

# KNOT



# NEWS

INTERNATIONAL GUILD OF KNOT TYERS - PACIFIC AMERICAS BRANCH

May 2000

Joseph Schmidbauer-Editor

Issue #22

The date for our knot exhibition, *Lots of Knots: A World of Knotting*, is fast approaching. Judging by the forms returned to me, a goodly number of Guild members and other interested knotters will be coming to the event.

Here is a look at the guest list so far, as well as some of the scheduled events and presentations:

Brian Field, the current IGKT President, will give a lecture on Friday evening: *Magic, Medicine, Monkey's Fists & Marlingspikes: A Brief Look at 200 Year of Knotting*.

Joe Soanes—a retired Master Rigger—will demonstrate wire rope splicing.

Yvonne Chang & Tillie Easton plan to show and sell samples of Chinese Knotting.

Jon & Jane Waltz will teach simple Lanyard Knots.

Marie Ortiz & Cliff Case have Knotted Picture Frames and Covered Bottles to display.

Other members that will be coming are:

Skip Dickens                      Stan Harris

Wayne Lewis                      Don Tucker

Barry Sessions - Secretary of the IGKT Texas

John Barbra - President of the IGKT North

Midshipman Dan Hatfield

The great Bob Noble will be our special raffle prize during the show. You must see this piece of art to believe it!

If you are planning to attend, please let the table space needed for the various displays and work spaces.

## **Lots of Knots A World of Knotting**



**Fancy Knotwork, Rigging & Splicing  
Los Angeles Maritime Museum  
Berth 84, Foot of 6<sup>th</sup> Street  
San Pedro, California**

**Saturday - June 24<sup>th</sup> Sunday - June 25<sup>th</sup> 2000**

**Lindsey Philpott (562) 595 - 8854  
Joe Schmidbauer Koolkatz@prodigy.net  
Web Site: <http://home.fea.net/~igktpab>**

People who have also responded but, sadly, are unable to attend:

Colin Grundy  
Geoffrey Budworth  
Luanne Kozma  
Dan Callahan  
Brion Toss  
Maggie Machado  
Clint Funk  
Don Rempe  
Roy Chapman  
Stuart Grainger  
Des & Liz Pawson

Many of the above members and friends have kindly donated their own knotted items to our collection to help fill out our displays.

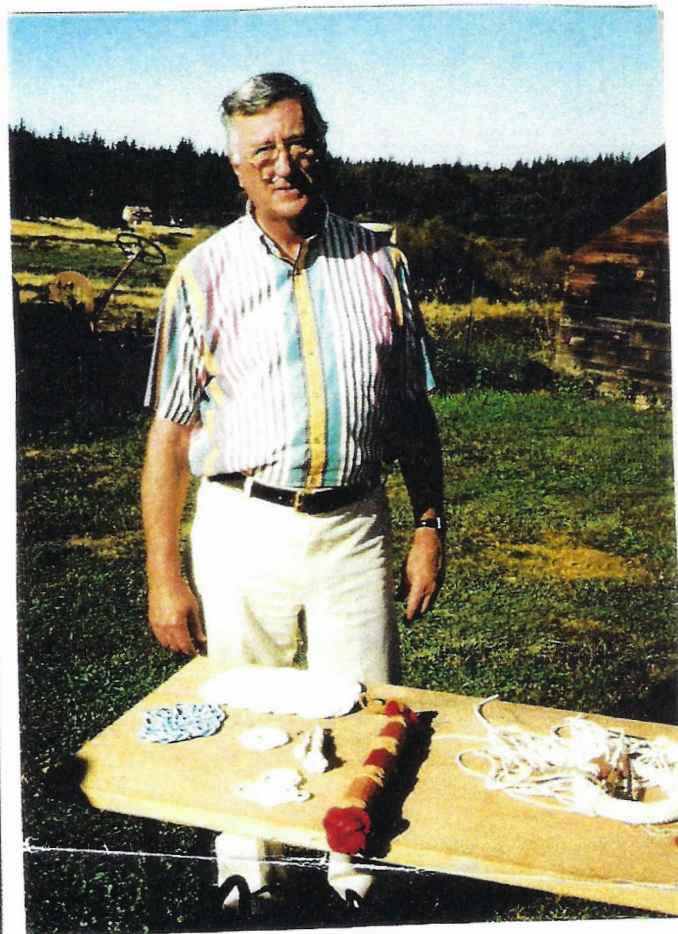
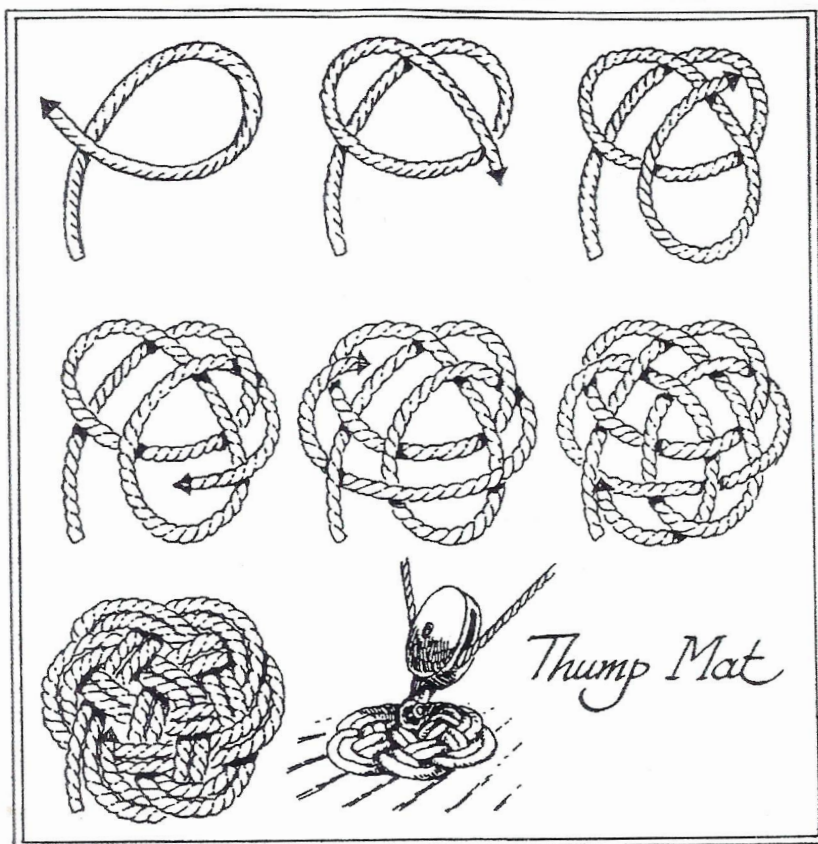
Friday, June 23<sup>rd</sup> is the date of our Forth Annual General Meeting, to take place in the Brass Room of the Los Angeles Maritime Museum at 7:00 PM. Members will be asked to participate in the election of Branch officers and discuss the future direction of the PAB. To be able to vote, each member must be currently paid up on dues. The treasurer, Lindsey Philpott, requests all members who haven't already sent in their dues payments to please do so promptly.

