



International Guild of Knot Tyers

TEXAS BRANCH NEWSLETTER

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Issue 9

Member Profile



Missie Lanham



Sam Lanham

Missie and Sam Lanham are a knotting couple who have been condemned to live in the Texas Hill Country west of Fredericksburg for the last 20 years. It's a struggle, but they are managing.

Knotwork and other fiber crafts have been among their interests for 40 years or so, dating back to the acquisition of a copy of the *Ashley Book of Knots* in the late 1950's, when they were living in their home

town of Waco where Missie was teaching and Sam was practicing law. Then, in the early 1960's, in an as yet unexplained circumstance, Missie, Sam, and three kids headed south to Austin where Missie studied for her Master's degree in special education at UT and Sam studied for the Presbyterian ministry at the seminary. An internship took them to west Galveston Island and after both graduated they returned to the island where Missie taught and Sam was a pastor. Among his parishioners were a group of fishing families who made their own boats and nets. Watching these folks work at their trades rekindled Sam's interest in knotwork---particularly square-knotting and bell-ropes. That interest has continued.

After Galveston and a decade at St Philip Presbyterian Church in Houston, Missie and Sam moved to the Hill Country where Missie taught homebound children in Fredericksburg and Sam taught at Schreiner University. They both retired in the late 1990's and at that point they joined IGKT-TxB and began knotting with renewed seriousness. Missie, who also does English smocking and primitive rug hooking, prefers to work with small (1-2 mm) stuff making key rings and small bell-ropes. Sam's fingers won't work with the small stuff so he prefers larger bell-ropes and bottle hitching. Their most ambitious project to date was a bell-rope

for the bell at the historic Presbyterian Church in Mendocino, California. Named for a former bell ringer of many decades, the Reep Rope is a 55' of 12 mm static rope, the lower 14' of which are covered with knotwork in which colors, materials, and textures are used to reflect a timeline of the church's interesting history of nearly 150 years. The rope hangs in the entry to the picturesque church on the Pacific coast. The project took two years and over 1000' of cord and was installed in March 2000.

Other family members who are members of IGKT-TxB are Missie and Sam's son, Sam 4 of Henderson, Texas, and Missie's brother Joe W. Brooks, of Marietta, GA

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The Prez says...

The last IGKT-TxB meeting was a success, I am told. My apologies for not being able to attend but my duties as Scoutmaster called to take the troop to summer camp.

Our next meeting will happen just a few days before the NAB meeting in Rockport. I would like to stress how great it would be for TxB to have a warm reception for the NAB. While it is their meeting, plans are for TxB to have a warm reception for the NAB members. Kudos to Gary and Ed for coordinating this process.

The membership of TxB is growing and that is good. It brings in a broader experience level and allows those less versed in a particular knotting area to draw on the experience of others. That is what TxB and IGKT are all about. For the August meeting, please try and bring a friend that might have a luke warm interest in knotting and see if it might grow into a burning passion. Ok, so that might be too much but bring a friend. It is only part of an afternoon.

Until then, knot on McDuff!!

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June meeting

The meeting was called to order at 1:10. President Charles Holmes was away at Boy Scout Summer Camp so your Ink Stained Wretch and Secretary presided.

Minutes from the last meeting were read, well sort of, and accepted. The Treasurers report was read and accepted. Old business pertaining to the NAB 2001 was discussed and Registration forms for the event were made available.

Attendance started off slowly but eventually there were eight members at the meeting:

Ed Baker
Tony Barrick
Rob Higgins
David Hudgins
Harry Yankuner
John Schauer
Ray Stell
Gary Sessions

There was one visitor, Jeff Rance, who joined our little fraternity.

The program consisted of a display of rigger's knives to get things warmed up for the main portion of the program, Ed Baker's demonstration of braided rope splicing. Everyone

came away from Ed's demonstration with a new appreciation for the skill required for handling braided line.

After the splicing demo the members separated into smaller groups for some individualized teach/learn sessions and knotting conversation.

It was a good meeting and you should make plans to attend the next scheduled meeting on August 5, 2001.

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Calendar Dates

-Aug 5 – Regular TxB meeting.

-Aug 23 – 26 IGKT NAB

Meeting in Rockport, TX

-Nov 11 – Music of the Sea

Festival in Rockport, TX

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Letters to the Editor

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Ashley Interview

The following article is an interview with Clifford W. Ashley by the *Boston Traveler* on Thursday, June 13, 1929. Ashley's daughter, Phoebe Ashley Chardon, found the article recently and gave this copy to Brian Field, who then loaned it to your Ink Stained Wretch as an article for our newsletter. All due credit is given to the *Boston Traveler*.

