

Knot



News

INTERNATIONAL GUILD OF KNOT TYERS - PACIFIC AMERICAS BRANCH

June 2001

Joseph Schmidbauer-Editor

Issue #27

From the Ditty Bag:

A Loop Buttoner

by Roy Chapman

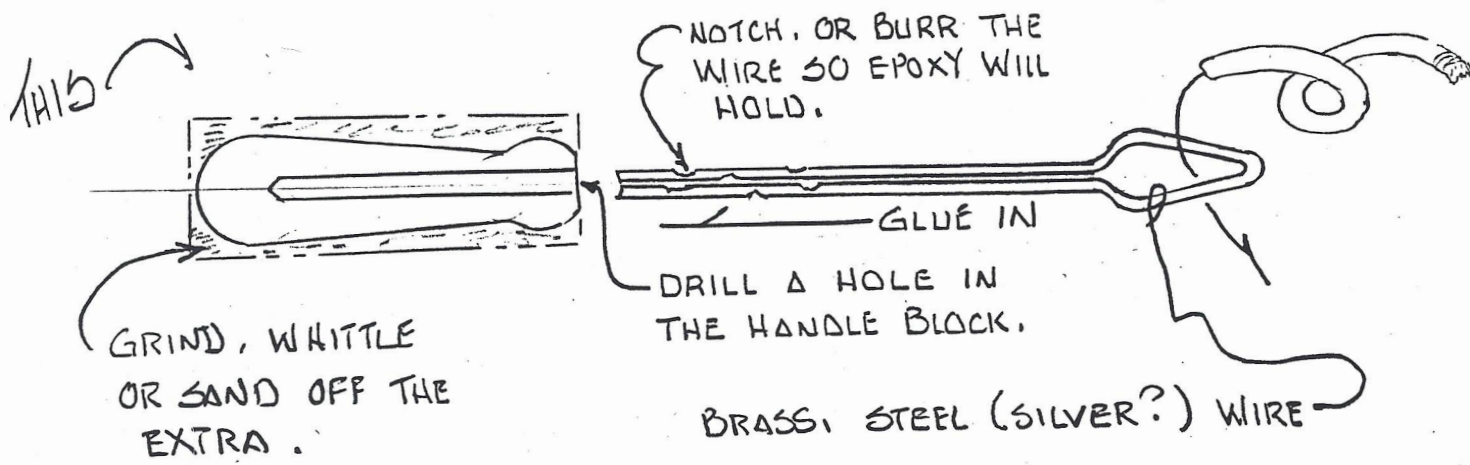
Have you thought about making some of the tools for our hobby? Fortunately I grew up thinking I could do anything so, when confronted with a need for knotting tools and finding no source, I made my own.

How frustrating we all find it when the instructions for making something start out with: "First, take an ordinary left-handed low-flaring zincfeldt plate reamer..." We don't do that to you.