✽

Long before our own *Lots of Knots* display here in Southern California, the first gathering of Guild members in North America was the **First Annual Pacific Northwest Section Picnic**. It was all the idea of Eric Will and Dennis Armstrong. All the knot tyers from the Washington and Oregon state area where invited to come and "swap stories, tie knots and have fun."

It took place on Sunday, August 29<sup>th</sup> 1993 at Eric's farm on Whidbey Island. The knot tyers who attended where: David Armstrong, Don Rempe, Larry Stiles, Dr. Rocky Gann, Bob Schwartz and Eric Will. Everyone gathered at the Great Leap Forward Boatworks for the picnic. "The weather was delightful... we ate freshly-dug clams and roasted sweet corn, tied knots and told stories, some of which might have even been true."

[The pictures of this event where passed on to me by PAB member Bob Schwartz and I hope the copies do them justice.]



Don Rempe





R. Gann - D. Armstrongs - L. Stiles - E. Will - D. Remppe - B. Schwartz



Rob Schwartz - Dr. Rocky E. Gann - Dennis Armstrongs



Larry Stiles



## Nobody Knows You When Your Down and Out

Stephen Arnold of New Jersey posted a note one day on Dan Callahan's Internet site, *The Knot Board*, wondering if anyone would be interested in a story about Raoul Graumont. My curiosity was instantly peaked, so I emailed him back to see what he had to say. A correspondence started back and forth over the next few weeks and here is the gist of his story:

I was working at the Spindletop Restaurant

in Wayne, New Jersey. I was seventeen and it was my first job. Dishwashing, busing dishes, etc. The year was 1971.

While taking a break one night, I saw an old man smoking a hand rolled cigarette. I thought that was a scream because, back then, it looked a lot like a joint. He always had a piece of tobacco stuck somewhere on his mouth. He looked to be about sixty years of age. A beret gave him something of a French look.

I sat down next to him and he told some tall tales of living in Argentina, working on the Pampas as a gaucho. Then he said that he could tie some 50,000 knots (or some such outlandish number). He claimed to have lectured about knots aboard the ships of all the major navies of the world.

I thought him an interesting character and all but I hardly believed him.