To allow room for other "News" this is the first of two installments of the interview.

Fairhaven's Ex-Whaler, Artist, and Author Show Uncanny Skill When It Comes to Devising Knots

Ashley Astonishes Experts by accomplishing the "Impossible"

He talks amiably, is a genius with canvas colors and can tie a knot such as you never saw before; he

has written all about whalers after having served his apprenticeship on the rolling deep aboard a far-famed old veteran of the chase, the whaling bark Sunbeam.

COLLECTOR OF ANTIQUES

He smokes a well tanned pipe, drives a racing car, has invented a machine that braids a kind of triangular shaped rope that experts said never could be made, and is a collector of antiques that many a connoisseur would go half round the world to see.

He is the single youngster (at 47 years of age) who perhaps more than any other person has served to keep the atmosphere of whaling, the whaling ship and the whaling port of New Bedford alive and dramatic and interesting.

His name is Clifford W. Ashley and a lot of his marine and particularly whaling canvases are hung in museums that the antiquarians swear by.

But more than that, if you are a sailor-minded in the least, you will stop and overstay the ordinary visitor's welcome in the beautiful but ancient studio where he works summers at 2 Washington Street, Fairhaven, a studio that overlooks New Bedford harbor, to see him tie knots.

EXPERT ON KNOTS

For the painter is something of a Houdini too in his magical skill with strands of rope.

He will tie you a knot out of a clear sky such as no one among all the fraternity ever dreamed of and it will prove a fanciful, a fantastic or an artistic knot – for he carries imagination also into this phase of his abilities.

The world listened and wondered while Luther Burbank crossed fruits and obtained new hybrids.

It is perhaps not less magical to witness this wizard of knot tying developing hybrid knots.

Without boasting in the least he tells you: "I am a person who makes knots 'synthetically.'" He does, a brief visit to his studio disclosed. You may be an out and out tyro at knots. Yet there can be no mistaking the wizardry of this man's fingers and brain.

He takes three, 10, or 100 strands and weaves them into flat, round, square, or oblong knots and braids; he makes a braided rope where the many strands weave in and out in almost unending series – makes a flat, a triangular, a round, a four-sided rope at your behest.

HYBRID KNOTS

Some of the samples that lie round the generous-sized studio and litter a large pasteboard box required hours of patient attention and painstaking effort to devise and create.

The painter-knot-tyer will tell you that the hybrid knot comes as naturally as the hybrid flower or fruit.

“You get one of the old-time standard knots like the Turkshhead, for instance, and ‘cross it’ with another old-time knot. Then you have the start of an entirely new series of knots.”

He dips into one of his receptacles for rope and twine and pulls out a quartet of little knots – knot heads you might call nice new series of them –

“Chinese button knots!” he advises. “You perhaps call them pajama knots. These four were crossed with the so-called manrope knots and I obtained a button knots and another of manrope knots.”

The knot-tyer will advise you that back of the act of tying a knot is a mathematical principle. Starting with one or the other of the list of sailor’s knots you cross with one or the other of the list and at each crossing, following the principle always, you have sprouted an entirely new family of knots.

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From the Ditty Bag

The Ashley interview printed in this issue was “contributed” by Brian Field, as we noted. Brian has been an Honorary Member of the Texas Branch for almost a year and, by the way, he is also the current President of the International Guild of Knot Tyers. Brian is an outstanding ambassador for knotting and a real pleasure to meet. He can converse intelligently

on just about any subject you might choose and even if he disagrees with your point of view you will enjoy the discussion. He is that much of a gentleman.

Brian recently had an operation for an ongoing medical condition and there has not been an update on how he fared. Your Ink Stained Wretch sent him a card from the Texas Branch, wishing him a speedy recovery. Keep him in your thoughts and prayers.

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Editorial

It seemed strange when I first started reading sections of the newspaper other than the Sports Page to see “we” used when it was obvious to me that there was only a single writer involved. And then in some college English course, this practice was given a name, the “Editorial We” .

I have never understood the use of the “Editorial We”.

Perhaps is it easier to take an unpopular, editorial position if one can create the image of a vast horde of people who agree with “us” on this issue.

Alas, “we” may never know. As editor of your newsletter, it is incumbent on me, or should that be “us”, to follow this aged old editorial practice.

At least I, oops, “we” think it is.

Bear with me, oops, “us” on this issue.

If you have insight on the beginnings of this custom please let us hear from you.

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