

## Letters to the Editor

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### IT'S A SMALL WORLD AFTER ALL

I noticed an interesting letter by Richard Darsie in last year's *Bulletin*. The author raises the issue of shared techniques being present in the Oceanic, Eskimo, and North American string figure repertoires. Mark A. Sherman in his *Editor's reply* agrees that "there are other strange parallels between the North American and Polynesian string figure repertoires." I think the similarities constitute important evidence of an underlying relationship between these cultures. Indirect confirmation of my hypothesis is provided by well-documented ethnocultural links between the Ainu people of the Far East and the peoples of Oceania. As an example I cite the similarity of patterns seen on wooden artifacts gathered among the Ainu and the Papuans of southeastern New Guinea (Kabo 1975:44). It is therefore possible that Oceanic, Eskimo, and North American string figures — undoubtedly informative sources or even forerunners of writing — also share a common origin. On the other hand, one cannot rule out the possibility that Oceanic, Eskimo, and American peoples maintained contact long after they settled their respective territories (Schuhmacher 1988; 1989).

Sergei V. Rjabchikov  
Krasnodar, Russia

- Darsie, R. (1995) "Prior contact or common origin?" *Bulletin of the International String Figure Association* 2:193-194.
- Kabo, V.R. (1975) "Ainskaya problema v novoy perspektive." *Sovetskaya etnografiya* 6:42-50.
- Sherman, M.A. (1995) "Editor's reply." *Bulletin of the International String Figure Association* 2:194.
- Schuhmacher, W.W. (1988) "In the wake of the whales: early Eskimos in Hawaii?" *Anthropos* 83:207-210.
- Schuhmacher, W.W. (1989) *The linguistic aspect of Thor Heyerdahl's theory*. Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag.

*Editor's reply: I note your reference to early Eskimos in Hawaii with great interest. Perhaps this explains the striking similarities I mentioned previously between the Kwakiutl "Digging Clams" and the Hawaiian "Calabash Net of Makalii," as well as the Kwakiutl "Killerwhale" and the Hawaiian "Hermaphrodites." Both have counterparts in the Eskimo repertoire. On the other hand, I recently learned that many Hawaiians migrated to the Pacific Northwest in the 1800s and married into the Indian communities [G. Lee (1995) "News and Notes" Rapa Nui Journal 9(2), page 56].*

## MINE OR OURS?

I was both perturbed and disturbed to find in a recent issue of our *Bulletin* an explosion of the trademark symbol, "TM." Far be it from me to condone plagiarism or theft of intellectual property. As a storyteller I am constantly confronted with the ethics of what story I tell, from what culture, and with what right. This question has already been the theme of a national storytelling convention in the United States and England. So when I choose a story to tell from a culture other than my own, I do so with great respect. But, it does not become MY story. I borrow it and more importantly, I pass it on. I have created a *version* of that story, and sometimes we storytellers are a little ticked off when someone else adapts not the story but a particular storyteller's style — then we start to talk about appropriating someone else's work! It took me over two years to put together my string figure performance (see my article in last year's *Bulletin*). If someone else takes as much time to learn it as I did, then he deserves to be able to use it also. For this reason I never copyright my shows.

To copyright a logo I think is fine, but I find it misplaced to copyright *ways of presenting or conceptualizing* string figures. After all, string figures precede us by several millennia!! — chances are good that the method in question has been in use for centuries somewhere in the world, albeit in less elegant form. Who are we to claim rights on the common heritage of humankind? Is the intellectual reorganization of information truly a basis for claiming property rights?

*Sam Cannarozzi Yada, Storyteller and Stringist  
Chasselay, France*

## CHACUN SON GOÛT

Recently, this bulletin has published several letters and articles written by Sam Yada. Among many other things, he has voiced his concern on the humanity, or the lack thereof, surrounding the creation of string figures. In the last bulletin, Mr. Yada goes so far as to "argue that the vast majority of scientific journals literally beat the subject [string figures] to death, killing its very essence."

I am compelled to comment, for fear that silence connotes entire agreement. Mr. Yada is a professed string storyteller, a very good one, no doubt. He asserts that "it is absolutely necessary to put, keep and create games and figures in a cultural and human context." His perception of what string figures should be is essential to his calling and central to it. For string figures to ever have a chance of enjoying future mass appeal, they must retain and project their cultural and human aspects. What disturbs me, though, is the con-

stant undercurrent expressed by Mr. Yada's views which condemn other string figure endeavors as having no place in the subject.

String figures may have originated in the cultural and human context that Mr. Yada yearns for, but string figures should not be kept confined to that domain. If string figures can be analyzed, then analyze them! If new abstract designs can be created, then create them! Such undertakings may not be everyone's cup of tea, but they are part of the string figure universe.

We all see within string figures certain subjective qualities that enchant us. I find making string figures entertaining, relaxing, and intellectually challenging. String figures speak to our capacity for self expression. I enjoy making a figure spring to life, whether it be one seeped in grand tradition, or another of my own invention that I might find intriguing.

Curiosity drives me to try to comprehend a figure's formation, then to use what I have learned to create new ones. Playfulness causes my fingers to dance with string, be it by the chance dropping of a string, or a movement performed with deliberate precision. I relish observing the string's progression, drawing order out of chaos, all culminating in the final design. The figure and the process — for me, that is the essence of string — the figure *and* the process!

Mr. Yada chides past authors who merely list how many figures are made and how they are made. I revel in such works, devouring those constructions, analyzing their movements and resulting patterns. This is no less important to me than the cultural and human aspects that Mr. Yada seeks. Rather than exclude, why not embrace any work which brings our understanding and enjoyment of the figure to fruition?

*Joseph D'Antoni  
Queens, New York*

#### READY SET — ACTION!

All string figure enthusiasts know from experience that learning how to make a string figure from the printed page has its limitations. The method of choice is to have someone show you, one-on-one. Although home video may someday provide an acceptable substitute, not everyone has access to this technology. I would like to mention an alternative solution I toyed with many years ago — the old fashioned "flick book."

For the benefit of the uninformed, flick books consist of a series of drawings or photos, one per page. To observe the animation, the "reader" flexes the edge of the book with his thumb until the pages flick by in rapid succession, much like the frames of a movie film. The advantage of this system is that the reader can flick through the pages at his own speed as often as desired to watch the figure take shape before his very eyes. Having trouble with one move? Open the book to that point and examine the pages one by one. Obvi-

ously this system is not practical for learning a large number of figures, but it sure is fun, and no batteries are required!

Along similar lines, I wish to mention a string figure animation project I tackled several years ago. The goal was to create a short film of a string loop folding up into a string figure all by itself. The process is not terribly difficult, just time consuming. First, the finished string figure is placed on contrasting background. Then, the figure is pulled apart, little by little, as individual frames are shot with a movie (or video) camera. When the film is run in reverse, the string twists and turns upon itself assuming all sorts of amazing shapes as the figure takes form. Unfortunately, this technique *does* require batteries!

*Philip Noble  
Prestwick, Ayrshire, Scotland*

#### IN HONOR OF HONOR

I wish to draw attention to the opening of a special exhibition of the Maude's personal library, donated recently to the University of Adelaide. Needless to say, the collection includes all of Mrs. Maude's classic string figure monographs. It seems entirely appropriate to me that we who have learned so much at the feet of this great, gentle, kind, and beautiful spirit should convey our love and appreciation in some "formal" way in celebration of her 91st birthday (July, 1996).

*Tom Storer  
Ann Arbor, Michigan*



*Professor H.E. Maude and Honor C. Maude - Photo: Bob Cooper, Coombs Photography*



**THE UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE**

The University of Adelaide Library



You are Invited to the Opening  
of the Exhibition



***Pacific Pilgrimage***  
*Selections from the Pacific Islands Library*  
*of Professor and Mrs. H.E. Maude*

To be Opened by Her Excellency The Honourable  
Dame Roma Mitchell, AC, DBE, Governor of South Australia  
on  
Monday, 23 October, 1995 at 5:00 pm  
in  
The Ira Raymond Exhibition Room, Barr Smith Library at the  
University of Adelaide, North Terrace Campus

In this exhibition the selected works give a taste of the richness and variety of materials available in the Collection to researchers, teachers and all interested in the history and culture of the islands of Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia.

The collection is of national significance and is based on the extensive personal library accumulated by Professor H.E. Maude, a former British colonial administrator in the Pacific and Professor of Pacific History at ANU, and his wife and fellow researcher,  
Honor Maude.

Dr. Alaric Maude, son of Professor and Mrs. Maude, will also speak at the opening.

The Library invites you to join us on this pleasant occasion to honour two people who have contributed a life of service and scholarship to the Pacific.

Exhibition Coordinated by Susan Woodburn, Special Collections Librarian.  
Exhibition Designed by Constance Gordon-Johnson of Wow Warehouse Design Studio.  
Funding assistance provided by the University of Adelaide Foundation.  
Artefacts loaned by the South Australian Museum.

**RSVP: University Librarian's Office 303 4064**  
(Guests are asked to assemble at 5 pm for the arrival of Her Excellency and the official party at 5:15 pm.)

NAURU, CENTRAL PACIFIC, OCTOBER 16, 1937

Towards the end of 1937 I was able to fulfill a long felt wish by spending six weeks on the island of Nauru collecting string figures. Recently, while sorting through my papers, I ran across a letter I wrote to my mother-in-law during my stay at Nauru. Given the current interest in Nauru's unsolved string figures, I thought perhaps ISFA members would enjoy reading it.

*Honor C. Maude  
Canberra, Australia*

Dearest Lady Maude,

I had a letter from you this mail, sent over from Ocean Island...I have had no further news of Harry, he should be in the Phoenix Islands about now and I don't suppose will be able to communicate. A ship goes over to Ocean Island today and I would love to go as I am afraid of being stranded here, but the string figures are going so well and I haven't nearly exhausted the supply. Harry won't return for another 3 weeks so I shall just have to risk a ship turning up.

So far I have spent about 8 days in the villages and have collected 80 figures. These people are really wonderful with a loop of string and have even worked out figures they had forgotten after I had shown them a picture. There are only a few elderly men now who can do any and I think they are wonderful but they say they used to know many more. I have been given one of the old plaited hair strings they use, it is about 15 ft. long and makes up beautifully. The administrator was very doubtful whether there were any so I was very thrilled to get one and actually they tell me there are lots about. As usual nobody has ever seen these people doing any string figures but now

apparently everyone sees them as houseboys and orderlies are trying to make them! Commander Garcia is very anxious that I should record all that I can find so that they will not be lost and maybe can be taught in the schools, so I feel I can't run away until I have done the job properly.

Nauru is such a pretty island and has about 10 miles of motor road. I am driven out 4 miles to the village I am working in at present, all through coconuts, with the reef on one side and the island rising steeply on the other.



*Honor Maude, circa 1960*

With much love from  
Your loving Honor

## THEY ALWAYS CARRY STRING

While working on my Ph.D. at the Australian CSIRO Radiophysics Laboratory in Sydney, my mother, Kathleen Haddon Rishbeth, came out from England for a visit. During her stay, the two of us had tea with Mrs. Maude. Below is a newspaper article that appeared shortly thereafter in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (June 14, 1956). The article was cleverly titled "They Always Carry String."

*Dr. Henry Rishbeth  
Southampton, England*

Other women wouldn't dream of going out without lipstick and powder puff, but Mrs. O.H.T. Rishbeth and Mrs. H.E. Maude, pop a piece of string in their handbags, too.

When they met last week in Sydney out came the string and in a minute they were making baboon's mouths, fish ponds and lightning.

Mrs. Rishbeth knows more about cat's cradles of all lands than any other woman in the world; Mrs. Maude is an expert on Polynesian string figures — and is probably the first person to use them as therapy for crippled children.

In the days when her Edwardian contemporaries were coping with bustles and sweeping skirts Mrs. Rishbeth ordered a short-skirted thornproof suit from her dressmaker.

And with knee-high gaiters and a change of non-iron crepe de chine blouses she set off with her father, Dr. A.C. Haddon, for Papua.

Dr. Haddon, founder of the School of Anthropology at Cambridge, had been a botanist. On a visit to New Guinea to study

sea anemone — his special field — he realised that the anemone might be there for ever, but the natives were dying out.

So he became an anthropologist and on his 1914 expedition to the Fly River took his daughter along with him to photograph native outrigger canoes.

To make friends with the natives and overcome language difficulties Mrs. Rishbeth fell back on a hobby that her father had introduced to the family years before — cat's cradle.

"When I got out my string the natives soon decided that I was one of them," she said.