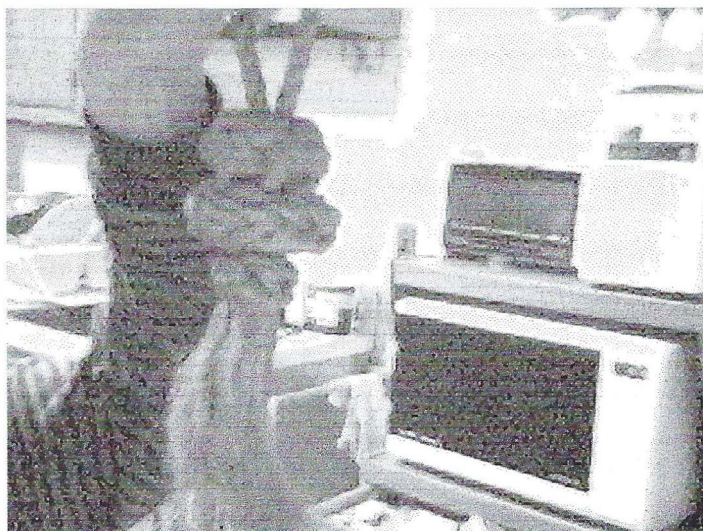
He said his name was Raoul Graumont and he had published over fifty books. Here was something I could check out, so I went to the library and looked for his name in Books in Print. Sure enough, there was his name followed by a whole list of knot tying books. I even found one of his books on the shelf and saw a young picture of him.

The next night I worked, he showed up with a beautiful knot he called a "Bird of Paradise." He said it was a comb hanger. He tried to give it to a Colombian fellow that worked there, but he saw no interest in the fellow's face. He gave it to me and I still have it. Raoul said he was down on his luck and was working as a dishwasher in the meantime. I asked him about his royalties and he said he had somehow lost the rights to his books (not that they were bestsellers). He looked to me as if he was really down and out. Being a self-absorbed teenager, I lost

contact with him and that's the end of the story.

Have you heard of him? Is he as legendary as he said he was? Please let me know!"

[If the photo comes out unclear, to the curious, the "Bird of Paradise" mentioned above looks like Figure 1, Plate 316, Page 593 in the *Encyclopedia* - Ed]



Knots are more or less complex, according to the purpose for which they are to be used; not only is it necessary to study their various interlockings, but also their especial uses. A knowledge of the materials of which cordage is composed is also essential, as in the various combinations, such as splicing, the work has to be tempered in the manner best fitted to the description of cordage used, as it often occurs that the operator has to 'unlay' and 'lay up' again for the various combinations in which Knots are necessary."

"Tom Bowling"  
*The Book of Knots*

### Branch Bits

**Tom Mortell** of California sent this in for your knotting interest: "There are two Hunter's Bend. They are a right and left handed pair. If, after starting with the strands parallel, the twist is made to produce the left handed turn, as shown in ABOK 1425A, then the knot is right handed.

I call this an enantiomorphic pair. A simple example is the right and left hand Overhand Knots.

**Sam Lanham** of Texas had these added comments about his article, *The Reep Rope*, from KN #21: "I just got it and I am astounded! I had no idea you would make me a front page story. I deeply appreciate this. And I am speechless—a rare occurrence for a former preacher, teacher and lawyer.

On the matter of protecting the rope and the knots, I have decided to have the rope coated with polyurethane. I have found a light, glossy, water-based poly that is infused with a UV protectant. I've put it on some ropes around here and at least for now (4-5 months) there is no diminishing of color or damage from the weather. When we mounted the rope and started pulling on it, one or two of the small minister's Turk's Heads began to loosen. They're 1.4mm nylon and only three leads. The rope action did this. I got some poly from a local hardware store and, after gluing the ends, applied it to solidify the TH's. So I ordered some of the better poly and had it shipped to the church where the bell ringer/handyman will coat the rope. It couldn't have been done until the rope was in California anyway because the added stiffness would have made shipping difficult, if not impossible. I should have gone early enough to coat it myself after I got there. Live and learn."

The article by **Bob Solon** in KN #21, *Fids: A View From the Great North Coast*, has caused some comments from these other fid makers:

**Terry Ridings** of Canada had this to say: "Everything Robert says is valid, but it does tend to create a "mystique" around the whole subject and this is what bothers me. As a teacher, I have a strong belief in making things available and encouraging people to try.

From my own experience of working with Lignum Vitae, yes, it does come with a wax covering, but after making what must be dozens of fids I have never had one "check" (split) after being made. By way of a qualifying statement, I don't live in an overheated apartment... perhaps there is a problem with that lifestyle?

Tools are a tactile experience; the joy of making your own is that it is both a part of you and is shaped to fit your hand. I do have a wood turning lathe but never, ever, use it for making fids. One reason is that Lignum Vitae is extremely hard and very tough on conventional woodworking tools. The main reason, though, is that I enjoy the tactile experience of a not perfectly round tool.

