Knot News

International Guild of Knot Tyers – Pacific Americas Branch

May 2010 Joseph Schmidbauer- Editor **ISSN 1554-1843** **Issue # 79**

The Simple Things

Mike "Hooey" Storch

Prologue

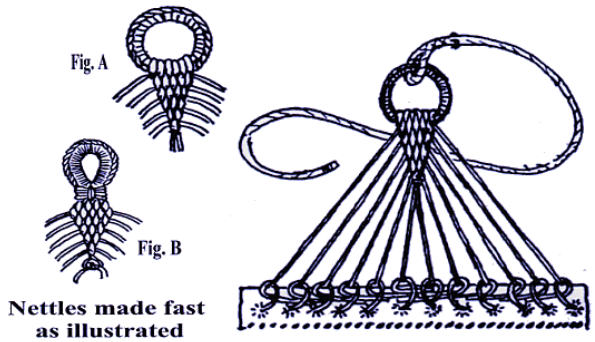
The following are excerpts from articles I wrote 20 years ago – the focus is on nautical hammocks and duffel bags – I used them continuously then, and still use them regularly now. Both items came to me via military surplus. I have had each for about 35 years now – the hammock has had its lanyards and clews replaced – and once I had to repair where a brass grommet wore out and pulled loose of the canvas. With palm and needle I sewed a new grommet in its place. The duffel bag took a tear in its bottom and this too I repaired with palm and needle. Both these palm and needle repairs are near 25 years old and holding well. This reminds me of what I have known all along: sometimes it's the simple things that matter most.

The Duffel Bag

It wouldn't seem there would be much to say about so simple an item as a duffel bag – but there are a surprising number of people using them incorrectly. Mostly I use mine for clothing, and the one that gets the most use is the one for laundry – it gets packed and unpacked once a week. Yes, there is a correct way to pack your clean clothing into a duffel bag without putting wrinkles into everything – not difficult at all – just don't fold your clothing as you would in a suitcase or footlocker. The duffel isn't designed that way – the trick is to roll each item and then pack it in the bag against the next rolled item. If done this way, everything will unroll neatly – otherwise the trip home from the laundry will have etched wrinkles into everything that will last till the next washing.

The Canvas Hammock

What could be more traditional than a canvas (Navy) hammock? They had their place on the tall ships of a bygone era, and they still serve a purpose – I've used mine on deck and also ashore for a most restful night's sleep. String or rope hammocks have a place too, but they are just not suited for long term serious use like canvas is – especially on a tall ship where space is a concern, as well as the pitch and roll of the ship. Over the years I have learned a trick or two about getting the most out of a canvas hammock, and with a little patience and practice you can easily double your pleasure in using one. A few precautions first, and then we'll get on to slinging one – canvas is not a synthetic fabric and should not be stowed wet or it will rot. Check too if the lanyards or clews are showing any rot or signs of excessive wear.