"But I was horrified when they showed me a figure... 'White man, he come' and then with a loop of twine around his neck 'he die'."

When the natives become really friendly they invite you to swap strings with them. This calls for diplomacy. I always made sure that I made a figure using my hands only for their string has often been in contact with diseased mouths and toes."

Cat's cradles originate, Mrs. Rishbeth believes, from the universal human habit of fiddling. They crop up all over the world.

Mrs. Rishbeth made her first collection of figures on the Alaskan coast in 1910. There the Eskimos use deer sinews for string.

In the long winter months of darkness they illustrate stories and legends with string figures and to them they often attach magical significance.

"They have a 'Spirit of Cat's Cradles,'" she explained. "The spirit becomes annoyed if the people play with their deer sinews too much."

"A crackling noise in the hut means that the spirit is watching. The Eskimos then seize up their string and try to race the spirit who is making the same figure with his invisible string."

"If they fail to win the race someone in the hut dies before the winter is out."

Mrs. Rishbeth, who was trained as a zoologist, has also collected cat's cradles in Australia (1914) and South America. She has written three books on them and introduced them to children on B.B.C television.

Now retired — she was librarian at the Haddon Library at Cambridge for 17 years — she is in Australia to visit her son, Mr. Henry Rishbeth, who is working for the C.S.I.R.O. It was at the Margaret Reid Orthopaedic Hospital that Mrs. Rishbeth and Mrs. Maude met for the first time.

Around them small boys,

propped up in bed, were weaving their fingers in and out of the coloured twine that Mrs. Maude brings to the hospital every Tuesday and Friday afternoon.

The cat's cradle class is Mrs. Maude's idea to help children who need to exercise their hands and fingers, and amuse those who have to lie on their backs for a long time.

She has three hospitals on her visiting list, and 40 young pupils.

Some figures are taken from Mrs. Rishbeth's books, but most of them Mrs. Maude learned from the natives during her 20 years in the Gilbert Islands.

An anthropologist "by marriage" — her husband was a student of Dr. Haddon at Cambridge — Mrs. Maude started to collect cat's cradles when she found that the natives were no longer making them as they became more civilised.

"Once," she said, "every native knew some, because he believed that when he died he had to do string figures with an ancestor; and if he couldn't do them, the ancestor would tie him up in the string."

Mrs. Maude has gathered more than 100 examples; now she is working on others at home at Wahroonga. For some of them she uses a 10ft string of plaited human hair from Nauru, cut — as a punishment — from the head of a wicked native woman.

The International String Figure Association gratefully acknowledges the Sydney Morning Herald for granting us permission to reproduce their article and photographs.



*Mrs. H.E. Maude makes a grass hut, and her pupil, Trevor Philpot, does a cat's cradle of lightning, at the Margaret Reid Hospital, St. Ives.*

*Mrs. O.H.T. Rishbeth, who collected her first cat's cradles in Alaska in 1910 and who has shown them to children on B.B.C. television, is visiting Sydney. She saw her first Australian aboriginal string figures in 1914.*



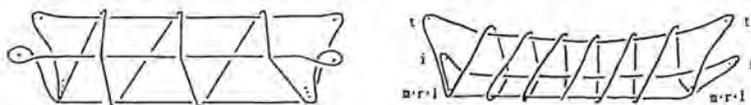
#### SERVED WITH A TWIST

For many years I have enjoyed inventing geometric string figures (see my four articles in past issues of our *Bulletin*). Recently, I realized that two of them closely resemble traditional Oceanic string figures. My "Fragment of a Helix" (Shishido 1982:27) appears to be identical to the Palauan *Chebirúkl miech ra Oguith*, (Raymund 1911:54), for which no method is known. However, caution is advised since some of the string crossings in Raymund's illustration are obscured by the hands.



Fragment of a helix (left) and the Palauan "Chebirúkl miech ra Oguith" (right)

My "Helix-I" (Shishido 1982:24) is closely related to the Marquesan *Fa'e papa* (Handy 1925:53, Plate IIA), the legendary house of *Atanua*. Remarkably, their methods of construction are entirely different. Figure 2 includes a line drawing of the Marquesan figure made according to Handy's instructions. In the Marquesan example, the number of helix cycles depends on the number of times the opening movements are performed.



Helix-I (left) and the Marquesan "Fa'e papa" (right)

This isolated example illustrates the need to examine methods of construction before assuming that similar looking patterns share a common origin.

Yukio Shishido  
Kyoto, Japan

Handy, W.C. (1925) "String Figures from the Marquesas and Society Islands." *Bernice P. Bishop Museum Bulletin* 18.

Raymund, P. (1911) "Die Faden und Abnehmspiele auf Palau." *Anthropos* 6:40-61.

Shishido, Y. (1982) "Geometrical Figures 2." *Bull. of String Figures Assoc.* 7:22-27.

#### A GATHERING OF THE CLANS

Publicizing our organization is indeed the key to our survival. What I have tried to do is tell individuals about us, hoping the news will travel by word of mouth. These individuals include my friend Gladys Lacativo "The Origami Lady," as well as librarians and teachers of all grades including professors. Also, I've given copies of our Bulletin to a local libraries.

Perhaps a "gathering of the clans" would generate a great deal of publicity. I am reminded of our meeting at Castle Creavie in Scotland in 1973 when Philip Noble and I persuaded our families to have a get-together. It was a small occasion, but a beginning of sorts between a "pro" like Philip and myself an amateur. All sorts of people are beginning to realize the benefits of string figures, but the groundwork continues.

Audrey Collinson Small  
Paradise, California



- With her husband, who eventually became British Resident Commissioner in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony, Mrs. Honor Maude, now of Canberra, lived in the GEC for a total of 15 years between 1929 and 1948. While in that part of the Pacific, she took the opportunity of investigating the Nauruans' remarkable skill in the making of string figures. A book by her on the subject is to be published soon by the South Australian Public Library Board.

## When it comes to making string figures, the Nauruans are world champs.

By HONOR MAUDE

It is a surprising fact, and one little known to Europeans, that the most widespread recreation in the world is not football or tennis, or any of the games played by us, but the making of string figures, commonly called cat's cradles. In these, patterns are made on the hands with a closed loop of string.

Even among Europeans it was once a popular pastime, and indeed today most children can make a few simple patterns. But elsewhere its devotees are numbered in millions—men and women, young and old—in Asia, Africa, America, among the Eskimos, in Australia, New Zealand, and throughout the islands of the Pacific.

What is even more surprising, however, is to find that with all the competition from the major centres of population, the prize for being the most expert string figure makers in the world must be given to the never more than 2,000 people of the island of Nauru. It is rather as if Niue was to win the Davis Cup.

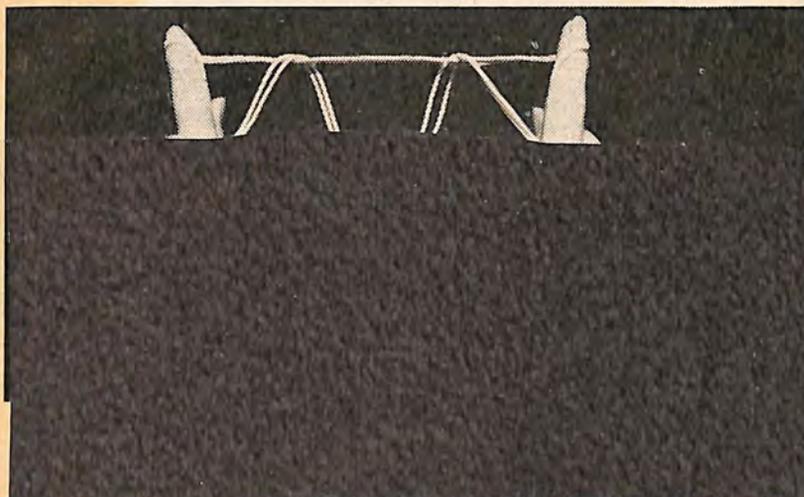
Yet the Nauruans, according to their own traditions, have been inventing and playing with string figures for only a hundred years, whereas in other communities the art is as old as their ancestral legends.

### First figure

The originators of string figure making on Nauru were said to be Derangabua and Anako. (The great-grandchildren of one of them were alive in 1937).

They both lived in the Buada district, close to the inland lagoon, and Derangabua would show his patterns to anyone who was interested.

The first figure was a simple one, well-known in other parts of the Pacific, and was probably introduced to Nauru by Gilbertese drift voyagers.



From such simple beginnings, the Nauruans developed their own style, progressing from the usual number of three loops on each hand (thumb, index and little finger) to figures beginning with four or five loops on each hand.

Then they would take a string from one finger, make a little loop on it and put it over another finger, pulling that finger's original loop up through it and thus making the succession of little loops that an early writer suspected could only have been made completely off the hands.

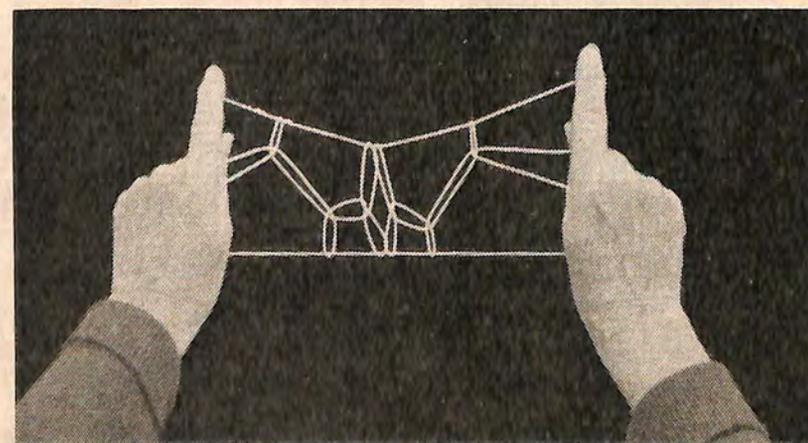
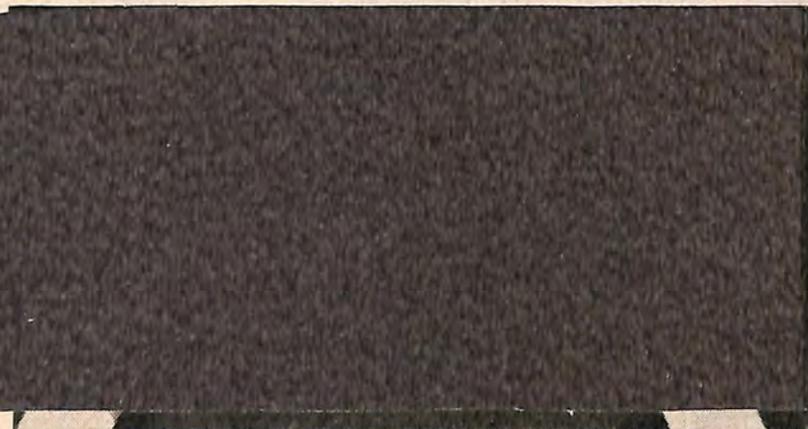
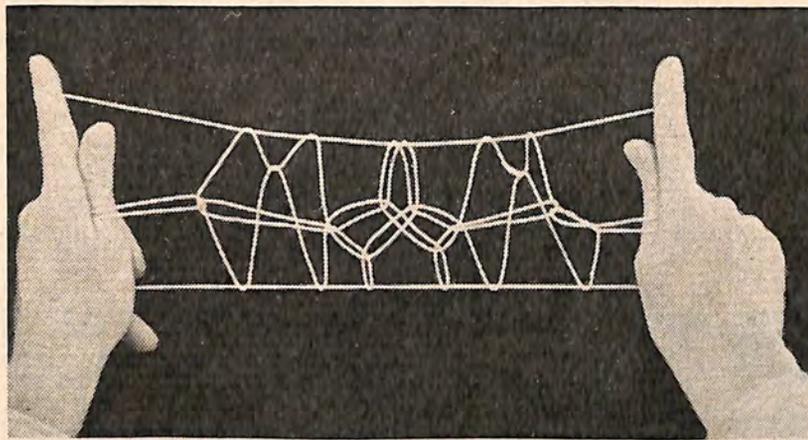
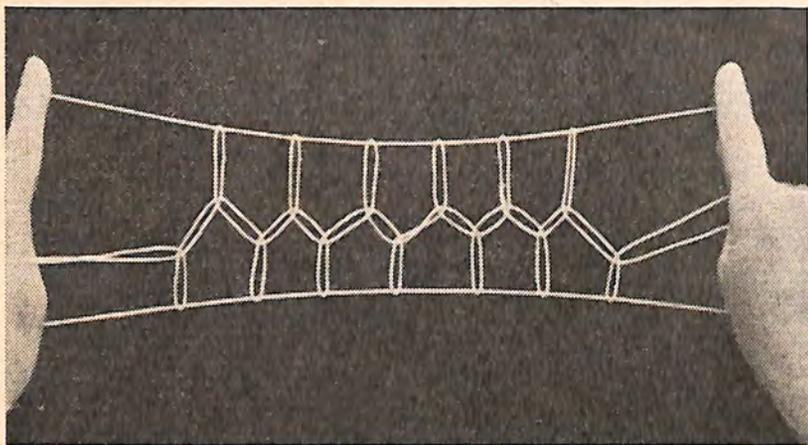
The figure called *Amet Dedogo Oeron* (The Man who holds up the Sky), gives a good idea of the distinctive rounded effect resulting from this technique (top picture next page).

of the series of movements for "finishing off" after making the central pattern.