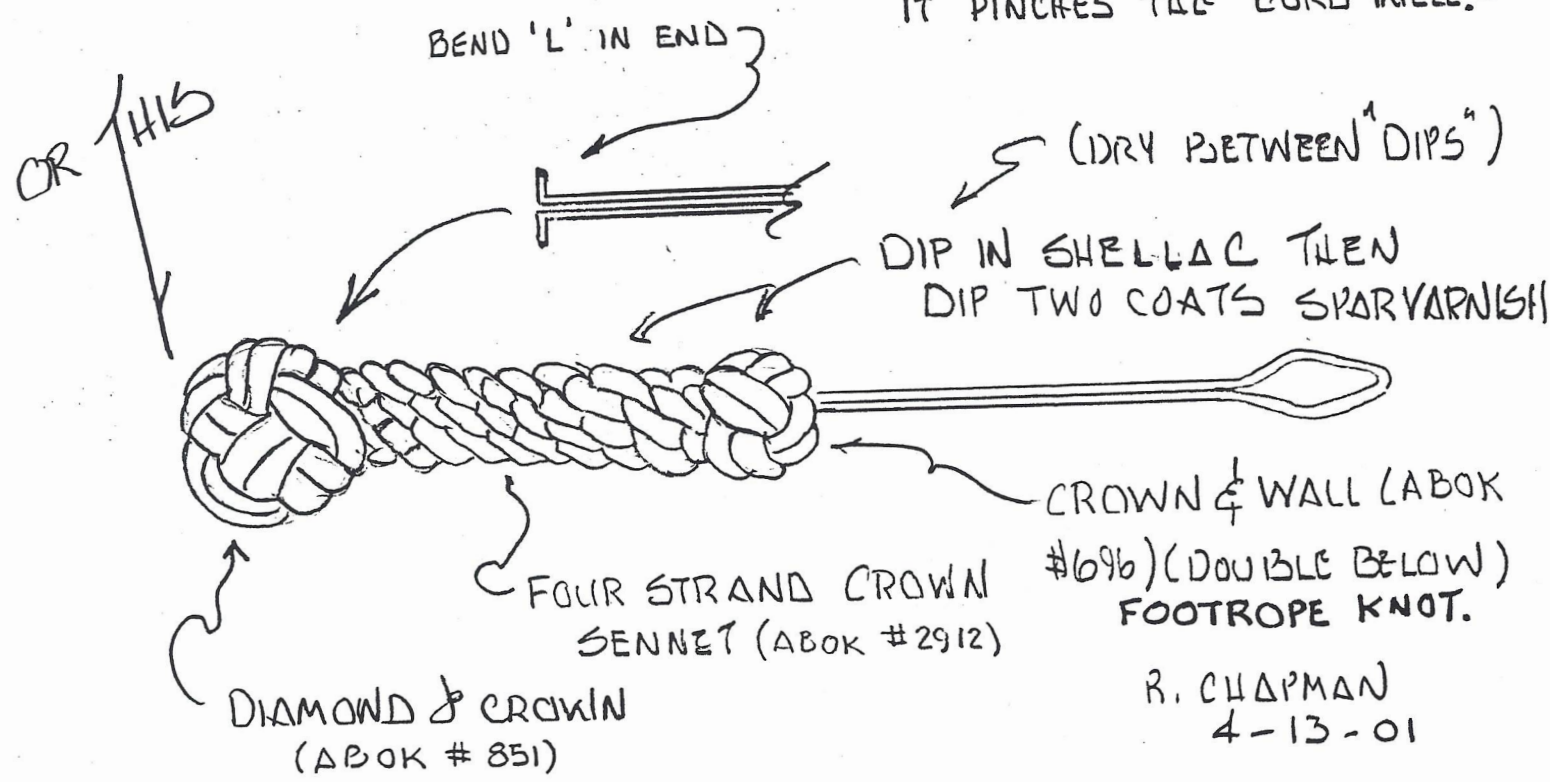
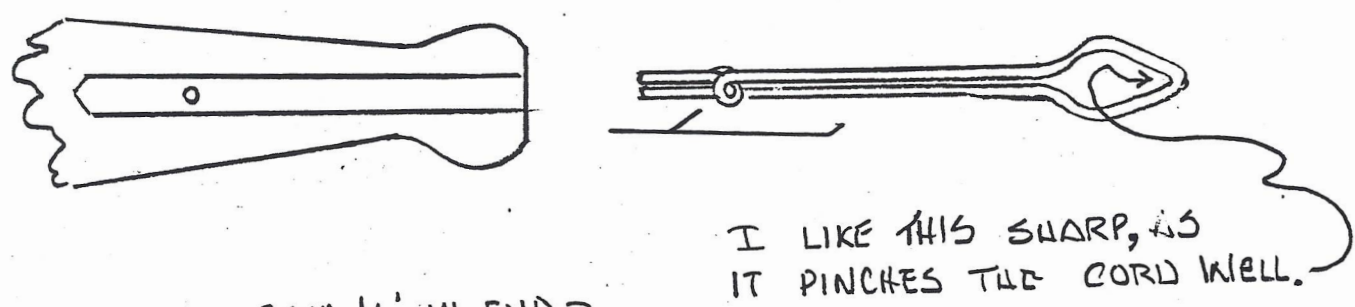
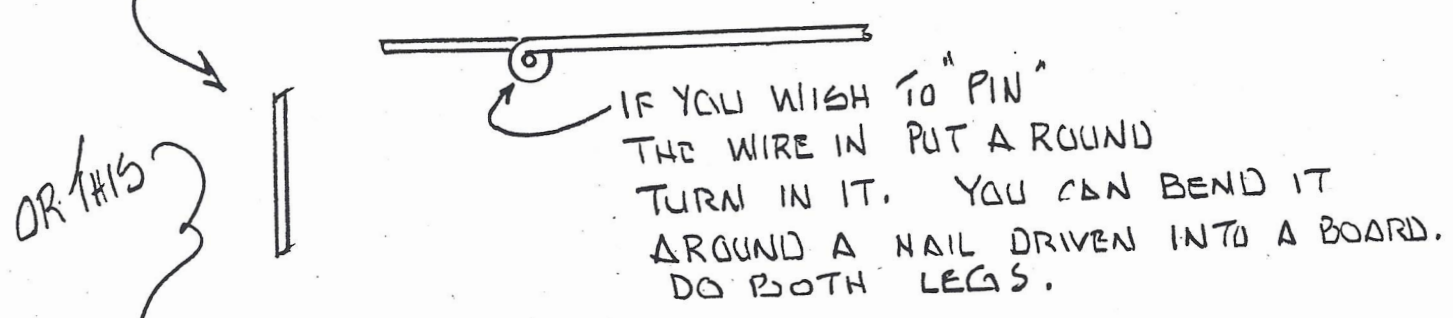
The *loop buttoner* is one of the handiest little tools that I use. I have several sizes and you should too. You will use it to draw the working ends through complex button knots, Turks Heads and multi-strand lanyard knots. Saves you a bushel of frustration. I have used one to needle hitch a bottle with cord larger than I had a needle for. I use a very small one to splice laid line on models and miniatures. When you need a loop buttoner almost nothing else will do as nicely.