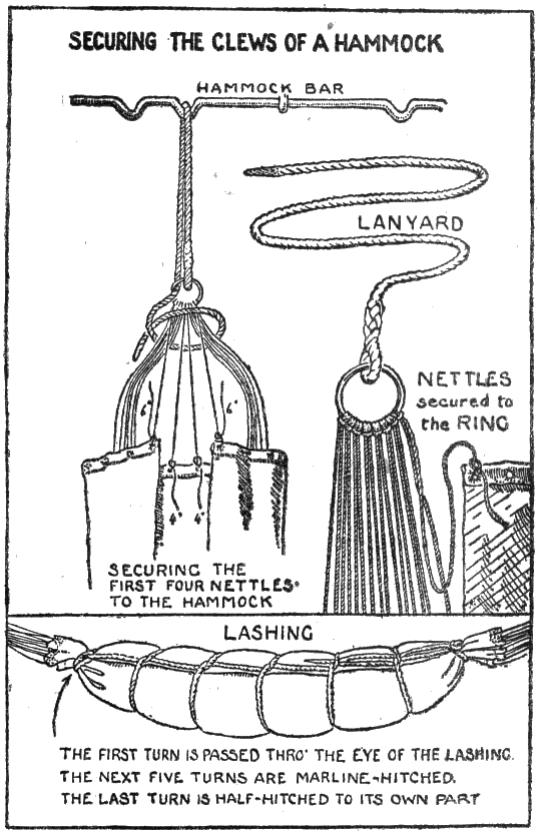
Nettles made fast as illustrated

In slinging the hammock, there are two adjustments to consider: the long one (tension) and the wide one – the tension is the easier and is adjusted by the lanyards to however tight or slack you want your hammock to be. A few tries and you will know what works for you. For sleep I prefer tighter – for sitting and reading I prefer a bit of sag – it's personal.

The other adjustment is a little harder to do, but it only has to be done once. The outer strings in the clews can be tightened or loosened and the results will be how snug the hammock will hold you in. Tighten the outers, and the sides will draw up and wrap around you like a sock – impossible to fall out of no matter how much pitch or roll you are experiencing. Loosen the outer few strings on both sides and the hammock will flatten like a leaf – a poor choice for sleeping.

Somewhere between these two you will find the adjustment that works best for you – just remember to tighten or loosen the outer few lines in ascending or descending tension in order to make the curve of the hammock a smooth roll.

On shore, there are other considerations – even if adjusted to the same lengthwise tension via the lanyards, the distance between trees will affect the hammocks tendency to "roll" or spin" – again, a try or two will show which trees are the correct distance apart for you.



The next consideration is the weather – nice to have cover, and with a little extra effort it can be done. Run a line taut between the same two trees as the hammock, but as high above it as you can reach – drape a tarp over the high line and stake out the corners. In wind or driving rain, move the stakes in a bit closer to the hammock for more protection – again, play with these adjustments and tensions to find out what works best for you.

I used this set-up on a gaff rigged schooner for six months, and had the best rest of the whole crew – I tied off to the main mast with one lanyard and out along the spar with the other. At day's end when we lowered the sails, I tied some sail out to the pin rails (belay pins) to form my cover. Of course not everyone has the same room on deck that I had to work with, but with a little improvisation you should be able to come up with a workable solution of your own.

All told, sometimes it's the simple things that make a difference…

The Making of a Rope Lamp

Dave Cook, Able Seaman

The idea for this lamp comes from Graumont and Hensel's *The Encyclopedia of Knots and Fancy Ropework*, Plate 281, Fig 381.

Using the basic directions on pages 514 & 516, plus much trial and error (and a whole lot of frustration), I managed to put together some nice lamps.

Fig. 1 – Start with a 14 inch length of 1/8 inch pipe threaded on one end and, using Constrictor Knots, seize seven 6 foot lengths of 1/4 inch manila line, for a distance of 2 ½ inches to the threaded end.