One of these series is also used on Tikopia for nearly half of their patterns, though not only as a means of ending off, and the other is found throughout the Gilbert Islands, also for making complete patterns. Each of these series of movements had a name: Eongatubabo and Amwangijo.

In the 19th century the Nauruans started to have island-wide competitions, which were soon held annually, and the experts would never be seen without their string, winding it round their wrists or throwing it over their shoulders when not in use.

Through these competitions, the actual inventing of new patterns be-



came a popular exercise; one not known, I believe, among any other people.

The competitor would turn away from the gathering while making his latest creation, and then suddenly turn round and hold the masterpiece up for all to see.

The other competitors would then vie to be the first to copy this pattern, and some of them would succeed in doing so with amazing speed, despite their intricacy.

Almost none of the many mythological names commemorated in Nauruan legends are found pictured in string: the man who held up the sky, already mentioned, is an exception; and Egigu, the girl who went to the moon, is another.

This last figure possesses its own chant as well as a long and involved story.

Among the most favoured subjects are chiefs and their wives; and one of particular interest is that of Eigamoia, the celebrated peacemaker who stopped the fighting between the north and south of Nauru during the latter part of the last century.

### Faced cannon fire

Eigamoia was known as the Queen of Nauru, and early records tell of there being a chief for each district and a "Queen" (now believed to have been the senior member of the powerful clan of Eamwit) over them all, whose word was law.

In the chant accompanying her figure, the Queen goes forward to stop the fighting in the face of cannon fire, and it ends by asking, "Is there anyone as able as Eigamoia?"

In pre-1914 days, the regular visit of the German doctor to incoming phosphate-loading ships was the subject of the realistic design at left called *Dogida*. This shows a distinct central figure with head, legs and arms; and, indeed, one can see his arms firmly braced on each side of the launch in which he is standing.

Another modern figure was invented when the first umbrella reached the island. It is extremely difficult to make, being a double figure and showing the lady (the trader's wife) represented by the central diamond, with the umbrella over her head.

- These four figures are called—  
**TOP:** "Amet Dedogo Oeron" (The Man who Holds Up the Sky); **SECOND:** "Egattamma"—one of the most complicated, but attractive figures; **THIRD:** "Dogida" (The German doctor); **BOTTOM:** "Imwingen-kuri" (Cross-beams supporting a house).

- The names of these figures are—  
**TOP:** "Eigamoia" (The Queen of Nauru); **SECOND:** "Emainodogonigae" (A Woman in her House); **THIRD:** "Eidigauw" (The Lady with the Umbrella); **BOTTOM:** "Administrative Staffs" in which the central figure represents the Administrator of Nauru and the smaller figures on either side his staff.

A song which accompanies this pattern includes the rather delicious observation that now an umbrella has reached Nauru, there is nothing left in the world to marvel at.

The fascinating art of making string figures was saved from being lost through the blight of European civilisation by the foresight of one of Nauru's many castaways, Ernest Stephen, an Australian, who, as a lad, was left stranded on the island in 1880 by a hard-hearted ship's captain (*PIM*, Aug., p. 87). He married an islander and settled down, and it was some years before his father, who had sent him on the voyage for his health, succeeded in finding out where he was.

Ernest Stephen was evidently much impressed by the Nauruans' dexterity as he collected 15 of the most intricate patterns and attached them to pieces of paper.

These figures were made with a very finely plaited string made of human hair, 10 to 15 feet long.

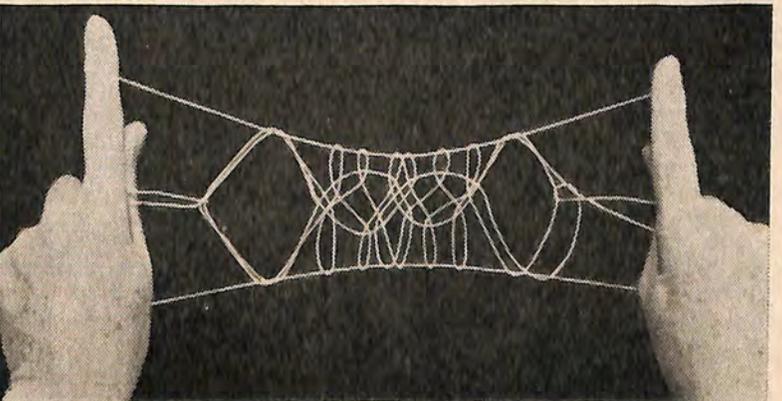
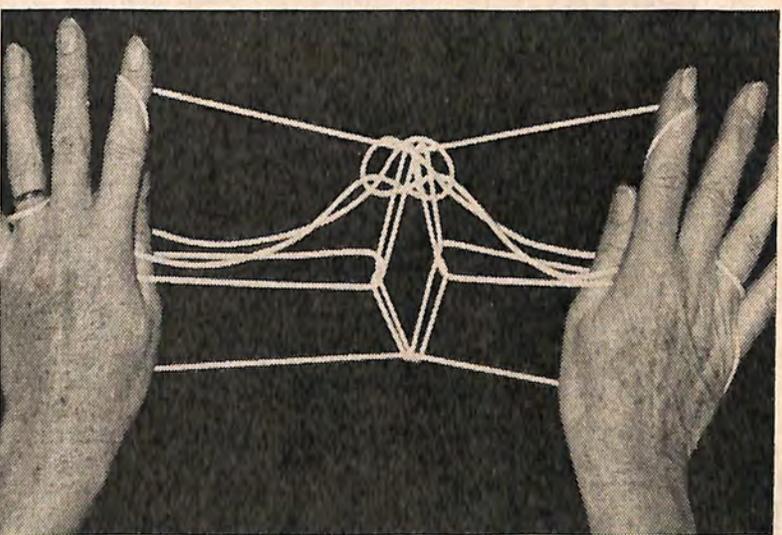
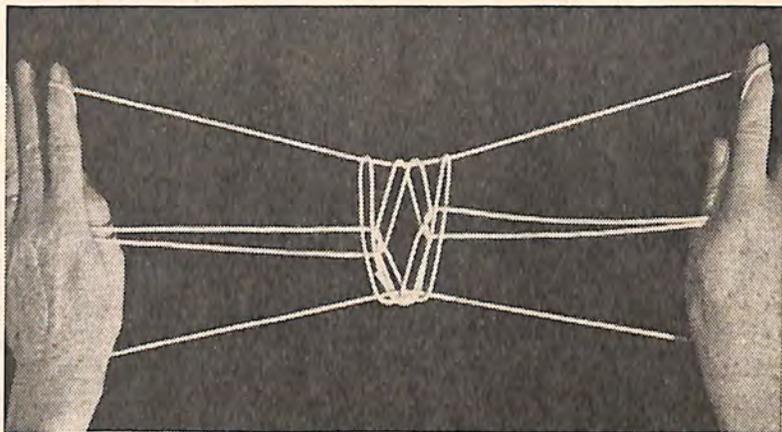
About the year 1900, Stephen presented these patterns to Dr. W. H. Furness, an American missionary, who gave them to his sister, Mrs. Caroline Furness Jayne.

### Pictured in book

Mrs. Jayne was then engaged in writing a book about string figures from many parts of the world, so she had drawings made of the Nauru figures and put them at the end of her book, which was published in 1906. (It was recently reprinted). She admitted in her work that the Nauruan patterns were "the most elaborate that have ever been collected", and added, unbelievably, that "they are apparently formed on the hands".

The figure which caused her to make this comment is, in fact, not made entirely on the hands in the Caroline Islands, though it is on Nauru. It is called *Imwingen-kuri*, meaning cross-beams supporting a house (bottom picture, p. 82).

The only other record of the making of string figures on Nauru is by the anthropologist, Paul Hambruch, who made extensive studies on Nauru before World War I. He





will provide the complexion with all the oil and moisture required to keep the skin young and beautiful.

It is to the skin virtually what water is to a flower, reviving and keeping it exquisitely fresh and flourishing. Endowed with hygroscopic qualities that attract and draw moisture from the atmosphere, the moist oil helps overcome dehydration of the epidermal (top) layer and ensures the retention of a dewy bloom on the skin all through the day. Called oil of Ulay in England and

## Youthfully Beautiful

Today you can cherish your complexion beauty as never before, keeping your skin wonderfully young and lovely. The discovery of a tropical moist oil with a remarkable, nourishing influence on the skin makes it possible for women all over the world to enjoy unprecedented complexion loveliness that is virtually evergreen.

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plexion beauty, consultants are now recommending that a film of moist tropical oil of Ulan should always be smoothed over the face and neck before applying make-up. This will nourish and beautify the skin as well as protect it against the drying effects of wind and weather.

When your complexion seems to be showing signs of keratinization (skin coarsening), brace and clarify the skin by vigorous toning. After cleansing, pat your skin briskly with a cotton pad soaked with lemon Delph skin freshener to clear away blemish-inducing impurities and invisible flakes that cause blackheads and a muddy appearance to the skin. Your complexion will soon regain a smoother texture and radiant youthful appearance.

The tissue-thin skin area surrounding your eyes needs the gentlest and tenderest of care. Finger-pat moist oil of Ulan around the eyes before you apply make-up, working from the nose and over the upper eyelid, then down and round the eyes towards the nose again. The special isotonic properties of the tropical beauty fluid makes it invaluable for keeping wrinkle-dryness at bay and protecting the youthful appearance of pretty eyes.

stated that he did not take any notice of the game while he was on the island, but got his information from a Nauruan whom he took back to Germany with him. In his study of Nauru, he described how to make 27 simple figures, using a comparatively short string.

Thus, for many years, the secret of Nauru's unique and wonderful string figures remained unsolved, and the Nauruans themselves gradually forgot them (or at least gave up making them), until, in 1937, having marvelled at the drawings in Mrs. Jayne's book, I went to Nauru with the express purpose of learning and recording any patterns that might still be remembered.

On Nauru, thanks to the enthusiastic co-operation of a small group of the older men and the hospitality, aid and encouragement of the Administrator and his wife, Captain and Mrs. R. C. Garsia, I was able, during a six-week stay on the island, to collect nearly 100 figures.

My informants worked hard, conferring together and helping each other to remember and recapitulate long-forgotten figures, and each day more and more would be reconstructed and proudly shown to me.

These included 10 of the patterns in Mrs. Jayne's book, all of which were duly learnt by me and recorded; the remainder, alas, are lost.

### More figures

After I had left the island, 23 more figures were collected and taken to Captain Garsia; these were attached to plywood and photographed, with notes made on each one by the Administrator, which showed that 12 of the patterns were new inventions and the others old ones belatedly remembered.

I have often been asked why it is that the Nauruans, in the dexterity of their movements and the intricacy and beauty of many of their patterns, have developed the art of string figure making far beyond the point where the rest of the world has stopped.

The answer, I think, is to be found in their unique annual competitions, which engendered a spirit of keen rivalry, leading to constant improvements in techniques and performance.

Where other communities, far greater in size, were content with repeating their traditional patterns from generation to generation, occasionally supplementing them by borrowing from neighbouring groups, the Nauruans alone were constantly inventing and improving; and like all true artists ever seeking an unattainable ideal of perfection.

- Papua-New Guinea's Department of Trade is encouraging the mass production of artifacts as trade, not as art, according to the author of this article, and this, he says, is destroying any sense of artistic enjoyment.

## NEW GUINEA: LAND OF UNCULTURE

*From a Port Moresby correspondent*

Perhaps Oala Oala Rarua is right. Australian expatriates in Papua-New Guinea ARE second-class citizens. Should the whole lot of them depart for Australia tomorrow they will leave behind them not one example of what one might call Art with a capital letter.