My fids look round until you pick them up... then they become an experience! How do I get to that state? Saw a rough shape (a band-saw certainly helps but it is not essential, for years I hand cut them), then you use a Surform tool (this is a kind of cheese-grater type of file available from the hardware store) to remove all the rough edges and establish the final shape. Follow this with 60/120/240/600 grit (dry) sandpapers and that is all you need other than an old shirt to shine it up.

Lignum Vitae—the "Wood of Life," a name given to it by the early Spanish. It was ground up and used as a cure for Syphilis - interestingly a pile of sawdust left on the bench turns green in quite a short time and even the polished fid has a green hue if caught in the right light...a natural antibiotic?

Technical note: for very small fids, ¼" (6mm) diameter (I call these Bodkins), I use bone as it has more flexibility and strength than wood. Many years ago I was given a couple of rib bones from a Pilot Whale that had washed up on shore in Newfoundland... long since gone thanks to an ex-landlord who didn't share my enthusiasm for natural things natural (I stored them on the roof because of the smell).

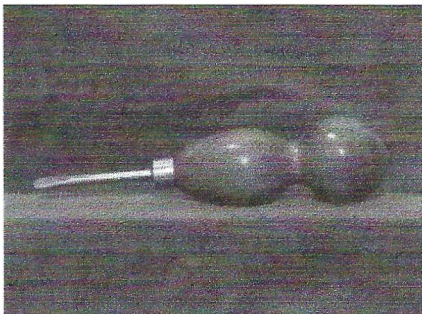
**Wayne Lewis** of New Berlin, Texas is another fid maker who wrote this: "Of interest to me this month was an article by your member Mr. Robert Solon about fids. I guess we have fids and maybe tools in common. I enjoy the knot tying tools as



much as I do the tying of knots. I enjoy making knot tying tools a bunch.

I turned two fids today out of Mesquite. One is 10 inches and the other about 16 inches. I do not use wooden fids; I just like to make them. What I wanted to say was that if Mr. Solon has a problem obtaining Lignum Vitae have him contact me. I have a very good source for Lignum Vitae. It ain't cheap but it can be had. I have a lot of exotic wood cut-offs that I have had laying around the shop for years. I have finally found a use for them by making fids out of exotic woods. I hope to make at least one fid of each of the woods that I have left.

You might suggest to Mr. Solon that he try Osage Orange for his next fid project. It makes an awesome fid and it will rival Lignum Vitae for a beautiful finish."



### From the Mailbag

Captain Hap Heyden sent us this update before departing for his new billet: "Well, I'm finally off on life's great adventure. I fly to Oahu at 11:00 tomorrow morning to take command of the *Moana Wave*. It is a 210 foot research vessel with a full crew of about 32 people. It's a great looking ship from the faxes I've received. I should have about three weeks in the Islands and then aim the pointy end towards the West Coast, with rumored stops in Southern California, Astoria and then on to Yokohama. It seems like anything can change at any time with these turkeys. I believe he changes his mind more than his underwear. It's a beautiful place, but I'm going into hell. It appears that one of the managers during the transition decided he needed a bigger allowance to the tune of thousands of dollars in padded boat expenses. He's been caught and it isn't pretty. So I get to straighten out the rat's nest and document what I can, then oversee getting the vessel out of dry dock and ready for departure."

### A New Knot?

Art Tobin of Canada addressed his letter to "Mr. Raoul Graumont or successor" and, through various twists and turns, it ended up coming to me. His claims are quite interesting: "I think I have invented a new knot. But maybe that's just my ignorance— quite surprising if some tar hasn't already thought of this twist, maybe centuries ago. Apart from Boy Scout knots and the occasional rolling hitch, my knowledge of knots is pretty dim. I would like to call this knot the *Mary Tobin Splice* in honor of all sea-going Irishmen (her brother was one), since I first tied it on 26 November 1999, my dear Ma's 99<sup>th</sup> birthday. She finished her journey on earth at the end of February '44, which reminds me to say:

"Lord have mercy on the sick and dying, God have mercy on the dead and gone."

That's an Irish saying: I'm Irish and I said it.

Since I'm a lousy artist to begin with, I thought it would be the best way just to show you the steps. This is the way to tie the *Mary Tobin Splice*:

$\alpha$  – Crown knot and first tuck

$\beta$  – Back under next tuck

$\chi$  – Take a round turn back over the same strand, finishing inside the rope

$\delta$  – Trim ends with a sharp knife

$\epsilon$  – Drop of glue will do to hold yarns together, or whip rope to prevent fraying

It seems to work best if you hold the strand twixt finger and thumb, then turn the whole knot in the opposite direction and pull taut every step of the way.

A picture is worth 1,000 words, but if even with a magnifying glass you can't be sure if the working part goes over or under the standing part, it may be worth 750!"

