



International Guild of Knot Tyers **TEXAS BRANCH** **NEWSLETTER**

October & December 2001

Issues 11 & 12

Well, as you know by now, there was not an issue of your newsletter in October. Nor in December. Your editor fell behind and had to take care of other things. I can't promise that this won't happen again but I will try to be a little more regular and on time.

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Member Profile

In this issue the member in the member profile is your Editor. I lost track of the time and did not request a profile from anyone so you will have to suffer.



Gary and stuff at the TMM, August 2001

"I'm a native Texan, born in Coleman, Texas, a long, long time ago, and pretty much spent the rest of my life in Oak Cliff, Texas, a suburb of Dallas. As a young lad I did most of the dumb things boys were expected to do and I'm glad I had the chance to do them back when most of those things were considered as "Rites of Passage" and not "Criminal Activity". Somehow I survived, managed to stay out of jail, and grow to (?) maturity.

I graduated from high school, a long, long time ago, and went to college. Didn't get my degree, though. I ran out of money and joined the United States Air Force. The Air Force trained me in Data Processing and stationed me in Germany where I had the good fortune to meet Barbara, who was also in the Air Force, the girl who would become my wife. We courted in Germany and got married in Chicago, IL and settled in Dallas where we raised three kids; Noah, Ann, and Todd. The kids have all grown up, moved away from home (and some have moved back), and so far have given Barbara and me two of the prettiest granddaughters and the best looking little grandson you could ever hope to see.

I've interested in a lot of different things: wood work, leather work, history in general, military and Texas history specifically, aircraft in general and specifically WW II aircraft and, of course, knot tying.

My earliest experiences with knots came at about age 6 when my Dad taught me the "Sheep Shank". I've been trying to find a use for it ever since. About the same time an uncle taught me to tie the "Square Knot". He didn't teach me the traditional "left over right then right over left" method. Instead he taught me to tie it the way the "Thief Knot" is tied which probably corrupted me forever. Along the way I learned, on my own I think, to tie the 4 strand square and round sennits, only I didn't know what they were, and I didn't know how to finish either one in any sort of reasonable way. Had to wait for Ashley to show me how

to tie a double wall and crown. The pivotal event in my knotting career was when I was taught to tie the one handed "Bowline" at a Boy Scout Leader Training function. I think it was in 1979. I was fascinated! I would tie it one-handed then reverse engineer (untie) until I could tie it using both hands. You don't wanna know how long that took! Then in 1980 I bought "*The Ashley Book of Knots*" and it has been downhill ever since.

In 1992 I read a blurb in "*Scouting*" magazine about knots and ropework that mentioned something called "The International Guild of Knot Tyers". I fired off a letter to the guy who wrote the article inquiring how to join. He immediately fired a letter back and explained to me that he really didn't know. But he did give me the name and address of someone who might know. Eventually I got in touch with Nigel Harding and became a member of the International Guild of Knot Tyers. I religiously read the IGKT publication, "Knotting Matters", and in 1996 I looked in the IGKT Membership Handbook and saw that there were several IGKT members living in Texas so I decided to try to get us together. I wrote Nigel Harding, Secretary of the IGKT, and asked about his thoughts on starting The Dallas Chapter of the IGKT. He wrote back with encouraging words and told us to go ahead and start something but to think big and call it The Texas Branch. I contacted every IGKT member who lived in Texas and proposed a meeting to discuss forming a Branch and that is pretty much how we got to where we are today. Back then our communication was via mail through Uncle Sam's Post Office or by telephone but now we can communicate with e-mail. Luddite that I am, I see this as real progress. The Internet also allows us to regularly communicate with knot tyers outside of Texas and, indeed, outside of the United States. We also have access to web sites that cater to knot tyers.

I wish I could explain the fascination that knotting has for me. On several occasions when the Texas Branch has had the opportunity to display it's work to the public I enjoyed seeing some non-knot tyers' eyes glaze over as they looked at some knotted piece and then ask, "Did you do that"? I have been fortunate to have attended four national IGKT functions and let me tell you, I caught myself with glazed-over eyes when I saw some of the work on display.

As a group, the members of the Texas Branch have a wide range of interests, as demonstrated by Ed Baker's "snake doctors" and Sam Lanham's epic church related bell ropes and his beautiful knot covered bottles. Knotting has allowed each of us to find an area of knotting interest and take pride in the skills we develop as we pursue the mastery of yet another knot or two. Sometime we even learn from each other and that, to me, is proof positive that we are headed in the right direction."