New Guineans will be left with the impression that the world's architecture consists of weather-board, fibrous-cement and corrugated-iron box-like structures.

They will know nothing of national theatre, of music, of painting, other than the traces that somehow may survive from their own earlier cultural background.

With its insistence on economic development, the Administration has neglected the cultural pursuits that are needed to make a community alive.

Except on the part of well-meaning, but often unqualified individuals, there has been no concerted effort to encourage artistic enterprise.

There has been no attempt to teach theatre, let alone establish a national theatre, as has been done in other developing countries.

Some of the groups of the Northern District of Papua are adept at mime, but they have not had any encouragement to perfect or display this art.

The Sepik and Trobriand Island people are expert wood-carvers,

but all that has been done for them is to encourage the crudification of this art for undiscerning tourists. The Department of Trade and Industry is aiding the mass-production of artifacts as trade, not as art.

Sepik masks are being turned out by the hundreds—poor, crude things that lack any kind of merit and which quickly become remote from the beauty and the bold expressionism of the painstakingly-carved originals.

To do this thing to the artists is to destroy in them any sense of art or artistic enjoyment. It is not good enough to say, as one hears it said, that Melanesian art of the past was purely utilitarian, for this is not so. It was often meant to be no more than decorative—a joy to the artist and to the eye of the beholder.

There are opportunities today, if we grasp them, for the welding into one related art form of, say, the charming bark cloth of the Northern District and the carving, weaving and other decorative ability of many others.

Musical appreciation in this country has been foisted upon the

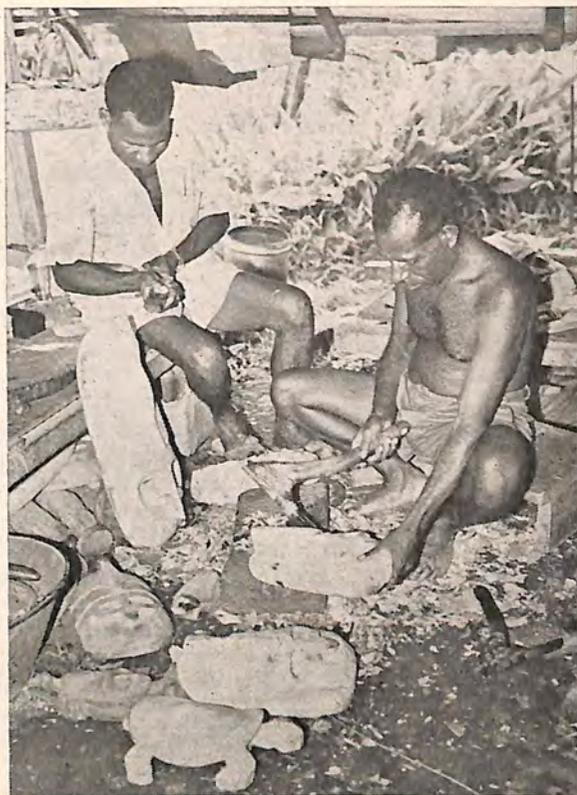
people in a haphazard way. We have groups formed into guitar and drum bands behaving in a poor imitation of The Beatles, or other similar sound-makers popularised in the territory by the Australian Broadcasting Commission.

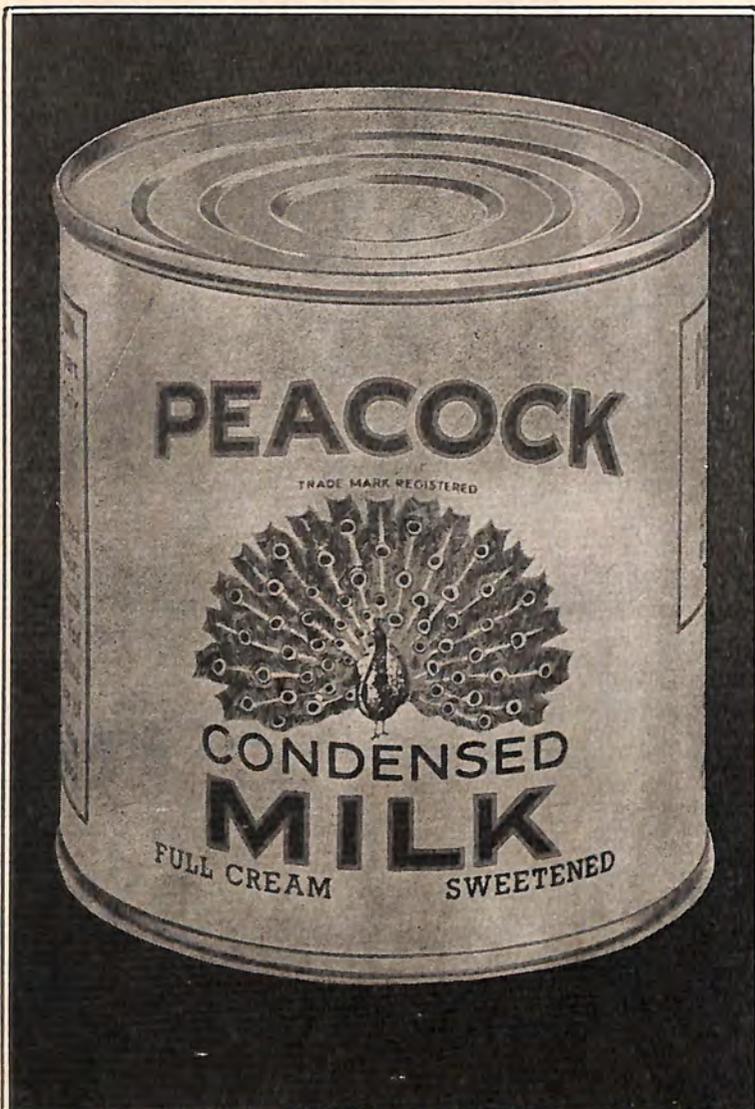
The ABC appears to believe that Melanesian programmes must contain nothing but "pop"; other kinds of music are clearly intended for the ears of the expatriates.

If this continues, the ABC may justly be accused of taking away more than it has given.

The Pacific Islands Regiment may come in for a share of criticism for many other things, but it did show regard for art when it introduced a pipe band producing unsophisticated sound but capable of sophisticated harmony.

The Government's policy of all-out economic development is narrow. The territory may perhaps be left with an economy (although there is no certainty of that), but it will have nothing else to appreciate. It will be a body without heart or soul.





## NEW CARNATION PRODUCT!

Now you can enjoy Peacock Full Cream Sweetened Condensed Milk . . . a top quality condensed milk made by the producers of Carnation Evaporated Milk. It's on sale at your local store at a value-for-money price.

## LONG ARM OF FIJI LAW WON'T REACH SO FAR NOW

Employers in Fiji using Fijian men between the age of 18 and 60 heaved a sigh of relief at the news that methods of extracting provincial taxes to finance the Fijian Administration are soon to be altered.

Defaulters are no longer to be treated as criminals and liable to be tossed in gaol if they cannot cough up the money when the long arm of the provincial constable grasps their shoulder. Future procedure is to be the same as the general Fiji law for the recovery of debts. The province to whom taxes are owed will have to sue the defaulter, and, if payment is not made, it will have power to seize his personal goods to realise money owing.

Provincial taxation is levied on Fijians over and above the normal basic tax and income tax levied by the central government. It is calculated annually by each province to cover its budget, and used mainly for minor public works and administrative charges, including the Fijian judiciary (which, it has also been announced, will progressively disappear from the Fiji scene in the next 12 months).

### Hauled off in the night

Employers in Fiji are well aware of the inconveniences for everybody of the present method of provincial tax collection. Their early morning roll-calls often reveal absentees who have been hauled off in the night by the constable for not having paid a minor sum (rarely in any one year does the tax total more than £6 a head).

At other times the employer can see trouble coming in the shape of a provincial constable hovering in the background, waving a blue chit at some unfortunate employee who is hopping from one foot to another. On such occasions it generally needs an advance of wages if the man is to be spared a week or so of prison diet.

The system of gaoling defaulters does not help the province either, for once a sentence is served the debt is wiped out.



Ratu Ganilau

There is also to be a different system of rating to realise revenue for provinces. It's been recognised that the equal division of money to finance a provincial budget among all eligible males is unfair as the poor are asked to pay as much as the rich.

Liability is to be related to the ability to pay and also to the amount and quality of land which Fijians own in their respective provinces.

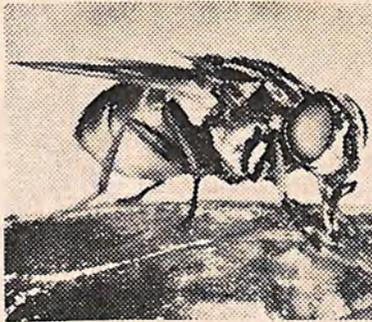
Ratu P. K. Ganilau, Minister for Fijian Affairs, has forecast that it will take some time to alter the rating system, over 4,000,000 acres of Fijian land being involved. The value of every individual piece of land has to be known.

### System criticised

The abolition of Fijian magistrates and courts will end a dual legal system in the colony which has come under increasing criticism lately.

Though dealing mainly with charges against Fijians which arise from breaches of regulations and by-laws made by the Fijian Administration, these courts also handle minor matters of a criminal nature and matrimonial causes.

The changes reflect the increasing dispersal of Fijian families throughout the colony due to better communications, expanded employment and shrinking of the village communal way of life.



## Keep your home safe from dangerous flies and mosquitoes

Most housewives know only too well the annoyance caused by flies and mosquitoes that invade the home, but not all are aware that these insect pests are guilty of conveying all manner of germs that are dangerous to human beings. One fly may carry over three-and-a-half million virulent bacteria, and the bite of a single mosquito could transmit malaria, dengue, yellow fever, encephalitis or filariasis.

It is probably all too easy to regard as harmless those two houseflies buzzing around your living-room — but stop and consider that if their progeny manage to survive every hazard you will have 382,020,000 billion descendants to deal with before the summer's end, and it becomes imperative that you kill those flies forthwith!

Mosquitoes also multiply at an alarming rate, and even in our enlightened era this dread insect still kills a million people a year. Since it needs water in

order to begin breeding, initial preventive measures point to the elimination of all places where small reservoirs of water might collect, such as old tins or bottles, fire buckets, roof gutters or drains.

The housewife has a particularly successful means at hand for instantly killing insect invaders, thanks to the development of a powerful safe aerosol spray insecticide ideal for domestic purposes because it does not contain any of the poisonous chlorinated hydro-carbons and is therefore perfectly safe to spray near children, food and pets. Because of its complete ease of application, high concentration and exceptional factors of safety, Pea-Beu aerosol fine-mist spray may be used to keep kitchen, pantry, living-room, bedroom, nursery and cellar pest-free. Its "umbrella-spreading" action expands widely and deeply, requiring an economical minimum of spraying to destroy flies, mosquitoes, cockroaches, fleas, moths, bugs and ants.

# From the Islands Press

**I**T had to happen some time [on Pitcairn Island]. A head-on collision between Hondas on a corner—luckily at slow speed and with no one hurt.

Len coming up from Aute Valley and Charles going down. Len's front forks were twisted and required a few hours' work on them, while Charles' bike has a distinct lop-sided look without there being anything much wrong. Drivers! Take heed of the first rule in the book. Keep left.—*News item in "Pitcairn Miscellany", Pitcairn Island.*

**WHAT'S** wrong with expressing an opinion these days? What's wrong with thinking that people should wear crash helmets, kids should behave on the buses, the authorities should keep the roads clear and someone should give Keith McDonald a hand with coaching junior tennis enthusiasts. Why does everyone write letters to the editor over a pen name?—*Letter from Elizabeth Mansom in "Pinnacle Post", Nauru.*

**WITH** the end of another year [1967] approaching it is customary to look back over the year just past and forward to the year ahead.

Most businessmen [in Western Samoa] have found the year the poorest for a long time as far as sales go, because what with the after effects of the hurricane; and financial restrictions, unemployment and devaluation adversely affecting *aiga* in New Zealand; the people have not had anywhere near as much money as they would like to spend.

The poor business however is not symptomatic of any chronic weakness in the economy—it was largely the result of a natural misfortune which might, of course, strike at any time but which by the law of averages is unlikely to do so again for some time.

The fact is that despite falling export earnings during this year, the economy is probably basically stronger now than it has ever been and future prospects are very bright.

Coconut replanting is going ahead well and the first effects of

this will be felt in another two years.

There is little doubt that agricultural production and earnings will next year show an enormous improvement over this year's figures.

