordney

Tom Gergen

Arne Jensen

Darrell McNurlan

Jerome Mullins

Charles Quimbach

Donald Tucker

#### Florida

Randy Penn

#### North Carolina

Dan Hatfield

Mark Kreinhop

#### Oregon

Eric Bagai

Jim Munford

Richard Woodfin jr

#### Pennsylvania

Dan Cashin

Dean Westervelt

#### South Carolina

E.J. "Skip" Dickens

#### Texas

Wayne & Kay Lewis

#### Washington

Dennis Armstrong

Brion Toss

#### Wyoming

Mike Hickey

#### Belgium

Geert "Willy" Willaert

If your name does not appear on this list then you have no cause for concern. The newsletter will continue to come your way.

The dues for the International Guild are \$27 for a year and the PAB dues are \$15 for a year. This comes to a total to you of \$42. Make your check or money order payable to "IGKT-PAB". Please forward them to: Joseph Schmidbauer; Secretary IGKT-PAB; 1805 Kingsford Drive; Corona, CA 92880. If you have any questions call me at (909) 737-4989 after 5PM.

## **Tubbs Cordage Company**

*Established 1856*

**San Francisco**

### **Sometimes a Good Thump is the Answer**

*by Bob Solon*

The rotunda at Perry's Victory and International Peace Memorial, on beautiful South Bass Island, is a solemn place from another time. Americans today have little knowledge of the honour and sacrifice of the men that fought the Battle of Lake Erie.

Six officers lie beneath the rotunda: three Americans and three British, victors and vanquished alike. They rest together as a tribute to the respect that Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry had for the forces he faced. So much so that Perry refused to accept the swords of surrendering British officers. He ordered that British and American casualties be treated exactly the same. To a man they spoke highly of him thereafter.

Perry's victory is why this Buckeye is an American instead of a Canadian. It lead to 188 years of Canadian-American peace and friendship. In most places the Canadian border is no more than a line on a map. The 4,000 miles of undefended border is the longest in the world.

Three stanchions remind the public not to tread on the marker in the rotunda floor. The National Park Service is serious in its responsibility to the fallen and to its visitors. About five years ago they asked me to give the stanchions a nautical look.

Due to my inexperience (before I had the help of Marty Combs), I used what I could find locally: braided nylon and 1" nylon dock line.



Two years ago I replaced my original work because it was getting soiled. This year the NPS heavy breathers decided they wanted a more historic look. Of course no one seemed able (or willing) to define what that meant. But all were sure that they would know it when they saw it. Hoo boy!

With the small stuff offered by Marty Combs, I could decorate the tops of the stanchions. But what about the bases? Wayne Lewis in Texas put me on to a couple of great books (both available from Marty Combs): *Knots Useful and Ornamental* and *Turks-heads* both authored by Ron Edwards. I highly recommend them.

On page 24 of *Knots Useful and Ornamental* there is a Thump Mat [ABOK #2360] that turned out to be the obvious solution. They are circular and relatively flat. That was the selling point because I didn't know if they would go over or under the bases of the stanchions.

The base of the stanchions is 9 inch in diameter. So, over or under, a 13-inch mat would give two inches of play all around. Bigger is better. Right? One-inch manila twice around gives you 13 inches in diameter. Supposed to be round? Hey, I'm a talented guy! Why does this thing look like a tiger's fur ball? O Lord, do I really need all this experience? One-inch manila, like my deodorant, just wasn't making it.

Back to the plotting table: need 3 mats, round, 13 inch in diameter. All the same size. How about a cookie cutter? Cut a 13-inch diameter circle out of  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch plywood. Go to the tinsmiths shop at the Isaac Ludwig Mill and fashion a tin fence, half-inch high, around the edge of the plywood circle. The stanchions are 2 inches in diameter. Cut a  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch thick,  $2\frac{1}{4}$  inch diameter round plug to put in the middle of the mat in case it's necessary to force the mat over the top of the stanchion.

The man with a plan in his hand. Being an optimistic pessimist, I expected the worst but very pleased with what came along. Half inch manila, three times around, with a plug in the middle looked almost perfect.

At the monument I found that there was no way to attach a mat to the bottom of the stanchion base. And attached it had to be. Sadly, things exposed to the public have a remarkable ability to grow feet and just walk away. The space from the center plug made it possible to force the mat down over the top of the stanchion.

One of the granite benches on the monument's plaza was the perfect place to finish the job. I sat in the shadow of the monument. Around 50 yards to my front was Put-In-Bay, jammed full of sailboats from the Mill's Race. About 70 yards behind me was the three-mile stretch of Lake Erie to the mainland. A nice breeze only added to the sunny perfection of the day.

The only thing needed was to tighten the mats. Since even Murphy is subject to Murphy's Law, sometimes things do go right. When adjusted the 13-inch mat molded itself to the curve of the base and just touched the floor. All that was left to do was sew the ends to the bottom of the mat.

It was a pleasant surprise to attract some sidewalk superintendents. What shocked me, however, was that they had the audacity to tease me and joke around. And with a man of my obvious talent and stately demeanor. Go figure!

### PAB Library

Our Branch Library continues to expand with more generous and unexpected donations. This library is available to all Guild members. You may borrow them for any reasonable length of time. Just remember the motto: "They are a loan, not a gift."