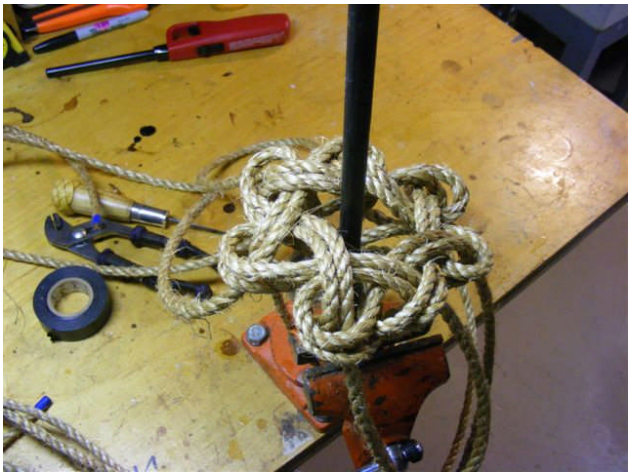


Fig. 2 – Next, tie a seven strand Star Knot…

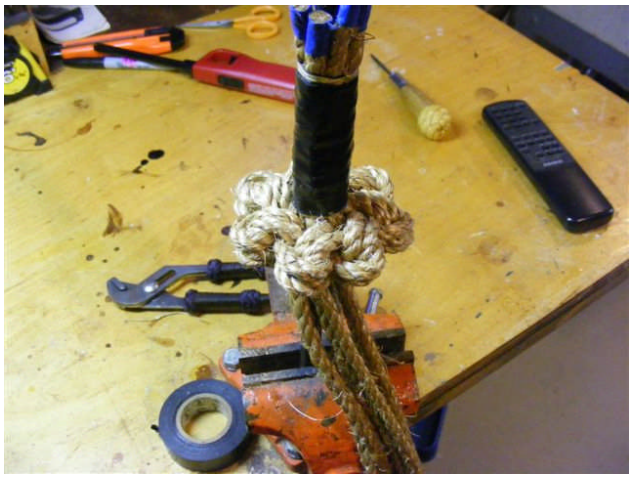


Fig. 3 …and work it tight.

Fig. 4 – Next, tie a single pass Diamond Knot and work it tight.

Fig. 5 – Next, tie a Matthew Walker Knot and work it tight.

Fig. 6 – Add another Matthew Walker Knot and a single pass Diamond Knot.

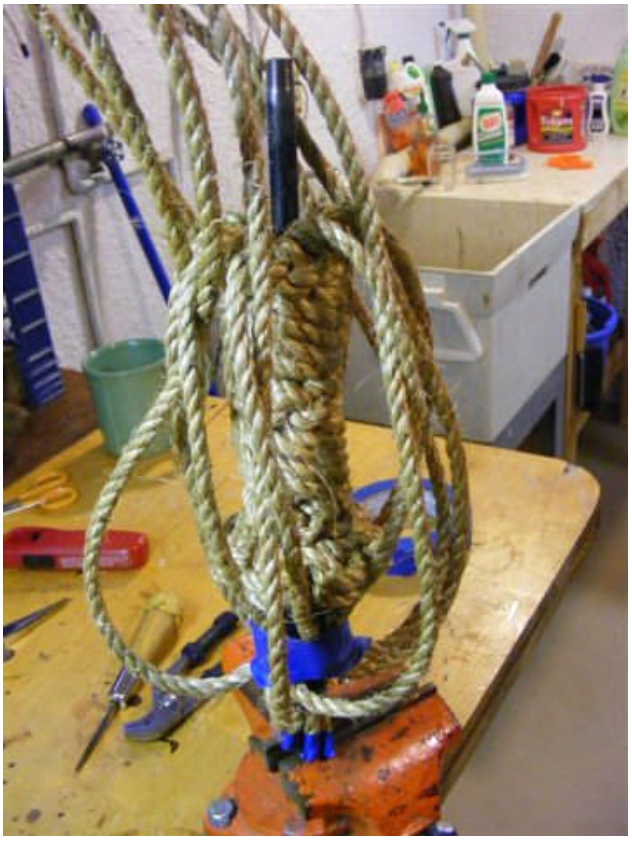


Fig. 7 – This shows the start of the next Diamond Knot that will have two passes.

Fig. 8 – The finished two pass Diamond Knot.

Fig. 9 – Next, tie a four pass Diamond Knot and carefully work it into a globe shape. This step can be frustrating. The bitter ends can then be tucked up into the inside of the knot or trimmed off once you have the desired shape.