Potlatch should start operating before the middle of next year and there is not much doubt that with the clear-cut approval given Potlatch, other big overseas companies eyeing the vast potential of the land and sea of Samoa will not be far behind.

This then has been a good year to get out of but it has contained the elements leading to greater prosperity ahead.—*Editorial in the "Apia Advertiser", Apia.*

**GIVEN** permission to go for a drink of water while working with a party from Suva Gaol, a 19-year-old Fijian prisoner took the opportunity to escape. But his liberty did not last long.

The thirst that freed him also trapped him, for within 24 hours he was caught drinking the Fijian national drink, *yagona* (kava), in a saloon in Suva. He had changed into civilian clothes but was recognised and re-captured. He went back to prison quietly.—*News item in government newsletter, "News from Fiji", Suva.*

**FOR** years ownership of the former German and Japanese lands on Yap has been clouded.

At the end of World War II, land held by the Japanese automatically was turned over to Trust Territory's new government. But what land had the Japanese acquired legally, and what had been seized during the war with little or nothing paid the original owners? Where were the boundaries of the land?

Thanks largely to the efforts of Peace Corps lawyers and the land management office, an attempt is now being made to find out what land really belongs to the government.

During the past year and one-half, the government has filed claim to three tracts formerly held by the Germans and Japanese. After a claim is filed, Yapese who feel they have rights in the

property have up to one year to notify the government. Then a hearing is held and ownership determined.

One of the big reasons for pressing claims now is so future planning can be carried out, knowing what land is owned by the government, what is not.—*News item in "The Rai Review", Yap Island, Western Carolines.*

**I** AM a Fijian with a peaceful mind. I hope that more than 90 per cent. of my race like to live and work with Europeans and Indians. . . .

There is a lot of talk about the future of Fiji, in and outside of Fiji.

The only solution which I hope will solve the problem is for our Fijian chiefs to ask Her Majesty's Government to hand over the rights of our land which our great chiefs bestowed on her in 1874, so that we Fijians can do what we like with our beloved Fiji.—*Letter from Viliame Saulekaleka, of Ra, in "The Fiji Times", Suva.*

**THE** police [on Tarawa] wish to draw the public's attention to a large number of juveniles, ages ranging from six to 15 years, who are operating among residences.

Their methods are to steal a few eggs—or shells, which they then take around the houses—not to sell, unless the house is occupied, but merely to justify their presence near the house if seen.

In the event of the house being left open while the occupier is out the children go through the windows and steal whatever is handy to dispose of, and particularly cash.

These are not isolated cases, but very prevalent. Many arrests have been made; and in several cases the culprits have been relatives of household staff and have at some time or other visited the house with such staff, and have gained pre-knowledge of the layout and whereabouts of the most desirable objects.

Frigidaires, and foodstuffs, including drinks of all kinds are good targets, as also cigarettes.—*Police notice in "Colony Information Notes", Tarawa.*

# ISFA NEWS

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE INTERNATIONAL STRING FIGURE ASSOCIATION

## *Sixth Bulletin Nears Completion*

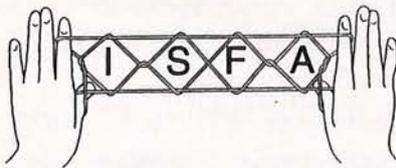
The 1999 issue of our Bulletin is nearly complete. At this point a press run in early November seems likely. By mid-December the books should be ready to mail.

Again we anticipate a large issue approaching 300 pages. This year's issue will open with a tribute to Kathleen Haddon written by her son, Dr. Henry Rishbeth. Mike Meredith has contributed an essay on the properties of various string types. Sam Cannarozzi Yada and Tim Kennedy both offer string stories. The use of string figures in the classroom is the focus of an article by Audrey Small and Barbara O'Rand. Several small collections from Asia are featured in our Research Reports section, including figures from India (Will Wirt), Assam (A. Johnston Abraham), Burma, and Sri Lanka (Hornell). Carey C.K. Smith presents a few figures he gathered in 1980 among the

Maori of New Zealand, while Dave Titus describes additional figures gathered by G.B. Gordon during his second trip to Alaska in 1907. An assortment of modern figures are featured in articles by Tetsuo Sato and Kazuo Kamiya. Three rather hefty articles complete the issue: a profusely illustrated article by George Bennet describing his arrow code for recording string figures; a speculative but well-documented article by Martin Probert on the origin of string figures, and another mind-boggling article by James Murphy on how to teach math skills using string figures (his "North American Net" system).

Again we wish to thank everyone for their patience during the lengthy editing process. While waiting for the Bulletin, members are invited to enjoy the September issue of *String Figure Magazine*. This issue, prepared by Joseph D'Antoni, features six novel figures: 'Water Gourd' from Hawaii, 'Kiwi' from New Zealand, 'Finger Trick' from Japan, 'Howling Monkey's Jaw' from Guyana, 'Bed' from central Africa, and 'Hull of a Ship' from Nauru.

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## *New Members*

Since March, the ISFA has acquired twenty-one new members. However, thirty-one of our 1998 members failed to renew. We now have 178 members residing in 22 countries. Once we reach our goal of 250 members, the ISFA will become self-supporting. Please encourage others to join whenever possible.

Our new overseas members are: *Kate Bunney*, Albany, Australia; *Briar O'Connor* and *Elizabeth*

*Patterson*, Auckland, New Zealand; *Staffan Norrman*, Sollentuna, Sweden; *Elizabeth Tilling*, Tyne and Wear, England; *Lothar Walschik*, Bremen, Germany; *Claude DuPasquier*, Villars-sur-glâne, Switzerland; *Takuyo Uemura*, Ayatown, Japan; and *Alex Budzier*, Newbrandenburg, Germany. From Canada we have *Ellen Gray*, Victoria, British Columbia. New U.S. members include: *Allan Reinap*, Reno, Nevada; *George Bego Gerhart*, Moab, Utah; *Johanna McCormick*, Sunnysvale, California; *Crystal Brown*, Boonsboro, Maryland; *Cathy Traut-Hessom*, Redwood Valley, California; *Suzanne Courteau*, Albany, California; *Fred Alcantar Jr.*, Burbank, California; *Yonah Lempert*, Ithaca, New York; *Audrey Kopp*, Marina Del Rey, California; *Dirk Elzinga*, Taylorsville, Utah; and *Matthew Roy*, Independence, California. A big welcome to all of you!

### ***Karl Schaffer in Scientific American***

ISFA member Karl Schaffer and his math-inspired dance ensemble are the focus of Ian Stewart's "Mathematical Recreations" column in the September issue of *Scientific American*. Dr. Schaffer wrote to Stewart shortly after the article entitled "Cat's Cradle Calculus Challenge" appeared in the December 1997 issue. In his letter, Schaffer described how his innovative dance ensemble, based in Santa Cruz, California, uses huge geometric string figures to help kids visualize math concepts. Illustrations showing how two dancers form a tetrahedron appear in the article.

Karl Schaffer, co-founder Erik Stern, and puzzle-master Scott Kim began incorporating string fig-



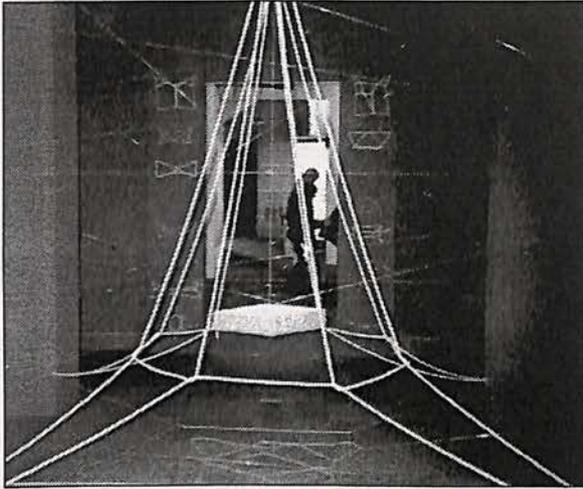
*Schaffer and Stern (Photo by Ron Reinberg)*

ures into their dance routines in 1994 after meeting ISFA member Greg Keith. What evolved was a 50-minute performance called *Through the Loop in Search of a Perfect Square*, billed as "a show for elementary schools that tells the story of three characters on a journey of mathematical discovery, featuring giant string figures and giant tangrams." Since its inception the show has been performed hundreds of times throughout Northern California and the West.

Schaffer and Stern formed their choreographic partnership in 1985. Kim joined them in 1992. Schaffer began dancing in Birmingham, Alabama, with Southern Danceworks, and has mastered many styles including Flamenco, Bharatya Natyam, tap, and Tai Chi Chuan. He is also the recipient of a Ph.D. in Mathematics from the University of California, Santa Cruz, and teaches math when not dancing. Stern, a professional choreographer, earned a Bachelor's degree in Biology and later a Master of Fine Arts degree from Cal Arts. Scott Kim is a well-known puzzle master, graphic artist, and designer of educational software. His puzzle designs can be found in toy stores nationwide, and he's currently the author of the puzzle column in *Discover* magazine. He received a B.A. in Music and a Ph.D. in Computers and Graphic Design from Stanford University. The ensemble is the recipient of numerous awards, including a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. Their performance schedule and other information is posted on the web at: ([www.scottkim.com/dance](http://www.scottkim.com/dance)).

### ***New Zealand String Figure Exhibit***

Late last year ISFA member Carey C.K. Smith sent photos of an impressive exhibit he visited at the new *Te Papa* museum in Wellington, New Zealand. The exhibit featured fluorescent string figures illuminated by black lights, video clips of Maori string figures being made (film footage from 1920), and an eight-foot tall replica of *Whare Kehua* — a traditional Maori figure that resembles the Eiffel Tower.



*'Whare Kehua,' measuring eight feet tall.  
Fluorescent string figures adorn the walls.*

The exhibit was created by Maureen Lander, also a member of the ISFA. Lander, who holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Photography and a Masters in Sculpture, is fascinated by new media, including light-sensitive finishes and moving images. *String Games* is her most dynamic installation to date. It was installed in early 1998 for the opening of *Te Papa* (formerly, the Dominion Museum). Dual heritage plays an important role in her work (Maureen is half Maori). Much of her art is connected to craft traditions, especially those that employ natural fibers derived from flax. She is best known for her large, mixed-media installations in which sculpture, fiber, light, and space are combined.

Her latest installation, *Digital String Games*, was created for the Ninth International Symposium of the Electronic Arts, held last year in Liverpool, England. In this exhibit, Lander and co-creator John Fairclough explored parallels between string games, one of the earliest forms of moving image, and interactive digital games, so popular among today's youth. Responding to instructions from a custom user interface, a computer generated images of string figures in real time, which it then projected.

In addition to art degrees, Maureen holds a Bachelor's degree in Maori Studies. She lectures on material culture in the Maori Studies Department at

the University of Auckland. As some of you may recall, the department sponsored a web site on Maori string figures several years ago that featured old photos collected by Andersen, illustrated instructions for making traditional designs, and sound clips of Maori chants.

### *Next stop Aya Town*

The latest addition to the ISFA member list is actually a town — Aya, located in the Miyazaki Prefecture of Kyushu, Japan. Last month the town's tourist commissioner contacted Tetsuo Sato (our spokesman in Japan) requesting membership. In Japanese, the word for string figure begins with 'aya' (*ayatori*, or more precisely, *aya ito tori*, meaning 'woof pattern string-taking'). The commissioner wants to use string figures to promote the town's image as an innovative, multicultural center for business, recreation, and the arts.

Participants in our e-mail discussion group may recall a posting by Sato about a bridge called *Ayatori-Hashi* (String Figure Bridge), near Yamanaka Hotspring in the Ishikawa Prefecture. Unfortunately the bridge is not located in Aya-town, but Aya-town does have its own suspension bridge — a very impressive one measuring 250 meters in length. A picture of it is posted on the web at:

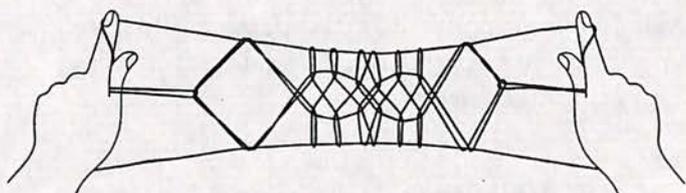
[www.miyazaki-nw.or.jp/ayatown/eindex.html](http://www.miyazaki-nw.or.jp/ayatown/eindex.html)

It's nice to know that we now have an entire town that supports our efforts to promote string figures. Perhaps the ISFA should hold their next international gathering there!