*The Saga of the Reep Rope* edited by Betty Storz  
Guest Room Press; 2001  
Donated by Sam Lanham

*Seamanship* by Rear Admiral S.B. Luce  
Cornell Maritime Press; 1950  
Donated by Joe Schmidbauer

*Knot Tying Manual* [Anonymous]  
Ethicon Inc; 1986  
Donated by Marilyn "Winkie" Fordney

*Manual of Operative Procedure and Surgical Knots* [Anonymous]  
Ethicon Inc; 1979  
Donated by Marilyn "Winkie" Fordney

*Whaling and Old Salem* by Frances Diane Robotti  
Bonanza; 1962  
Donated by Roy Chapman

*Clipper Ships and Their Makers* by Alexander Laing  
Bonanza Books; 1961  
Donated by Roy Chapman

## Heat-sealing & other Heresies

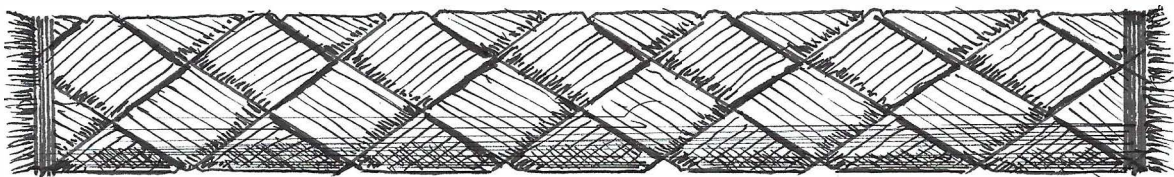
outlined by Geoffrey Budworth

A fussy old cove from the Weald\*  
Thought that only whipped cordage appealed.  
But his more laid-back friends  
Were content with ropes' ends  
Glue-dipped, or tape-wrapped, or heat-sealed.

[\* The Weald – an extensive area of ancient woodland  
in the English county of Kent.]

The spike or knife once commonly found at the end of any lanyard around the neck or waist of most Guild members has been replaced ... by a disposable cigarette lighter. For the 'butane whipping' or 'Bryant-&May splice', together with tape and sticky rubberized dips, have all but ousted (except for decorative display items) the more painstaking traditional whipping or pointing-&-grafting of ropes' ends.

Other unorthodox practices include: super-glues to obviate stitching and splicing; resin hardeners that transform cordage products into fossilized sculptures; steam irons instead of seam rubbers; and the wearing of industrial gloves to avoid blisters and calluses. But their adherents assert; *'If the old timers could've, they would've.'*



Coach-whipping, or crafty contrivance?

Now yet another crafty contrivance is emerging. Instead of the slow and laborious application of coach-whipping to hand-rails and suchlike, some of us are stripping the braided covering from a sheath-&-core rope of suitable diameter and texture, then sliding it over whatever foundation is to be covered, before adding the customary couple of Turks' Heads to secure and embellish both ends. It's addictive, I can tell you. On boats' gear, horse tack, household or garden tools and utensils, there is little limit to how this technique may be fittingly used; although one ought, perhaps, to draw the line at lawnmowers, baby buggies, supermarket trolleys, dining table cutlery, etc., etc., etc. Beware, therefore, what my IGKT colleague John Smith (UK – ) pithily calls the O.U.C.H. syndrome - the Overpowering Urge to Cover Handles! Otherwise, feel free to add this lazy but likeable shortcut to your rope-working repertoire.

--- oOo ---



### Schedule of Meetings and Events

Our Monthly meetings are held on the Second Tuesday of each month from September through June. They are held at the Los Angeles Maritime Institute in San Pedro, California that is right next door to the Los Angeles Maritime Museum. Meetings run from 7:00 to 9:00 PM.

Here are the meeting dates for the rest of 2001:

November 13<sup>th</sup>

December 11<sup>th</sup>

Volunteers are still needed to lecture, show and tell or for knotting demonstrations.

October 21<sup>st</sup>

*Autumn Sea Fair*

Cabrillo Marine Aquarium

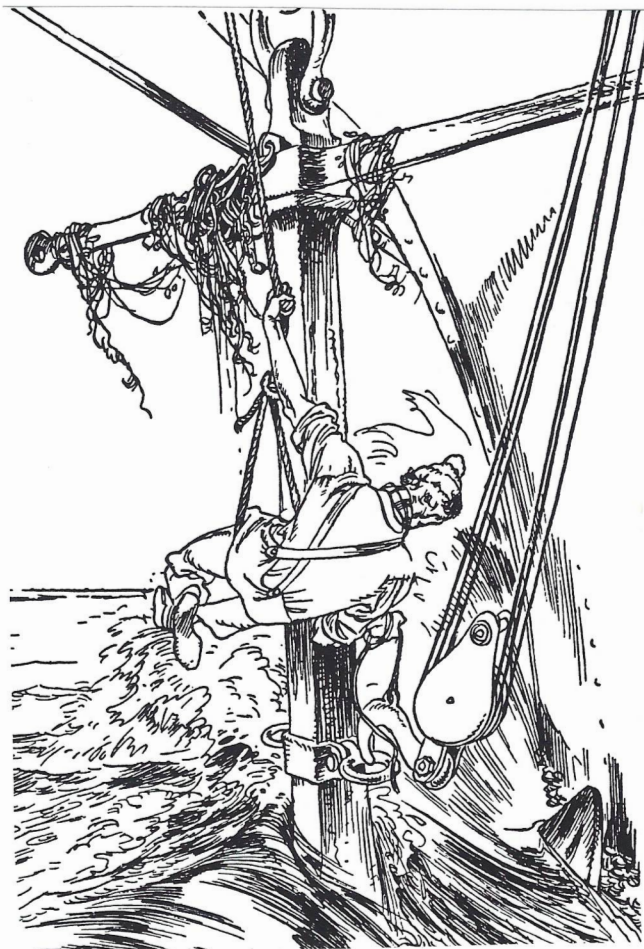
Stephen White Drive; San Pedro

October 27<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup>

*Maritime Art & Crafts Fair*

Los Angeles Maritime Museum

(on the water at 6<sup>th</sup> St); San Pedro



*Knot News*  
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