Here is how to make one: First, take an ordinary left-handed low-flaring zincfeldt plate reamer and..." Oops, said I wouldn't. Look at the sketches. Then decide how big a buttoner you need. If you are working in 550 cord you might want one with 1/4" or 5/16" and about 3" or 4" of wire beyond the handle. If you work in 2mm cord you might want an eye opening of 4mm or 5mm. The eye should be big enough to easily thread your working cord end through but small enough to pass the tool through the knot in progress without force. The wire should be long enough to not distort the knot as you work. The wire needs to be stiff enough to not deform in use but soft enough to work with while you make your tool. Copper electrical wire is too soft, spring steel too hard (although a heavy guitar string or piano string can be good). It should be thin enough to make a compact tool and thick enough to be stiff. This isn't rocket science and about anything no thicker than a wire coat hanger will work nicely. Brass is pretty. The handle can be wood, bone, ivory, ceramic (why not something "sculpty"?), metal or worked up knots or ... plastic (can't imagine why you would want plastic but...) or something "recycled". I made a nice "pocket" loop buttoner using an old fountain pen... never guessing what that ol' Esterbrook would be worth today. You can drill a hole, burn a hole, dare I say, "ream" a hole? Perhaps your "recycled" handle is already hollow. It really is easiest to epoxy the wire into the handle, no matter how you made the hole, but if you wish to make it "old time" then follow the diagram and pin it into the handle. You can then (any of the following, or combination thereof): whittle, turn, file, sand or grind your handle to a comfortable shape. Please oh please, add a nice Turks Head where



MAKE THE PIN TOO LONG AND FILE IT OFF AFTER IT IS IN.



R. CHAPMAN
4-13-01

the wire enters a handle. Of course you could make the handle of cord or hitch it all over... let your imagination play.

From the Secretary

A few issues back I suggested that PAB members could use this newsletter to share their knowledge of knots, knotting and knotting tools. I have been told that you should be careful for what you pray for because Mr. Roy Chapman of Marblemount, Washington has inundated me with a flood of great articles for the *Knot News*. A number of them will appear in this issue and there is enough left over for a number of future issues. Mr. Chapman has agreed to have two bylines for his writing. *From The Ditty Bag* will feature knotting tools and how to make them. The Loop Buttoner is the first in this series, soon to be followed by the Seam Rubber, the Thimble and the Needle Case. Others will be sure to follow from the very talented typewriter of Roy Chapman.