### *Odds and Ends*

Honor Maude, the world's foremost authority on Pacific Island string figures, celebrated her 94th birthday on July 10. To commemorate the occasion, the ISFA sent her a *Lifetime Achievement Award* certificate with an inscription reading "for meritorious service in the gathering of string fig-

ures.” A drawing of ‘Administration Staffs’ from Nauru adorned the certificate. Honor was thrilled.



*‘Administration Staffs’ from Honor Maude’s Nauru book.  
Drawing by Mark Sherman.*

Mark Sherman spent much of the summer mounting Nauru string figures for the artist working on the second edition of Honor Maude’s “The String Figures of Nauru Island.” In addition to the 120 figures described in her book, he also mounted the 35 “unsolved” Jayne/Garsia figures that ISFA members managed to reconstruct over the years. To weave the intricate figures Sherman selected a very thin, slippery, string: one with properties resembling the hair string used by Nauruans. String used for making fringe on costumes proved to be ideal. The finished patterns were taped to large sheets of black construction paper and shipped to Fiji for eventual display at the University of the South Pacific and perhaps Nauru.

Two of our overseas members were busy this summer translating our web pages (posted at [www.isfa.org](http://www.isfa.org)). *Myriam Namolaru* kindly provided a French translation, while *Alex Budzier* supplied us with a German translation. We still lack a Spanish translation (Japanese would be nice too!). We are hoping that the translations will attract more non-English speaking enthusiasts.

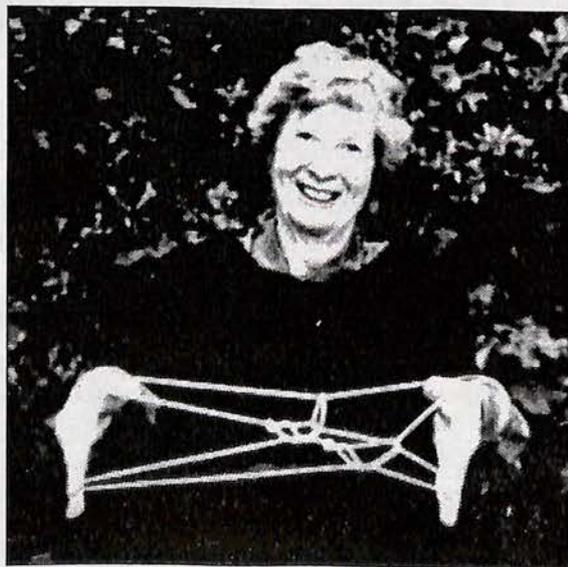
Dr. Tom Storer spent much of his summer updating his monumental *String Figure Bibliography* — a task that has kept him busy for over 30 years now. The first edition appeared in our Bulletin way back in 1985. In 1996, ISFA Press published a second edition. Plans for publishing a third edition are now being finalized. The third edition will include several hundred new entries. All members are encouraged to send photocopies of new items, no matter how small or trivial, to Tom Storer, Math Department, University of Michigan, Ann

Arbor, Michigan 48109, USA. Don’t forget to include the author, article or book title, journal or magazine title (if applicable), page numbers, and publisher (company’s name and location).

Dave Titus returned to Nepal during the month of May, where he visited a leper colony in the remote western part of the country and taught string figures. During his six-week visit Dave distributed over 4000 colored loops of string! Upon his return he visited a camp in New York for inner city children with AIDS. He also stopped by the University Museum in Philadelphia to dig through their archives. His efforts were richly rewarded: in addition to the twenty figures published in our third Bulletin, Dave discovered that G.B. Gordon collected an additional fifty-five figures during his visit to Alaska in 1905, all of which he mounted on cards. Look for these in a future Bulletin.

## *Member Profile*

The following biography of Audrey Small was written by columnist Ann Doro. It first appeared in the January 1999 issue of *Senior Lifestyle*, Oroville, California.



*Audrey Small with ‘Two Ptarmigans’ from Alaska.*

As a child in England, Audrey Small learned ‘Tallow Dips,’ a series of string figures based on an old British folk tale of a man who stole tallow

dips from the market and was arrested for this minor offense. Tallow dips are wicks dipped in melted animal fat. Her mother taught Audrey several string figures and thus was born Audrey's continuing fascination with telling stories or poems while accompanying them with string figures. Over a ten-year period, Audrey's mother, Paula Collinson, studied folklore and string figures, guided by her father, Professor W.E. Collinson of the University of Liverpool. She entertained at clubs, schools, and library societies.

It is only natural for Audrey to hold an audience spellbound with her magical strings. "I remember when my mother said, 'You're on your own now. I've taught you some of the basics. You can learn much more from books.'" Thus Audrey began a lifetime devotion to keeping alive the tradition of accompanying story with strings that seem to talk.

In 1939, Audrey took a subsidiary high school certificate (the equivalent of a high school diploma) and planned to enroll in the University of Liverpool in the Fall. She might have gone through with her initial plan, but World War II intervened. In July of that year, Audrey accompanied her mother on a visit to relatives in New York and Chicago. They also attended the New York World's Fair, as well as the Pan-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco.

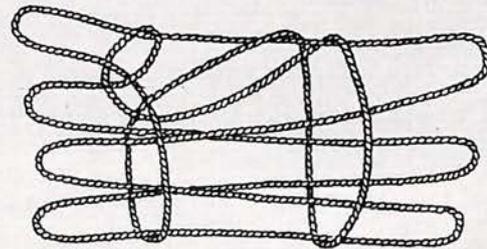
During this visit in the U.S., they received a wire from Professor Collinson, advising that since the Germans had been torpedoing ships in the North Atlantic, it would not be safe for them to return. It was considered unsafe for German-born Mrs. Collinson to return at all during the war. Though Audrey wanted to join her friends, working in the Ambulance Corps, or in anti-aircraft activities, she accepted her fate and enrolled at the University of Chicago, living at International House near the campus. She received a B.A. in English in 1943.

While in a Shakespeare class at the University, she met Phil Small. They were married on December 11, 1942. The marriage was kept a secret. Phil

had become a cadet in the Merchant Marine Academy at King's Point on Long Island. Cadets were not allowed to be married.

Following the wedding, Audrey returned to her course work at the University, joining her husband after graduation. They lived in a one room apartment on Riverside Drive in New York City. While her husband did convoy duty, Audrey was employed by Thomas Crowell Company in New York, working on the new *Roget's Thesaurus*. When the war was over in Europe, the Smalls moved west, and in 1945, Audrey worked at the U.C. Berkeley library. After V.J. Day, the Smalls decided to start their family.

When their children were grown, Audrey attended the College of Holy Names in Oakland, Califor-



One of Audrey's poems, first published in *Blue Unicorn* in 1997, is "The Caribou in the Willows."

In summer  
a caribou makes his way  
to the willows' shade  
Standing there  
his branches their branches  
his limbs their limbs  
he waits  
When it is dark  
when form and shadow are  
one  
he walks away.

Kathleen Haddon, author of "Artists in String" writes, "The caribou, it is said, when it became hot, stayed in the willows, but when it grew cool it went away."

nia, where she received a Masters in English and a secondary education credential. While in college here, she was asked to give a workshop on string figures for student teachers. In addition, she gave a demonstration at the Raskob Institute for Reading. Since that time she has been invited by a number of schools, libraries and Girl Scout organizations to present her string figures.

The Smalls are frequent International travelers. Wherever Audrey goes she shares string figures. "They are a great aid to communication, being interdisciplinary, intergenerational and multicultural," she stated. Audrey and Phil moved to Paradise, California, in 1981, where she continues to entertain and instruct at the Paradise and Chico Libraries, at schools in Chico, Oroville, and Paradise and at poetry readings where she shares her own poetry as well as many of the classics, accompanying them with string figures.

### ***String Figure Discussion Group: Summary of Topics***

Since not everyone has access to e-mail and our string figure discussion group, a summary of topics posted since March is provided here. If a specific topic interests you and you would like a printed copy of the message and the responses it generated, contact ISFA Press.

- Macrame string (Meredith)
- 'Scissors' from India (Wirt)
- Donating photos to museums (Titus)
- Fire Drill to Jacob's Ladder (Titus)
- Four methods for 'Fire Drill' (Wirt)
- Alaskan 'Swan'; Mamtrelich twist (Titus)
- TV sighting: "Simpsons" (Parkinson)
- TV sighting: "Adam's Family" (Meredith)
- 'Cat's Whiskers' (Meredith, Wirt, Engelhardt)
- TV sighting: Aborigines documentary (Watson)
- Overcoming adult inhibition (Noble)
- Ad sighting (Darsie)
- Indian 'Bier' and related Quinault figure (Wirt)
- 'Outboard Motor' (Wirt)
- German Jacob's Ladder (Engelhardt)

- Assisted migration of string figures; K. Haddon at Yam Island, Torres Strait (Rishbeth)
- Torres Strait Islanders exhibition at the Haddon Library, Cambridge (Rishbeth)
- Torres Strait Islander in Jayne's book; meeting of K. Haddon and Jayne (Noble, Rishbeth)
- Aleut string figure in *Ranger Rick* (Holbrook)
- Inuit film at museum in Osaka (Sato)
- Navaho figures in *New Mexico* magazine, invitation to visit reservation (Hartman)
- Ankle string trick from India (Wirt)
- String figure on decorative box lid from Arizona (Kennedy)
- String in recertification workshops (Peterson)
- New French web site (Namolaru)
- Archiving web sites that feature string figures; Maori site (D'Antoni)
- 'Movie Screen' variations (Hocking, Small)
- Marcel Duchamp with string figure (Kennedy)
- Inuit 'Mammoth' figure mentioned on Japanese radio program (Sato)
- 'Nose Trick,' 'Crow's Foot' from India (Wirt)
- Variations of 'Crab,' 'Ten Men,' and 'House of Blos-Bird' (Tilling, Wirt)
- English names for Jayne 845 and 856 (Tilling)
- String figures in leprosy hospital at Jumla, Nepal; some figures from Bhutan (Titus)
- Inuit figure that resembles a lobster; making string figures in public to kill time (Tilling)
- Greenland string figure in *Sea Kayaker* (Wirt)
- New children's tale: "Princess Ayatori" (Sato)
- Notes on string figures from Bhutan; Cat's Cradle seen on TV series MASH (Titus)
- Memories of last year's gathering in Winnipeg, comments about '99 Folk Festival (Neufeld)
- Navaho 'Six Diamonds' and Mexican 'Six Eyes' (Lee, McCarthy, Wirt)
- Multiple 'Diamonds' (inoli)
- 'Two Fawns' errata (Meredith, Wirt)
- Explanations of several Japanese string figure titles (Probert, Sato)
- Discovery of more Gordon figures at University Museum (Titus, Parkinson, Sherman)
- ISFA in latest *Scientific American* (D'Antoni)
- Artwork featuring string figures for sale (Titus)
- True meaning of the term 'cat's cradle' (Noble)
- String figure database (Namolaru, Probert)

## CHILDREN LEARNING THE INTRICACIES OF CAT'S CRADLE FROM AN EXPERT



Mrs. H. E. Maude demonstrates how to make "Cat's Cradles" to children who attended the garden party held at "Huntly," the property of Mr. John Gale. Proceeds of the party will augment the World Refugee Year Appeal.

# Green fingers in cat's cradles

**GERANIUM** growing and the intricacies of finger - weaving cat's cradles would probably seem poles apart to any one but Mrs. Honor Maude, of Forrest.

**B**UT she has developed a skill in both arts. She can produce a canoe house from a 12 ft. piece of string as easily as she can snip off a geranium cutting.

Scattered around her pleasant university flat there are 60 varieties of geraniums in hundreds of pots, and remembrance pieces from years spent in the Pacific Islands. Like the lounge upholstered in tapa cloth and woven pandanus floor rugs.

## ● Geranium culture

The first in the family to take up geranium culture was her husband. Mr. Maude said this was probably defensive action against the demands made on him by the large garden of the Wahroonga home where they lived for a time after 20 years in the islands.

In any case, they both took to geraniums like ducks to water.

With their interest in geraniums reawakened in England during a holiday, they became members of the first geranium - growing

society in New South Wales on their return.

Recognised in Canberra as an authority on the subject, Mrs. Maude has been happy to pass on some of her knowledge of plants at garden club meetings, horticultural gatherings and on TV programmes.

She has also collaborated with her husband in writing the book "String Figures from the Gilbert Islands" and a second anthropological book is half-written.

During a world tour she appeared on TV in Hawaii and spoke about the 200 known cat's cradle designs.