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The Prez says...

"The recent news from England regarding the condition of Brian Field has all of our attention and please keep him and Margaret in your thoughts and prayers. The short time I had to spend with them this summer was very precious. Brian's knowledge of knotting, not to mention a lot of other things, was very impressive and the IGKT really has a good choice for its President. Wish him the best of luck for recover from his illness and recent surgery.

The upcoming Sounds of the Sea event is coming up on November 10-11 at the Texas Maritime Museum in Rockport, Texas. If you have not been to the museum, I strongly encourage you to take the time and attend. The museum and the musical groups that will be there will make for a great time. Talk with Gary FNG for more details.

Attendance at the last meeting was off from our normal crowd. Since I know it was not due to the Cowboy game, I hope it was the State Fair. Whatever the case the next meeting is the first Sunday in December, the 2nd. Please mark your calendars now so we will see you there. Let's make it bring a knotting friend meeting.

Speaking of knots, I am trying some new things that is taking me some extra thinking and doing time. Rob Higgins and I started some bottle half-hitching at the IGKT-NAB meeting with a little guidance from Sam Lanham and I have also started a special patriotic project. Please let us know what you are working on so you can present it to the group or if you like, do a more formal teaching session.

As we approach the end of the year, I want to take the time and space to recognize the other officers of the group. Gary, Rob, Eddie, and Wayne have all contributed to the group's success. Rob serves as the treasurer, Eddie is the program chair, Wayne is a member at large, and Gary is the Secretary. While Gary is producing this newsletter, he will just have to put up with all the nice things people say about him."

Thanks for everyone's support and remember the key to the success of any organization like this is the participation of its members.

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NAB-2001

On August 23rd, 24th, 25th, and 26th a delegation of the Texas Branch attended an International Guild of Knot Tyers meeting hosted by the North American Branch in Rockport, Texas. The public demonstrations were conducted at the Texas Maritime Museum (TMM) and the "after hours" activities, knotting and otherwise, were to be found at the Best Western Motel in Fulton, just down the road a bit from the Museum.



The Rockport Harbor from the TMM Lighthouse.

My very unofficial count of attendees is 32, including spouses. That is probably a smaller number than the organizer, John Burke, would have wished for but the group was very lively and wanted to have some fun tying knots. Ed Baker, Barbara and I convoyed down on Thursday, Aug. 23, so as to be early. We checked into the motel, about 4:40 or 5:00, and then I ventured down to the room the motel allowed us to use as a Hospitality Room and, lo and behold, there was a crowd! The lying, oops, I mean the tying had started early.

Friday was more or less a free day. Some went on a tour of the aircraft carrier USS Lexington in nearby Corpus Christi and some of just fooled around in Rockport and Fulton. Ed, Barbara and I toured the Fulton Mansion. It is a very impressive home built around 1880 by Mr. Fulton, an early cattle baron in every sense of the word. In those days, just after the Civil War, all one had to do to become a cattle baron was ride the range putting ones brand on every cow one could find that had not already been branded by another cattle baron and ship it east to a beef-hungry market. The home that Mr. Fulton built has been very well restored and is furnished with period furnishings, where the original furnishings could not be found. (Ed. *I first saw the Fulton Mansion in 1969 when it was the centerpiece of a very shabby camping trailer park. It sure looks better now!*) Friday night was back at the Hospitality Room for more tying and visiting. Your Texas Branch supplied snack trays for the knot tyers and the food was much appreciated. We also announced the raffle for Saturday night. The price to join the raffle was a saleable knotted item to be donated to the Texas Maritime Museum. The raffle prizes were a new rigger's knife, with marlinespike, an "experienced" sewing palm, and an "experienced" braided line splicing kit. Out thanks go to Sam Lanham for donating the knife and to Joe Schmidbauer, Secretary of the PAB, for donating the palm and the splicing kit. And special thanks to the donor of the funds which paid for the snack trays.