He also will also be doing an occasional piece about the philosophy and/or humor of knotting under the title of *Thinking of Knotting....*

I also want to thank Mr. Robert Solon for his many letters, both published and unpublished, that he has sent my way. His irreverence and good humor always manages to brighten my day and yours too I hope.

This doesn't let you other knot tyers off the hook by any means! Your contributions are always welcome at any time. So here is another issue of *Knot News* and many thanks again to Roy and Bob for helping to fill these empty pages.



I want to remind everyone once again that my postal zip code has changed to 92880. Please correct your address books so I can continue getting your correspondence. Also note that if you, as a member of the PAB, wish to continue receiving the *Knot News*; please remember to send in your dues according to the schedule published in the last issue. If by January 1, 2002 I don't receive your dues, I shall consider your membership lapsed and you will no longer receive its benefits.

From the Mailbag

The Great **Bob Solon** of Ohio wrote this interesting letter: "Late this morning (0830) I drove about 25 miles southwest of Toledo, down the muddy Maumee River, to the Isaac Ludwig Mill. The mill is right across the river from

Grand Rapids, Ohio. As I mentioned before, I do all the rope work (not that there's all the much) at the Providence Park.

The park is located on the old Miami & Erie Canal, part of the trans-Ohio canal system that opened up The Great North West Territory (yes, Virginia, that was *Ohio*, just after the War of 1812). About a mile and a half of the canal has been restored along with Lock #44 which is adjacent to the Isaac Ludwig Mill. At this point the upper canal is about 12 feet above the adjacent Maumee River. The drop in Lock #44 is about 4 feet. The MetroPark constructed a replica of a state boat that is 65 feet long. A pair of mules in tandem supplies the power, just like the old days. Toledo to Cincinnati in six days and five nights of continuous travel, under less than ideal conditions.

The rope needs of a canal boat are simple. A tow rope. Some lines for tying up. Initially the lines were made from manila. That didn't last long. The boat crew didn't know how (or refused) to take care of manila and the towpath is covered with gravel, which makes it the world's longest piece of sandpaper. The name of the solution is Promila. It is polypropylene that is dyed tan to make it look like manila.

This all started about seven years ago when I first met Miss Madonna. She had just started working at Providence MetroPark and told me I just *had* to see the canal boat. It's pretty neat, even though she gushed about it. While cruising down the canal at a stately 3 mph, I noticed that all the ropes were whipped with electrical tape. I opined that I was not aware that electrical tape existed in 1880. She was not amused. She was stated in unequivocal terms that if I was so *smart* why didn't I *do* something about it. I've been volunteering ever since.

Today's jobs were simple; four eye splices in two lines. Working with Promila is not difficult. It is much easier on the hands than manila but in some way just isn't right. (For you fid freaks, my preferred fid for Promila has a .625 taper.) It doesn't grab the same as manila and I like to put in an extra tuck in my eye splices. Other than that it works well and is not subject to the rot and mildew that can crop up with the improper use of manila. For show, however, I prefer manila."



Alex Kleider of California had these few comments to make: "There hasn't been much time for leisurely knotting but I do pay

attention to every piece of cordage I happen to notice.

Just a couple of weeks ago I was with a friend who used to be in the tree business. We were trying to drag a madrone log out of a creek so that I could mill it to use as a mantle. We needed a higher vantage point so he volunteered to set a block in a nearby tree. The whole thing pulled out. I subsequently discovered that he used a bowline as a loop around the tree and the shackle, so no surprise that the thing pulled out (no tension on the line itself!) It was a surprise to me that a man who uses rope professionally didn't understand the difference between a loop and a binding knot.

I had never before considered what happens when a bowline is pulled open while the line is slack: it simply capsizes and slips open."