At this point I take a propane torch and burn off the fuzz. Then I take a piece of scrap 1/4 inch wood about 5 inches square, with a 7/16 inch hole drilled in the center and insert the bottom of the pipe through the hole and clamp the pipe in a vice. By doing this you will be able to draw the knots up against each other by twisting the rope around the pipe. You just have to experiment with this step. Next I brush on a very generous coat of "water-based" polyurethane. This will raise up more fuzz that will have to be burned off once the finish dries. The final finish on the Manila will be multiple coats of oil-based polyurethane – whatever product you have on hand, or you can stick with the water-based product. Add additional coats until you get the desired finish. By starting with water-based polyurethane first you will end up with a much nicer finish. I do this on all my knot work that I want to use varnish on. It works well especially on nylon, either as a base before applying oil-based varnish or by itself. Once everything has dried and hardened up remove the lamp from the vice and scrap the piece of wood.

Next take a razor knife or blade and trim off the little bit of Manila above the Constrictor Knot. You should now be able to see the threads on the pipe.

Serve the neck from the threads to the Star Knot with whatever you choose. On this project I used #72 Nylon Seine Twine and applied a couple coats of water-based polyurethane. The serving here is decorated with two 3L x 8B Turk's Heads and a Napoleon Bend Turk's Head using #24 Nylon Seine Twine. Add a couple more coats of water polyurethane to all. I got the amber color on the Turk's Heads by brushing on a coat of Sikkins Cetol Marine Translucent Boat Finish.

I like to use a pull chain switch and I added a 3/8 inch wooden bead that I stained and then put on a 3L x 5B Turk's Head made of some waxed Nylon Twine I had, and then varnished it. The base for this lamp is a piece of oak, 5 inch square that I beveled on the table saw. Whatever you choose for a base you will probably need to trim off some of the excess 1/4 inch pipe before inserting it into the base. The finished lamp is 11 ½ inches tall from the bottom of the base to the top of the neck. I have made shorter ones by using different combinations of the single pass Diamond and Matthew Walker Knots. I have also used 1/4 inch Nylon Line. This requires 8 strands and makes a more compact product. If using Nylon, it should have a hard lay. A coat or two of Polycrylic and a couple of coats of good amber colored varnish produces a very nice finish on Nylon.

Dave Cook spent 23 1/2 years as a merchant seaman on the Great Lakes. He taught himself marlinspike seamanship to help pass away the spare time while on board ship. He fooled around making these lamps – his shipmates liked them, and he sold a number of them for $100 apiece.

Mr. Cook lives in , Ohio and is a member of The Great North Coast Knotting Continuum.

From the Mail Bag

MIKE STORCH IN , IDAHO SENT IN THIS LETTER:
"This is a follow up to the initial letter I wrote for *Knot News* issue #78 re: 'Knots 101'.
I am currently working with a student that just finished her second lesson – each lesson is about three hours of 'one to one' instruction. She will need one more lesson (two at most) to have her leather cutting and preparation skills up to a really nice level. Prior to now she has been working with spool lace, inherently of low quality, and it has been holding her back.
My schedule with her has been for me to do most of the cutting and prep of the roo hide during the first session, explaining everything along the way, and allowing her to do some of the work… as I felt she had absorbed the instruction. In the second session I cut less and allowed her to cut more, while I followed her moves and made the necessary corrections and suggestions. For her next session she will do most of the work, while I continue to monitor and suggest.
The third lesson is also the time to help her understand and develop "feel", which is so important to braid work. In effect the sessions proceed from instructing to tutoring to mentoring. The trick of working as I do with a student is to progress through the phases of instruct/tutor/mentor with good timing, and as smoothly as is possible. Shauna happens to be a gifted student whose moves I can read easily, and progresses smoothly and naturally. On her own she will produce quality braid-work.
The following note is what she wrote me after our second session – it is self explanatory – and it is the kind of response an instructor should always be working towards.