The Fulton Mansion, Fulton Texas

Saturday morning was set up time for the Museum visitors. Some of the knot tyers elected to go sailing instead of setting up early and paid for it by getting wet in a brief shower. But eventually we all got settled down and waited for the crowd of visitors to appear. The crowd didn't appear but that didn't deter us at all because we had more time to visit old friends and make new ones. As is normal at these knotty gatherings there was a lot of very nice work to see. On Saturday evening we ate a catered meal in our Hospitality Room and enjoyed a presentation by Allison Lakin, Educational Director for the Texas Maritime Museum, on the recovery of the Spanish ship *La Belle*. Her presentation was actually a history lesson about Rene-Robert La Salle's search for the mouth of the Mississippi River. He only missed it by about 500 miles, landing in the Matagorda Bay of Texas in about 1685. But that was not an unusual error in those days of one-dimensional latitudinal navigation. The chronometer, needed for accurate longitudinal navigation, had yet to be invented. And we heard all about "old dead Bob", the sailor whose well-preserved body was found coiled up on a coil of rope. Another interesting find aboard the *La Belle* was rope, coiled and stored in barrels. The rope was in excellent condition and maintained about 80% of its original strength. Not too shabby for being under water for over 300 years. The raffle was a lot of fun but the same name, Lindsey Philpott, kept being drawn. Lindsey's name was drawn for the rigger's knife and the splicing kit. Lindsey is a professional rigger and probably had his own splicing tools so he declined to accept the splicing kit. But as a rigger wouldn't you assume that he also had at least one knife? Go figure. Congratulations, Lindsey!

Sunday at the Museum was a little better attended. The highlight of the TxB area was teaching visitors to tie Ed Baker's famous "Snake Doctor". It seemed as though everybody wanted one and Missie Lanham was kept busy teaching them how to tie it. The number of knot tyers began to dwindle on Sunday afternoon as they began their trips home but a few stayed over and returned home on Monday and others stayed until Tuesday.

Your editor considers the event as a success. Everybody seemed to have had a good time and anybody who wanted to learn something new had an opportunity. The TMM is an excellent venue for gatherings like this and the Best Western motel in Fulton was a great choice for a "headquarters".

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October meeting

TxB President Charles Holmes called the October meeting to order at 1:30 and requested that we observe a moment of silence in memory of the victims of the Sep 11 terrorists attack. Some discussion ensued about the event and the retaliatory attacks that the United States and its allies had commenced earlier in the day.

The President called for the Secretary to read the moments of the August Meeting.
The President called for the Treasurer's report.

It was announced that our Branch Bylaws had been approved by the IGKT governing council. It was noted that some TxB members were not current in their dues to the IGKT. The Texas Branch does not collect membership dues for the IGKT but each TxB member is expected to be current with the IGKT.

Charlie brought the TxB T-shirts for distribution. The T-shirts are really nice and many thanks to Charlie for coordinating the design and ordering.

A card for Brian Field was circulated for everyone to sign.

Then the knot tying commenced.

Charlie Holmes was tying a patriotically red, white, and blue bell pull with some nice 2mm cord.

Tony admired the German manufactured rigger's knife Charlie brought home from England.

Dee and Jack and David worked on figuring out how to a rope horse halter.

Gary tied a couple of Ocean Mats.

Everybody enjoyed the kolaches (sp?) that Phil and Karen Lipoma brought from West, Texas.

Those attending the meeting were:

Phil and Karen Lipoma (they get top billing because of the goodies!), David Hudgins, Tony Barrick, Charlie Holmes, Jack Keene, John and Dee.

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December Meeting

The meeting was called to order by Prez. Chas. Holmes at 1:20. Those attending the meeting were:

Charlie Holmes, Rob Higgins, Tony Barrick, John and Dee, Harry, Ken Miller (a visitor), and Gary.

Gary gave a short report on the Texas Maritime Museum's Music of the Sea Festival.

Charlie and Gary talked a bit about Brian Field.

Dee had the program material and displayed the rope halter she had learned to tie. She had a handout for the crowd which explained the technique.

Ken Miller had a walking stave that he was decorating with some very nice knotting. He and Gary worked on some Turk's Heads to better cover the end of Ken's well done coach whipping.

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*New knots are often flashes in the pan; they founder on circumstances that
tradition long ago anticipated...*

old knots never die; they just wait for us to come to our senses."

Brion Toss, The Rigger's Locker – USA, 1992

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Calendar Dates

Nov. 10, 11 – Music of the Sea festival at the Texas Maritime Museum in Rockport, Texas.

Dec. 2 - The TxB December meeting.

Feb. 3 – The TxB February Meeting

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Music of the Sea Festival

I could tell you that I planned to get the October Newsletter out in November so that I could report on the Second Annual Music of the Sea Festival at the Texas Maritime Museum in Rockport, Texas and some of you would even believe it. The rest of you, the Doubting Thomas group, would be right, though. Time simply got away from me.

On November 10th and 11th the Lanhams and the Sessions represented the Texas Branch at the Festival. The weather and music were fantastic. Although not as big as anticipated, the crowd was spirited and

more numerous than last year. Not all of the musical groups that entertained us last year returned for this year's event but the music was very good.

Our tables were in the Children's tent again this year. In addition to tables and chairs the tent also had a small stage where the musical groups would cycle through when they were not entertaining in the other two tents. The term "Children's tent" is a bit misleading because we had a lot of adult visitors. The children's activities were in the tent with us but they had their activities at another group of tables. The TxB was asked to conduct a knot tying class both Saturday and Sunday. The majority of "learners" in these classes were young boys and girls learning to tie Ed Baker's famous "snake doctor". Missie Lanham and Barbara Sessions handled these kids very well and there are many more "horse doctors" in Rockport than there used to be. I had one young lad walk up to the table, pick up a piece of line, and tie a one-handed bowline. He is a Scout in Troop in Rockport and evidently the Troop leadership in that unit has done a good job teaching knots. I tested his proficiency with some other Scout knots and then I used him to work with some other boys who showed up. On Sunday he returned and I had him teach the taunt line hitch to a man who wanted some help with something to tie stuff on his pickup truck. Those Wood Badge skills still come in handy!

We ate a lot of seafood and had a good time. On Monday, after the Festival, Barbara and I spent three nights with the Lanhams in their home in Fredericksburg. It was a great trip.

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Letters to the Editor

The following story e-mailed from Joe Brooks fulfills most, if not all, of the requirements for the perfect story. A lady in distress, a hardware store, some knots, and, most important of all, a happy child, and therefore, a happy ending,

Sez Joe:

"A lady came into The Home Depot the other day. She was putting up a swing for a small child. I helped her pick a rope, a twisted yellow poly with a working load of 244 pounds. Then came the question of how to suspend the swing. She bought some eye hooks to screw into a tree limb, but had no idea how to attach the rope.

Now comes the IGKT/TxB part. I taught her the anchor hitch, and how to wrap and frap the end. All the swinging child wants to do will not work this hitch loose. The lady left with just the right knot for the job."

Ed. Thanks to Joe for sharing that with us.

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From the Ditty Bag

There were several things about the recent visit to Rockport that will be remembered but the one that will always stand out in my mind is an incident in the Hospitality room on Friday night with Gerald. While I was out of the Hospitality room, Gerald decided that he wanted one of my ditty bags. He picked the one he wanted and had loaded it with his gear and when the crowd broke up for the evening I caught Gerald and we talked about the purchase. I gave him a price and he pulled out his wallet and paid me.

As I folded the money I told him, "...and there is a life time guarantee on that ditty bag." To which Gerald responded, "You Son of a Bitch, you know I'm 76 years old!"

Gerald kept us laughing all weekend.

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A book review

On the day after Barbara and I returned from Rockport I received a strange, triangular shaped, in the mail. Triangular and about five feet long. It was indeed addressed to me but I didn't recognize the name in the return address. I opened the package and out came a small book – approximately 4.5 in. by 7 in.

Strange. The title of the book was *The Book of Knots* by "Tom Bowling". I remembered reading the name "Tom Bowling" in several knot books and, obviously, I was intrigued. Reading further I read the name Gordon Perry, whom I had met in New Bedford at an IGKT meeting in 1999. *The Book of Knots* is a reprint of the "Tom Bowling" book with a new interpretation by Gordon Perry. Knowing that there had to be something else in the large package I kept digging until I discovered a large poster with many knots displayed. There were also two smaller poster sized plates inside the book. Interesting. The book doesn't have any instructions on tying the knots; it simply refers the reader to the plates and gives the author's name of the knot. And since the names he uses would be unfamiliar to most of us, the book also contains tables, which give us an interpretation of Bowling's names.

According to Gordon nine different versions of *The Book of Knots* are known to exist, the earliest published in 1866 and with versions also published in 1870, 1876 (two versions?), 1879, 1890, 1892, 1899, and 1969. Also according to Gordon, "Tom Bowling" is most certainly a pseudonym.

The Book of Knots certainly won't replace my Ashley but it has found a place in my knotting library. The book is historically important and the plates are very interesting. My thanks to Gordon Perry for his efforts with this jewel and for sharing his work with me.

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Des Pawson, Past President of the IGKT, proprietor of Foot Rope Knots, and an all round good guy has written a new book. I haven't seen the book but I have ordered it from Des. If you are familiar with his previous book, *The Handbook of Knots*, you might want to check into finding this book. I hope to have my copy by the February meeting.