Reverend Thomas Johnson of

California kindly wrote this letter: "I have developed combinations of sailors knots which would work well with crystals. The trick is to make something that looks good small and is not too hard to tie. In classes I have taught, I encourage people to start practicing with larger cord and work their way down. I started getting ideas when I saw normal crystal knotting, where the crystal is grooved and the cord is indiscriminately wrapped around it, looking quite primitive. I wanted a more refined look, hence what I came up with. I also dabble in oriental knotting and I have come up with some original allegorical forms."

Branch Bits

Terry Ridings of British Columbia writes: "Louie Bartos' article *The Fid-Revisited* (KN #26) is interesting and had me off measuring fids and he so rightly says the shape is a personal call.

Let me introduce another consideration to what makes a good fid.

Splicing rope is one job and sometimes involves working in the rigging where tools have to be compact and functional. But what of other uses? For fender making I use two fids. One is 19" long and 1.3" in diameter. The other, which is for snugging things down, fits nicely in the hand and has approximately the same taper, but is 9" long with a diameter of 0.88" with a very blunt point.

Most of my fids have about the same taper which suit my requirements for fancywork be it small or large, but that isn't always the case.

My choice is to work in natural fibers but not long ago I had a commission for a 12ft by 12ft rope net in polyester and discovered very quickly that a Swedish Fid was very much more suited to the soft synthetic fiber than traditional tools.

With fancywork one generally doesn't want to disturb things too much and the long thin fids allow a passage through several tucks not much larger than the working end of the cord. Going back to rope fenders for a moment, the long fid also allows working without skinning knuckles during contact with the cordage that tends to be rather abrasive.

One other comment on the taper is that I don't use a linear taper, an example is the 19" fid above where the first 4" of the point curves in (the first 0.5" even more so) – without this the fid would be several inches longer and have a very delicate point. In a situation like this the taper calculation doesn't apply.

I would be interested to hear Louie's, and others, opinions about fid points."



Bob Solon of Ohio added this about the article: "Hats aloft for Louie Bartos for *The Fid – Revisited* in the April 2001 issue. I wish I had thought to apply something like the scientific method to a tool that is totally dependant (in my obviously unbiased opinion) on form, feel and eye of the beholder.

At first reading I was sure the author was full of prunes. Then I consulted Brother Ashley (1944 edition, pages 19, 20 and the pictures adjacent to page 21.) Hmm. Maybe that Bartos guy wasn't sniffing glue up in his sail loft after all. Louie says that the radius of the taper should be .075" per inch. Therefore a fid 10 inches long should be 1.5 inches in diameter.

Bartos tested 50 fids. (I wish I HAD 50 fids! Forget about the tests!) The only constant in all his tests was that he used "half-inch, three-strand manila with a hard twist." Now here is where I question his results. Fids with a slight taper tend to get too long and cumbersome when working with larger rope. Last summer while working with new, 2" diameter manila with a very hard twist, I found that the best fid for the job had approximately a .167" taper. I broke one thin fid trying to lever open the strands. (Yes, I left my marlingspike at home.) A 12" fid would have about a 4" base. I put the base on my hip and used both hands to twist against the lay and to pull the rope on to it. Rope like this almost always snaps back into

shape. In this case it was easy to get the rope off of the relatively short fid and still have a workable hole. A 4" fid with a .075" taper would have to be 26.7 inches long. Too long, I believe, for the job.

I'll tell you what I really like about Louie. He writes a disclaimer that would make a Chicago attorney green with envy. To hear him talk, it ain't scientific and it's a crude study. But it did hold your interest and didn't he make you think? What does make a good fid? I'm going to get out the tape measure and calipers and check mine out. That Bartos guy just might be onto something."



PAB members **Tillie Easton** and **Yvonne Chang** had their moment of fame when they both appeared on the TV program *Life and Times*, on channel 28 KCET out of Los Angeles. On April 4th they did a six-minute segment that showed a display of their work along with a short discussion of Chinese Knotting.

They were "discovered" while doing a demonstration at the Museum of Flying. Why were they at a Museum of Flying? That day they were helping to honor a 96-year-old Chinese-American woman aviator. It was in collaboration with the Pacific Asia Museum to put on an exhibit of Chinese culture to honor this woman's heritage. Tillie and Yvonne caught the eye of Susan Hag, an associate producer of KCET. She got the boss's blessing and the rest (as they say) is history.

They didn't get to mention the Guild but hopefully it did pique some people's interest enough to want start in with knotting!



Dan Callahan of Alaska has been having some trouble with his web pages. The "Homepages.go.com" have gone under, taking with it his "Knotical News & Events", "Knotical Links", Knotical Auctions I & II, and "Fancy Knots From Around The World."

Happily, Dan has already set up new pages and is working to update everything as soon as he can. The addresses are:

<http://www.geocities.com/knot-tyer/world.html>
http://www.geocities.com/knot_tyer/news.html
http://www.geocities.com/knot_tyer/links.html
http://www.geocities.com/knot_tyer/ebay.html
http://www.geocities.com/knot_tyer/yahoo.html

Branch Library

The PAB Library has been enlarged again with more generous contributions:

Knots: A Pocket Companion

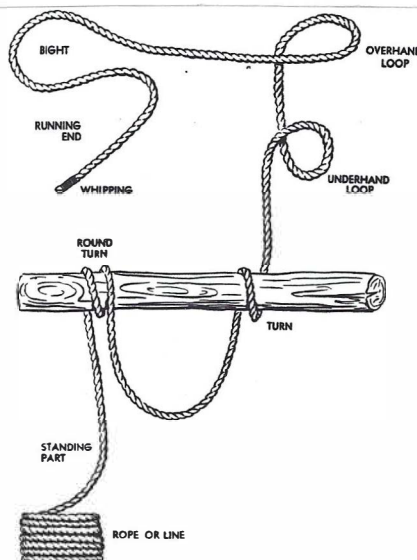
Quantum Book; 1999 was donated by **Lindsey Philpott.**

The Young Sea Officer's Sheet Anchor by Darcy Lever.

Dover Publications; 1998 reprint of 1819 edition

Practical Knots and Ropework by Percy Blandford

Tab Books; 1980 were donated by **Joe Schmidbauer**



Thinking about Knotting...

By Roy Chapman

A friend of mine, not a knotter, is going on an "adventure tour", intending to fly to England, buy a BMW R80GS (1981 preferred) and riding through Europe and North Africa for 60 days. I don't have his guts, but I have more than 500,000 motorcycle miles behind me so have been giving free advice (worth every penny of it, too). So Dave asked, "What knots should I learn for my trip?" Now, there is a leading question!

Easy to tie, easy to remember, easy to untie, what? It seemed like a simple request, but the more I thought about it the harder it got! Here is my list: 1) a fixed loop — Bowline; 2) a bend — Sheet Bend (same form as the bowline so Dave has to learn only one knot to get two); 3) an adjustable loop — Midshipman's Hitch; 4) a loop on a bight — Lineman's Loop [ABOK

#1053]; 5) a choking loop — Timber Hitch; 6) a general purpose crossing / post hitch / binding knot — Clove Hitch; 7) hose clamp / binding knot/ one step beyond duct tape — Constrictor.

What do you think? I tried to think of all the little problems that 550 cord and a good knot might solve and this is the best I can do. One could jury rig a clutch cable, splint a leg or lash on a jerry can of petrol, I guess.

⌘

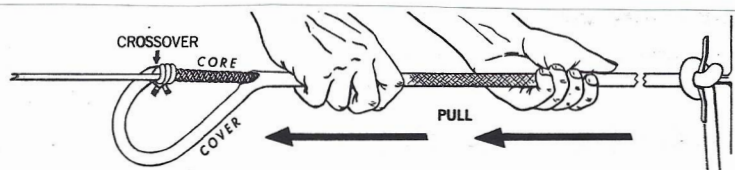
It's not what you tie; it's how you tie it:

The trouble with knot boards (and some knot books and some written instructions) is that you can't see how to move your hands and pick up the line or strands. The ABOK does an excellent job. Our own Guild members, in *Knotting Matters* and *Knot News*, do an excellent job as well. I recently had an occasion to teach a non-knotting adult a few basic knots. I made samples of each knot to have and hold, copies of the ABOK to read and re-read and give "hands on" instruction. Through this I have come to realize that it takes more than a little effort for the hands to become "fluent" in the language of knotting. Perhaps others among us, who have tied knots for 30 or 40 years, forget just how smoothly we handle cord and line. The novice may be dominated, intimidated or discouraged just by the very act of watching us tie a bowline. Children are far less fragile students than adults, who may conclude that they are all thumbs and give up. Here is what I learned:

Don't show off, it intimidates. Have your student positioned behind and to the side so that they can see the work from your perspective, not across from you. Move your hands veryyyy slowly. Repeat the knot at least 6 times and have the novice repeat it 6 or more times. Don't talk when you tie the knot unless you want the student to repeat that litany in their heads as they tie the knot. Knotting is a tactile skill, not a verbal one. Don't try to teach it all on one day. Come back to the work a few days later and again a few days after that. Remind them that it took them a long time to learn to walk or use a fork... new skills take time. Don't say things like, "It's really very simple." For the adult who can't "get it" may conclude that they are pretty slow and unable to grasp something so "simple". Many people don't do anything like knotting in their daily lives and don't think in three dimensions. They really don't "see" the difference between a granny and a square knot or that there can be

two different overhand knots, a right and a left (by the way, does anyone know a universal name for a "left handed overhand knot"?).

We (of the gray beard age) don't learn very quickly either and if you doubt that, go take square dance lessons!



This is the knot variation I want to share with others. I never would have thought of it if the original ABOK had not had an illustration error in diagram A of knot #788, page 141. That error caused me to tie and retie and think a lot about this little knot. I was doubling the original knot in several different ways when I thought of doing this. My variation forms a simple lanyard, with a small loop for the pendant and a long loop for a necklace.

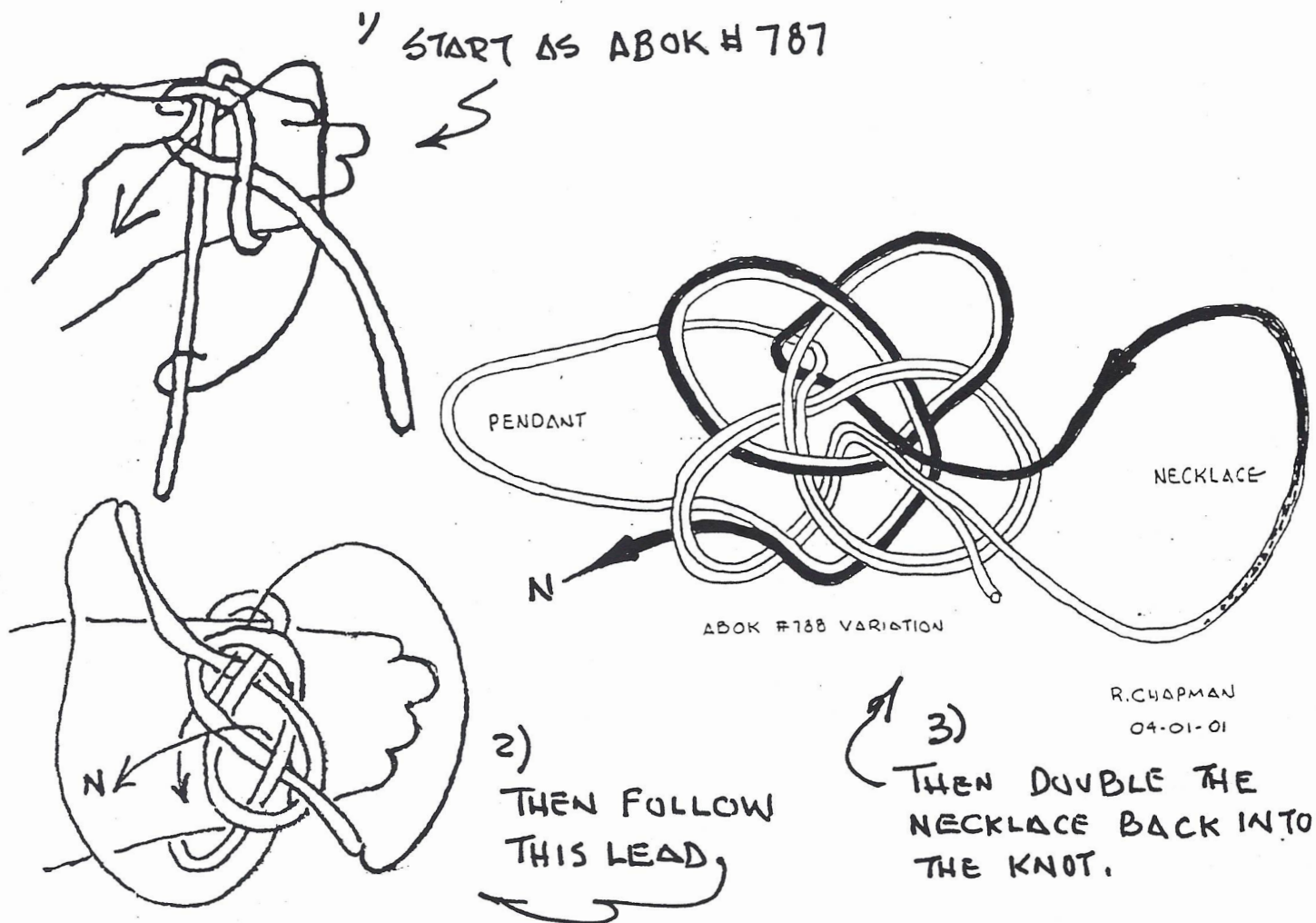
I have tied and given away hundreds of these and have ones for my own use which have lasted through hard life for 40 years. If worked tightly they never come untied.

I like that it is the same basic diagram as the IGKT logo (which I had never seen in 1961 when I tied this) and the 3Lx4B Turks Head.

Six feet of Para cord will make a dandy necklace lanyard, just right for a bosun's pipe or compass or what have you. Remember, when you have a length of 550 Para cord around your neck, be darned careful to not get it hung up or you could be hanged by it. When going aloft I "ring hitch" my lanyard to my belt or a buttonhole. I also learned the hard way that an open knife should have it's lanyard hitched to the wrist of the hand using the knife, not anywhere else, for as your hand extends beyond the lanyard's scope the tethered knife slides through your grip with the greatest of ease. Tied in 1/4" tarred hemp this knot makes n elegantly simple marlinespike lanyard too. Tied in "something pretty" it holds a locket or pendant for my wife's ornamentation without overpowering the bauble.

Knife Lanyard Knot, ABOK #788, Double Variation, MK1

Start as #787, in my diagram #1. Double one half of the knot, as per my diagram #2, not as in ABOK. Form a "necklace loop" from one end. Double the necklace end back into the knot to double the second side as in my diagram #3. Fair the knot. Work it tight, as you would any bulky knot. Finally trim the ends very short and they will almost jump out of sight into the knot. I thrust them out of sight with my pricker if they won't "jump". The finished knot will look just like the illustration of #788 but where Mr. Ashley shows the ends descending you will have a lovely single strand necklace descending.



PAB Meeting Schedule

Friday, June 29th - Annual General Meeting

Saturday, June 30th - Knot Demonstration

Los Angeles Maritime Museum

San Pedro, California

For Information call Lindsey Philpott

July and August - No Meetings

Monthly Meeting Schedule Fall 2001

Second Tuesday of the Month - 7:00 to 9:00

Los Angeles Maritime Institute

San Pedro, California

September 11th

October 9th

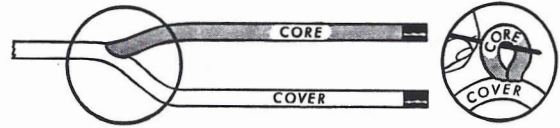
November 13th

December 11th

The Samson splicing principle over simplified is this:

**"COVER GOES INTO CORE
and
CORE GOES INTO COVER"**

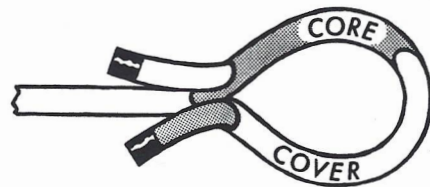
1.



2.



3.



Knot News
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