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MRS. MAUDE

figures which she herself can make.

She expects to do a similar telecast soon from one of the Canberra stations.

Cat's cradles can be useful as well as fascinating playthings, Mrs. Maude said, since they strengthen muscles in disabled hands.

While in Sydney she spent two days a week at the Margaret Reid Hospital for Crippled Children, teaching patterns to children.

# It's a Cheap Hobby for All Ages, But There Are Strings Attached

By ELIZABETH SEAY

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

There's Nintendo, there's Myst, and then there's string.

"Strings become an obsession with some people," says Gelvin Stevenson, an investment consultant and a connoisseur of string figures. "It's like a moving meditation."

Weaving designs on the fingers with a loop of string is more than a childhood game. The International String Figure Association recently expanded its bulletin into an annual journal; it has some 200 adult members, about half in the U.S. and the next-largest contingent from Japan.

The journal's editor, Mark Sherman, is a biochemist in Pasadena, Calif. He says the group's members include mathematicians, musicians and anthropologists. Among the latter is Honor Maude, a 90-year-old Australian woman who has published what Mr. Sherman calls "the absolute bible of string-figure literature." Mr. Sherman's favorite string figure is Many Stars, a Navajo design representing the Arizona sky at night.

The journal reports on string figures from around the world. In its pages, designs familiar to schoolchildren, like the Witch's Broom and the Cup and Saucer,

are joined by more exotic figures, including the Squid, the Brassiere and the Two Fish Swimming Apart.

The journal ponders such topics as "the presence of string in the postmodern world" and features how-to diagrams and readers' queries and observations. One letter writer seeks to learn the lost art of making a string elephant; another reports that modern-day Mexican revolutionaries relax with string figures.

But string figures can be more than a pastime: They can be therapy for the blind, exercise for the arthritic and a learning tool for anyone. One New York teacher, James Murphy, helps his students at La Guardia High School learn math and logic with string figures. Mr. Stevenson, the investment counselor, teaches string figuring to former prison inmates. The activity, he says, "teaches you to follow detailed instructions, to go step by step to reach a solution." He adds, "I like to think of algebra, trigonometry, calculus and string figures."

Others simply enjoy inventing new shapes. Joseph D'Antoni, a New York physics teacher, explains his fascination with the process: "It's just a miracle that out of a tangle of string something will pop into view."

Nov. 8<sup>th</sup> 1964.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 1964

## A riddle in the garden

# WHAT IS A GERANIUM?

By a staff reporter

**WHEN** is a geranium not a geranium? When it's a pelargonium!

The riddle was solved for us by Mrs. H. E. Maude, of Forrest, well known for her geranium growing.

"Geraniums and pelargoniums both belong to the geraniaceae family," she said, "but the plant most people know as a geranium is, in fact, a pelargonium.

"However, it has been called a geranium for so long that authorities feel it is much too late to make any change.

### The true geranium

"The true geranium is deciduous, usually hardy, with a small, fragile four-petalled cup-shaped flower and delicate, many-armed star-shaped leaves.

"As a matter of fact, the little Australian weed known locally as the Cup-leaved Cranesbill is a true geranium."

Mrs. Maude, who has grown up to 200 'geranium' varieties and at the moment has 40 different plants, said pelargoniums originally were brought to England from South Africa in Victorian times.

"England and France hybridised them, and if certain species were returned to their native land

today, I doubt if they would be recognised."

Mrs. Maude said it was perhaps not generally realised what a great variety of pelargoniums existed.

"Some plants are grown solely for their colourful leaves, some for their scent, some as miniatures, and others for the shape or colour of their blooms."

### Another puzzle

Mrs. Maude solved another puzzle for us.

When is a game not a game? When it is a cultural art!

Mrs. Maude is a world authority on cats' cradles. She has published one book on the art and another is in preparation.

She is debating where to publish the second book. She said it was difficult to find finance in Australia and she might have to approach American publishers.

"Cats' cradles are technically known as string figures, which they literally are," Mrs. Maude said. "They are an ancient form of art and a means of tracing culture contacts among different civilisations.

"Pieces of Mayan pottery, dating from about 400 A.D. and decorated with string figure patterns,



Mrs. H. E. Maude, pictured yesterday with some of the 40 'geranium' plants she is growing at her home in Forrest.

have been unearthed in South America, while a cat's cradle was actually used as a form of traction on broken limbs by a physician at the court of the Emperor Julian, in the same period.

"After that period, there is an enormous gap in our knowledge of string figures until Captain Bligh remarked upon seeing them in Tahiti."

Mrs. Maude spent 20 years in the Gilbert Islands when her husband was an Administrator there. It was during this time that she acquired her enormous wealth of knowledge of this early, but still contemporary, art.

She collected 120 dif-

ferent patterns during her stay in the islands, and has since acquired a total of about 500 designs.

"Cats' cradles are seldom, if ever, seen among island peoples unless the visitor first produces the string, but once you show your interest they are eager to share their secrets with you," Mrs. Maude said.

"In one area in the Gilbert Islands, string figures are part of local religious beliefs. Certain patterns must be learned because,

according to belief, when people die they are met by a spirit with a half-completed design. If they cannot finish it, they are unable to enter the spirit world."

Mrs. Maude taught cats' cradles to patients in the Margaret Reid and Collaroy hospitals for crippled children.

"When I went back two years later, I found the children had handed on the patterns I had taught to newcomers without any aid from adults."

## HONORARY LIFE MEMBERSHIP to MRS HONOR MAUDE

The Annual General Meeting held 4 February, 1984, was a great occasion when Honorary Life Membership of the Society was conferred on Mrs Honor Maude. Mr Lansdown, retiring President, spoke of the distinguished service given by Mrs Maude to the Canberra community as a whole, over many years, and also of the devotion she had given to the culture of pelargoniums and species geraniums, firstly in Sydney and, after moving to Canberra, to this Society. He said it gave him much pleasure to hand to her the Certificate of Honorary Life Membership.

In responding, Mrs Maude gave a brief account of her introduction to "geraniums" in Australia. Her husband bought some and after getting them home said: "I don't think I really know what to do with them, why don't you plant them"? Mrs Maude went on to say: "I haven't taken much of an active part in this Society during recent years, but as you know there comes a time when one must slow down, so I am both honored and grateful to you all for this generous gesture". She added: "When I first joined this Society, it did not have the numbers of today and it is only during the last few years, with increasing numbers, that meetings have not been held in members' gardens."

Mrs Maude's garden, at Forrest, was always the venue for at least one meeting during the year, when members were able to view her plants both cultivars in pots and the in-ground Geranium and Erodium species. It is also interesting to note that Mr J Blakeman and Mrs J Courtice, both mentioned in Mrs Maude's following account, are now Honorary Life Members of this Society. Mrs Maude's "geranium" growing activities encompassed both Sydney and Canberra. She has given us this short history of events leading up to the formation of our Society.

L.A.

Your kindness has prompted me to look back to the beginnings of the revival of "geranium" culture in Australia. It really can be said to have begun with John Blakeman, who was growing and hybridising "geraniums" in Melbourne as long ago as 1940 at Tally Ho, Victoria. He wrote a series of articles about them in the "Australian Garden Lover", first in 1953 and then from January 1954, under his own name. I intend to donate a copy of these 1954 articles to the Society. ( From this time John Blakeman continued regular contributions to various gardening journals until his pressure of work and illness at Alice Springs made it impossible. Ed.)

These articles stimulated a few "geranium" lovers in Sydney to get together and form a group which, in August 1954, became a Geranium Society section of the Royal Horticultural Society of N.S.W.

My husband and I were founding members and the first meeting was held in the home of Mrs David Pratten in Pymble. Our first President, Mr R H Anderson, was the Director of the Botanic Gardens. At one time our meetings were held in the Board Room of the Commonwealth Bank in Martin Place.

Our first show was set up in October 1954 at the Sydney Town Hall. You will see by the photograph I presented to the Society that it was a good effort by a few pioneering people.

Soon after this I went to Melbourne for the sole purpose of visiting John Blakeman and seeing his "geraniums". I returned home with a number of plants, including two - 'Honor Maude' and 'Wahroonga' - which were two new cultivars named after me and where I lived.

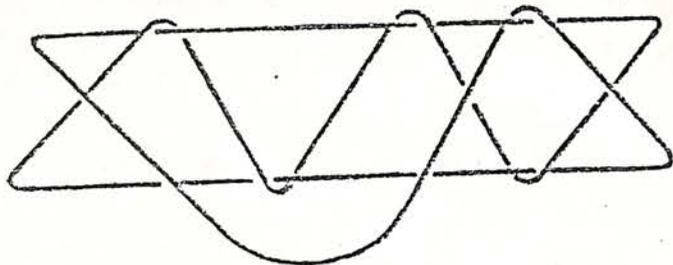
I invited John to come and stay with us and to give a talk to our group, which he did - and it was after his visit that the "Melbourne Branch of the Australian Geranium Society" was formed on 16 May, 1956, with John as the first Secretary.

The two first commercial "geranium" growers in Sydney were both members of our Society - Jane Barling at Mona Vale and Mrs Ruby Gibson at Chatswood. Mrs Jean Llewellyn was also an early member of the Society, and as you all know has become one of Australia's foremost growers as well as a specialist on varieties and cultivar names. After we left Sydney she founded, in 1958, a separate society now known as the Australian Geranium Society.

In the very early days of television in Canberra I was asked to give a talk on "geraniums" and to show some plants and demonstrate potting methods. I did my programme and was told it was good, but unfortunately something was wrong with the cameras so I had to do it again. Once again something went wrong and I was asked if I could possibly manage to do it a third time. My husband assures me that at that stage they phoned him to come and stand by in case of need.

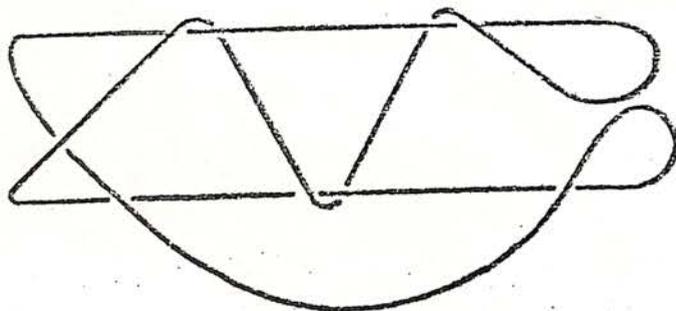
I think that this TV demonstration aroused a degree of interest in "geranium" growing and a little later I was asked to give a talk for the Horticultural Society at the Albert Hall. Several times after this Mrs Taber and I set up a display of "geraniums" at that Society's shows, which again brought these plants to the notice of the public. (This display was set-up by our Society each year until 1981, and was discontinued following our first show in 1980. We appreciated this opportunity to display "geraniums" to Canberra people and, thereby, enlist members for our Society. Ed.) Finally Mrs Joy Courtice founded the Canberra Society in February, 1968. There were 23 financial members, including Jean Llewellyn, that first year, and from that beginning there grew this flourishing Geranium and Fuchsia Society of today.

HONOR MAUDE



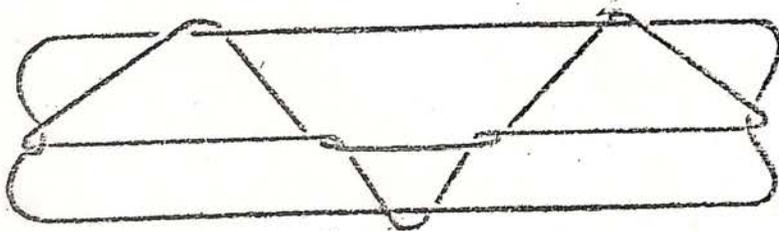
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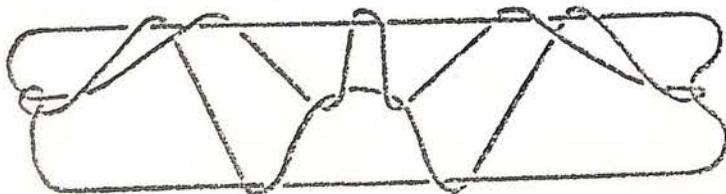
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28e. Paitere



$3\frac{1}{2}$

28f. Paitere



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28g. Paitere

Tonga 1941

Matafui a shau.

Fua fua bea moia

peau tohi oma ea

Fai fai peau fepaki

peau to kia fete vai

Bili ko vai manu lele.

Tove lalukope

This is only 5 of  
a ten ~~or more~~

line chant which  
a juggler recites  
while juggling.

I think the purpose  
was to measure  
how long a juggler  
could juggle.

Take two feet of string and tie a pipi seed to each end; then tie a small loop in the middle of the string and hold it in your right hand. Take one seed in your left hand and holding hands horizontal slowly rotate right hand clockwise. After a few moments throw down the seed in the left hand and <sup>the</sup> seeds should rotate in opposite directions.

(I have never tried this since 1941! Can you suggest an alternative to a pipi seed? I can't remember whether it is round & hard or flat.)

## Menakaibola

1. Place string on left wrist. Distally grasp ulnar wrist string between thumb and forefinger (index) of right hand about two inches below left wrist; pull this string towards you, across left wrist and over back of left hand, then drop between left ring and little finger.
2. Keeping hands close together insert right hand from proximal ulnar side into hanging loop, pass it distal to string lying between left ring and little finger, then make a complete clockwise turn proximal to both strings of hanging loop and insert right little finger distally into wrist loop proximal to string lying across palm. Draw right hand towards you, then return both hands to an upright position and extend.
- 3-7. As in Bulletin No.11.
8. Putting the tips of left little finger and thumb together, pass them, and all other fingers, from distal side through the figure allowing strings to slip off back of hand; then spread left thumb and little finger widely. Turn right hand away from you.

## NOTES ON TERMINOLOGY

Strings - The strings used are always closed loops. To make a short string use about 7 feet of a soft nylon cord and for a long string use 11 or 12 feet; knot or sew the ends together.

Palmar and Dorsal - The part of a string which lies across the palm of a hand is described as palmar, the part lying across the back of a hand is dorsal.

Near and Far - Anything on the thumb side of the hand is called near, anything on the little finger side is called far. Since a string passing round a finger or fingers forms a loop, each loop possesses a near and a far string.

Upper and Lower - Of two strings or loops on the same finger, the one nearer the palm of the hand is called lower, the one nearer the tip of the finger is called upper.

Extend - Draw hands apart until strings are taut.

Twisting Loops - A loop may be twisted in two directions, either towards you or away from you. If towards you the finger is rotated towards you, down, away from you and up again, taking care not to get entangled with any other strings. If away from you the movement is done in the opposite direction.

Position 1 - Put tips of thumbs and little fingers of each hand together and then insert into loop of string, separate thumbs and little fingers and extend hands (the strings must not be crossed).

Opening A and B - Position 1, then pick up palmar string of each hand from below on back of index of opposite hand, right index first and then left index (through right index loop from above) for Opening A; in Opening B the right palmar string is picked up first.

Murray Opening - Hold string between thumbs and indices with hands about 6 inches apart and the loop hanging down; make a small hanging loop with the 6 inches of string by bringing hands together, right over left, insert indices towards you into this small loop and continue the movement towards you until indices are upright; draw hands apart keeping a lower and an upper loop on each index. Near strings should be parallel and far strings crossed.

Navaho - When there are two strings on a finger or thumb, one lower and the other upper, the lower string is lifted over the upper string, over the tip of the finger and dropped on the other side.

By PAULINE KING

Cat's cradles, or string figures, may seem like child's play to most people. But to Gilbert Islanders they are the concern of every man, woman and child and an important step on the way to paradise, says Mrs. Henry E. Maude.

Mrs. Maude and her husband arrived aboard the SS Oronsay last week for a six-week stay in the islands. They spent 20 years in the Gilbert Islands where Mr. Maude was a British government official.

**HE IS NOW** doing research for the Australian National University in Canberra. He is here investigating the contacts between the Hawaiian government and central Pacific islands for his research project.

"I read a book by Mrs. Jayne on Pacific string figures and got interested in them," said Mrs. Maude. "Then Sir Arthur Grimble, who wrote 'Pattern of Islands,' was most kind and gave me his collection of Gilbertese figures."

"**I'VE ADDED** to them and have 120 different patterns which I've put into a book now being printed. Some patterns are made with 15 feet of string and take up to 10 minutes to complete."

**AS SHE** talked, Mrs. Maude deftly whisked a piece of string through intricate triangles and even arches, now and then biting an edge to loop in under the thumb and over the index finger.

"This is Hina's skipping rope"—whisk—"and Teniakau's doll"—whisk and twist—"and the throat of the rainbow." The last was a three-dimensional triangle with many crossed lines through the middle.

**"THE GILBERTESE** have to know a certain series of them



T. Umeda

**Mrs. Henry E. Maude shows a Gilbertese string figure called "leaves of the breadfruit."**

in order to get to paradise. They believe that after death you meet an old ancestor, called na Ubwebwe. He produces a string and does the first series.

"You have to finish it. Then he starts others and you work together until they are all finished. If you don't know the series, they believe na Ubwebwe ties you up with the string so that you can go no further."

**ALTHOUGH** string figures are so important to the Gilbertese, Mrs. Maude never came upon islanders doing them. She had to seek them out.

"I'd sit in the maneaba, or meeting house, pull out a string

and start doing a pattern or two. Islanders would come and watch. Then, they would join in and show me new ones.

**"I'D HAND OUT** a piece of string or lend them my own and they'd chew it up a bit. You see, they use their hands, feet and mouth to do some patterns. I tried to keep my own but that was not always possible.

"The day we departed for Australia as I was about to leave for the boat, an eight year old boy rushed up. He produced a dusty bit of string and showed me a very complicated one. I learned it on the spot, rushed aboard ship and

wrote it down."

**IN AUSTRALIA** Mrs. Maude taught string figures to children convalescing in hospitals. She found this a very successful therapy since patterns are easy to do for patients confined to bed. They also help strengthen the muscles in the hands of handicapped children.

"I plan to write up the other patterns I collected in Tonga, New Caledonia and Nauru. In Nauru the young people don't learn patterns any more. All the old people who taught me are dead.

"Why, if I don't get them down, they will be lost forever."

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MRS. MAUDE

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# They <sup>SMH</sup> Always Carry String

14 June 1956.

**OTHER** women wouldn't dream of going out without lipstick and powder puff, but Mrs. O. H. T. Rishbeth and Mrs. H. E. Maude, pop a piece of string in their handbags, too.

When they met last week Cambridge, had been a botanist. On a visit to New Guinea to study sea anemone—his special field—he realised that the anemone might be there for ever, but the natives were dying out.

Mrs. Rishbeth knows more about cat's cradles of all lands than any other woman in the world; Mrs. Maude is an expert on Polynesian string figures—and is probably the first person to use them as therapy for crippled children.

In the days when her Edwardian contemporaries were coping with bustles and sweeping skirts Mrs. Rishbeth ordered a short-skirted thorn-proof suit from her dress-maker.

And with knee-high gaiters and a change of non-iron crepe de chine blouses she set off with her father, Dr. A. C. Haddon, for Papua.

Dr. Haddon, founder of the School of Anthropology at

Cambridge, had been a really friendly they invite you to swap strings with them. This calls for diplomacy. I always made sure that I made a figure using my hands only for their string has often been in contact with diseased mouths and toes."

So he became an anthropologist and on his 1914 expedition to the Fly River took his daughter along with him to photograph native outrigger canoes.

To make friends with the natives and overcome language difficulties Mrs. Rishbeth fell back on a hobby that her father had introduced to her family years before—cat's cradles.

Mrs. Rishbeth made her first collection of figures on the Alaskan coast in 1910. There the Eskimos use deer sinews for string.

In the long winter months of darkness they illustrate stories and legends with string figures and to them they often attach magical significance.

## The "Cat's Cradle Spirit"

"A crackling noise in the watching. The Eskimos then seize up their string and try to race the spirit who is making the same figure with his invisible string.

"If they fail to win the race someone in the hut dies before the winter is out"

Mrs. Rishbeth, who was trained as a zoologist, has also collected cat's cradles in Australia (1914) and South America. She has written three books on them and introduced them to children on B.B.C. television.

Now retired—she was librarian at the Haddon Library at Cambridge for 17 years—she is in Australia to visit her son, Mr. Henry Rishbeth, who is working for the C.S.I.R.O. It was at the Margaret Reid Orthopaedic Hospital that

Mrs. Rishbeth and Mrs. Maude met for the first time. Around them small boys, propped up in bed, were weaving their fingers in and out of the coloured twine that Mrs. Maude brings to the hospital every Tuesday and Friday afternoon.

The cat's cradle class is Mrs. Maude's idea to help children who need to exercise their hands and fingers, and amuse those who have to lie on their backs for a long time.

She has three hospitals on her visiting list, and 40 young pupils.

Some figures are taken from Mrs. Rishbeth's books, but most of them Mrs. Maude learned from the natives during her 20 years in the Gilbert Islands.

An anthropologist "by marriage"—her husband was a student of Dr. Haddon at Cambridge—Mrs. Maude started to collect cat's cradles when she found that the natives were no longer making them as they became more civilised.

"Once," she said, "every native knew some, because he believed that when he died he had to do string figures with an ancestor; and if he couldn't do them, the ancestor would tie him up in the string."

Mrs. Maude has gathered more than 100 examples; now she is working on others at home at Wahroonga. For some of them she uses a 10ft string of plaited human hair from Nauru, cut—as a punishment—from the head of a wicked native woman.



MRS. H. E. MAUDE makes a grass hut, and her pupil, TREVOR PHILPOT, does a cat's cradle of lightning, at the Margaret Reid Hospital, St. Ives.



MRS. O. H. T. RISHBETH, who collected her first cat's cradles in Alaska in 1910 and who has shown them to children on B.B.C. television, is visiting Sydney. She saw her first Australian aboriginal string figures in 1914.

Sydney Morning Herald, June 1956



Areti Vahine and her daughter Mano  
Paea, Tahiti 1965

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## NOTES ON TERMINOLOGY

Palmar and Dorsal - The part of a string which lies across the palm of a hand is described as palmar; the part lying across the back of the hand as dorsal.

Radial and Ulnar - Anything on the thumb side of the hand is called radial, anything on the little finger side is called ulnar. - Since a string passing round a finger or fingers forms a loop, each such loop is composed of a radial string and an ulnar string.

Proximal and Distal - Of two strings or loops on the same finger, the one nearer the palm of the hand is called proximal, the one nearer the finger tip is called distal. Furthermore, a loop may be entered, or a string picked up either from the proximal side or from the distal side.

Twisting Loops - A loop may be twisted in two directions, either radial or ulnar. If in the radial direction the finger is rotated towards you, down, away and up to original position, taking care not to become entangled with any other strings. If the movement is in the ulnar direction the rotation is made in the opposite direction.

Position 1 - Put tips of thumbs and little fingers of each hand together and insert into loop of string, separate thumbs and little fingers and draw hands apart until strings are taut (strings must not be crossed).

Opening A - Position 1. Palmar string of each hand is picked up, from proximal side, on back of index of opposite hand, right index first and left index through right index loop from distal side.

Murray Opening - Hold string between thumbs and indices, hands being about six inches apart with remainder of loop hanging down; make a small hanging loop with the six inches of string by bringing hands together, right over left, insert indices towards you into this loop,

continue movement until indices are upright, draw hands apart and there will be a distal and a proximal loop on each index; radial strings should be parallel and ulnar strings crossed.

Navaho - When there are two strings on a digit, one proximal and one distal, the proximal string is lifted over the distal string, over tip of the digit and dropped on the other side.

Caroline Extension - Insert indices, from proximal side, into thumb loops, pick up ulnar thumb strings and, pressing thumbs against indices to prevent these strings from slipping, turn palms away.

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THE FIVE MINUTE QUIZ

The answer to the Quiz of August 27 "cats cradle" applies only to the sequence originally brought to the British Isles by sailors employed on ships engaged in the Eastern Tea Trade.

String games in general are correctly called "string figures", which are the most widely played game in the world. Although known almost everywhere, they could not be recorded and transmitted in writing until Rivers and Haddon invented the still used terminology when working with the anthropological expedition to the Torres Strait Islands in 1902. The first popular book on string figures was Mrs Jayne's 1906 classic "String Figures and How to Make Them", republished recently. She was followed by Haddon's daughter, Kathleen, whose "String Figures for Beginners" was reprinted nine times by 1971.

Articles in newspapers and periodicals have followed, the latest being an excellent survey in the Wall Street Journal for February 26, 1996. The co-ordination of all this interest is the function of the International String Figure Association, centred in California, which publishes an annual bulletin supplemented by a quarterly magazine. The latter records a selection of old and new figures including some made using a computer.

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Much work has been published on Australia and the Pacific area, including monographs on New Guinea, Arnhem Land, Queensland, Victoria and seven by myself on the string figures of a number of Pacific Islands.

Honor Maude