> *"I had a great lesson today! You are the most wonderful teacher! Thank you so much for sharing your knowledge with me and helping me to move on with my braid work!*
>
> *Once again, thank you so much for taking me on as your student! I'm very proud to be learning from you."*
>
> *Shauna*

PIETER VAN DE GRIEND OF , NETHERLANDS ANSWERED THIS QUESTION FROM **BRIAN O'NEEL** OF , MARYLAND:

Q: "I find myself puzzled by some annotations in PvdG's article *Nagem Knots (3).* There are numbers in [ ], which refer to his reference list at the article's end, but there are also numbers in ( ) in the first paragraph:

"Nested Grid (4/2, 6/0, 8/1)"

Are the parenthetical notes referring to earlier section of this seemingly multi-part article?"

A: "The answer to the first question is simple.
The number between [square] brackets always refer to the corresponding items in the bibliography listing, so [5,p87] refers to page 87 of the 5th reference.
The numbers in the (round) parentheses, which are mentioned below:

"Nested Grid (4/2, 6/0, 8/1)"

In this case, refers to an Asymmetrical Nested Grid (used as a "punctuated sphere covering"), which has a Left Bight Boundary consisting of Nesting Number Bl=4 and Number of Nests Al=2. The right Bight Boundary has Br=8 and Ar=1. Note that the products Bl*Al==BrAr, i.e. they must match. As for the 6/0 in the middle that is shorthand for *x/y*. A symmetrical Nested Grid can be conveniently denoted by (B,A,*x*,*y*) because in the symmetrical case the products equality is automatically satisfied. I assume the x and y are clear (they denote the respective width of the Equatorial Grid Section and the rotational shift between both Hemispherical Grid Sections).
Perhaps this notation is not adequately explained in my articles. I will come up with a Notes On Nested Grids paper to exemplify this better."

Go Gators! A Pineapple Knot by *Skyout*.

When the Bag Lanyard Became a Cat-O-Nine Tales

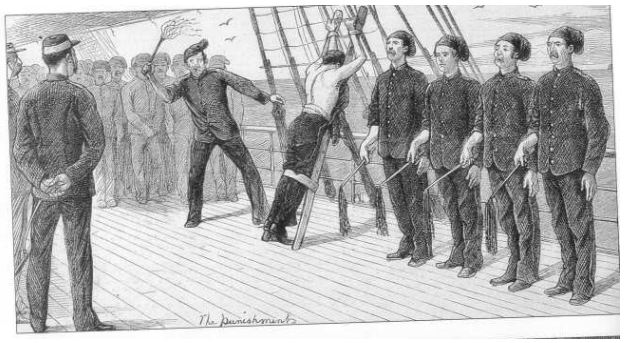
Roy Chapman

As the 2010 sale season approached I began casting about for a wider variety of items to offer my prospective clients. As I have said before, the virtue of Farmers Markets is that everyone eventually shows up here. That covers a lot of interest ranges – from Doctors to Lawyers and Indian Chiefs. Even "Old Money" shows up.

One of the problems is that I am not equipped to make sea chests or other nautical objects for which knots are the associated components (as I could when living in the woods and having a wood shop). I begin to feel like "Bones" in the old *Star Trek* series: "D'mn it, Jim, I'm a doctor not a seamstress!" Faced with this lack of shop problem, I started looking to my skills with the hope of finding some fast work that looked salty, didn't price me over the rainbow and didn't use tools or shop space that I no longer have. In short: just knots (or, at worst, knots and canvas work).

If I punch in brass eyelets instead of hand stitching them, then hammocks, ditty bags and duffel bags become "reasonable". I realize that you, gentle knotter, will cringe. However, the price difference is dramatic. The Commodore will likely accept brass eyelets without a flinch.

Ah Ha! Flinch! The magic word. How many times have I been asked to make a Cat-O-Nine Tails? I have always declined, for I have too vivid a picture in my mind of how the device was applied when corporal punishment was common.



Don't believe that was in the Dark Ages, for my teachers liberally applied a 3 foot wooden paddle without prejudice (would have probably used a "Cat" if they'd have had one). Still the question of making one comes up from time to time and I am now becoming commercial in my thinking. Besides, some of the potential clients seem to be asking about a different sort of discipline. And here I am cranking out bag lanyards…so...here is my first Cat. Notice how related it is to my bag lanyards and bell ropes (think I am in a rut?).

Here are three bag lanyards, a bell rope and cat.

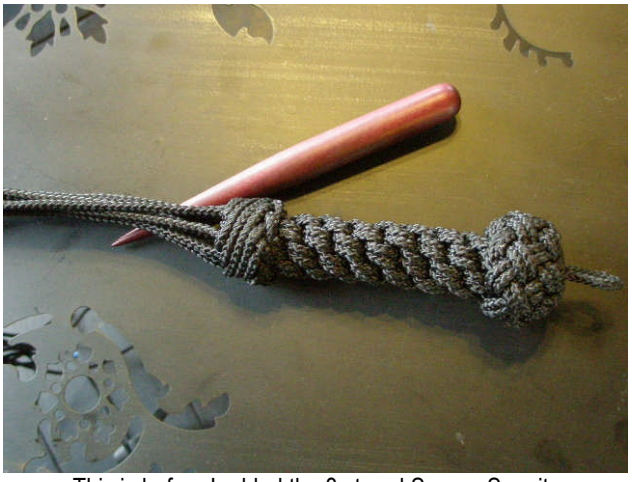
If you are thinking: "What knob is that?" Here is the answer. The bell rope knob is crown ABOK #954 over a diamond knot #693 (which tucks over one then under one) instead of a wall as in the ABOK #954. The "Cat" knob crown is also a #954 but the replacement for the wall is ABOK #734. In this knot the first tuck is under, the second is over and the third is under. You work it in 8 strands instead of 4 strands. You may also be familiar with the sequence from Pieter van de Griend's *Little Lump Knot*.

You can see the difference here.

When you make a "stock" #954 knob the skirt is very short and tight to the sennit. The diamond and #954 crown has a longer skirt but it still tries to hug the sennit. The knob on the Cat has quite a long skirt (from #734) and must be worked firmly to close the skirt tightly around the sennit.

Here you can see that both use the #954 crown.

I think it would really make a good “Cat” right from here. I put the wee lanyard loop on the knob to attach a wrist loop or a tassel or a ??? The following is a description of how I got the loop in.



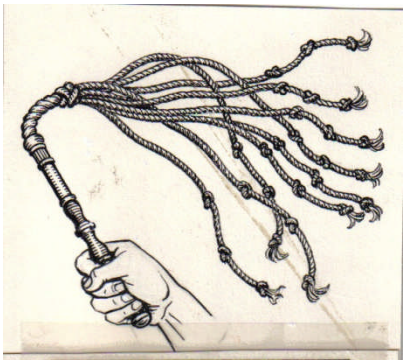
This is before I added the 8 strand Square Sennit and the bright red Turk’s Head.

How I put the lanyard loop in on the ninth tail.

I put a Brummel Eye in the ninth tail and made it the core of the crown sennit handle. I just made up a bit of sennit to make sure I had enough for the skirt of the knob. Then I tied the knob knot. I pulled the tail down until the lanyard loop was “right”. Then I continued with the crown sennit until I had “enough” handle.

A side note – the very open work bag lanyard in the first illustration is made from some new old stock (NOS) that I got recently. This is #120 hard laid nylon and is about as stiff as fence wire. I often look for materials that have been around the shop too long or have too much “shelf wear”, getting some good bargains and challenging line in the process.

A closed ended Turk’s Head on my cane, #120 four strand cotton.



Marlinspike Pine Tar Smell Wick

Jim “Jimbo” Long

This one I made and hitched over JUST to have Pine Tar Smell in my truck.

Some people hang cardboard pine trees, I hang tarred hemp!

It serves no other purpose than to hang there and smell nice.

Pre-tarring, post-tar and RE-tarred: