

# THE LOOP

*The Federation of Fly Fishers Journal for Certified Casting Instructors  
Summer 2004*

## **New Fast Knots – Christopher 1 and Christopher 2**

*by Dan McCrimmon and Don Gore*

Some years back a fly fisher was faced with a problem. His Grandson was not happy about the entire fussy knot-tying stuff and just wanted to get on with his fishing. Tying knots was keeping him away from the things that were important, like casting, hooking and landing fish.

To keep his grandson happy, Don Gore decided to take a good look at knots with a view toward finding, or if he had to, inventing, something that was strong and fast to tie. He needed a knot that would get tippet tied to leader, tippet tied to tippet, and tippet tied to fly pattern. He needed two better knots. Don is familiar with knots; he uses a variety of them in his work. He is a surgeon.

The most common knots used in fly fishing are the barrel or blood knot, the surgeon's knot for joining monofilament and the clinch or improved clinch for tying on a fly. These are four excellent knots but they are difficult to tie especially with small tippet material.

When properly tied, the barrel knot forms a tapered contour that not only is aesthetically pleasing but also slides through the rod guides with ease. This knot is hard to tie, not as strong as a surgeon's knot, and recommended for joining pieces of monofilament with large diameter differences.

The surgeon's knot is stronger and not as likely to slip when connecting monofilament of different diameters. Many people find it easier to tie than the barrel knot but it can still be difficult to tie with fine monofilament. The surgeon's knot does not have the tapered shape of the barrel knot, but this is not terribly important with fine tippet.

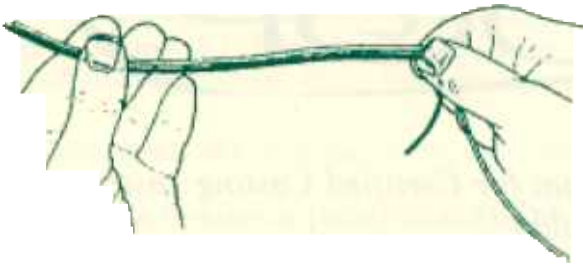
Therefore Don's mission was to invent an easy to tie knot that would approach or equal the strength of the barrel, blood, and surgeon's knots. He wanted to find a knot that was not only strong, but fast and easy to tie. The end result is the Christopher knot (named for his grandson), which has a similar profile to the surgeon's knot. (Step 1)

The knot Don designed was fast and easy to tie two pieces of tippet together. His grandson could get out there and fish faster. However, he still needed to find a fast and easy way to get the fly tied onto the leader.

An additional easy knot was needed. Don decided to call this new knot the Christopher 2. This knot, when used to tie on a fly, is significantly stronger than the clinch and about the same strength as the improved clinch. Don found it had a configuration similar to the Double Whemyss described in Bob McNally's book, *Fisherman's Knots, Fishing Rigs & How to Use Them* (Step 2). McNally's description uses a conventional and more difficult method of tying, and he also recommends cinching the knot down behind the eye around the shaft, as would be done with a turle knot or one of its variations. This allows for a straight pull on hooks with up or down eyes. However, there are significant differences between the Christopher 2 and the Double Whemyss knot.

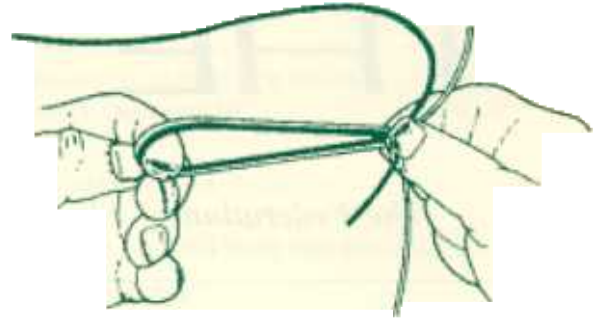
*Dan McCrimmon is a MCI from Vancouver, B.C. Don Gore is an FFF member and orthopedic surgeon from Sheboygan, WI. Illustrations by Carole Hilmer/Dan McCrimmon This article was originally published in American Angler Magazine*

*(Continued on Page 2)*



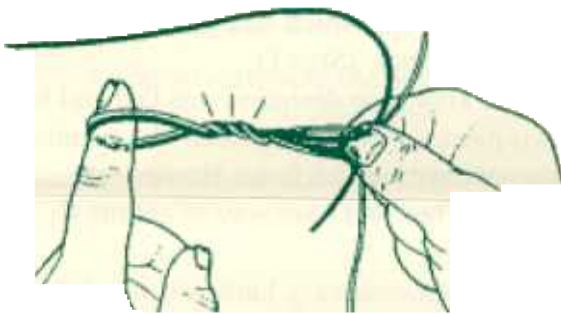
**Step 1**

Overlap two ends of monofilament about 6 inches. The long, free end of the piece going to the fly is pointed to the tier's left for a right-handed tier. The other end along with the section going to the rod is firmly grasped between right thumb and index finger.



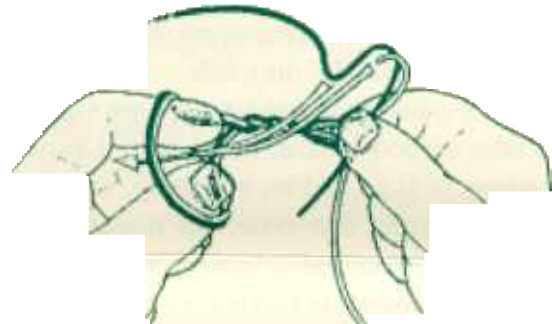
**Step 2**

The ends held in the left hand are passed to the right thumb and index finger forming a large loop.



**Step 3**

Place the left index finger in the loop and twist three times (more twists make the knot difficult to tighten).



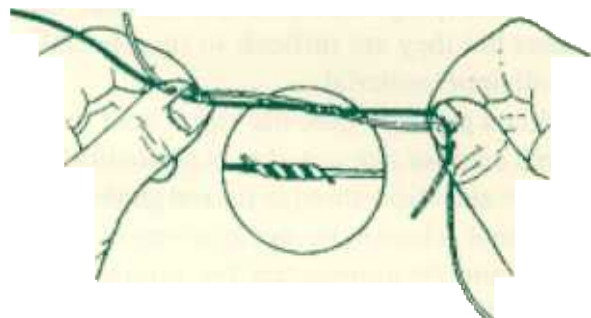
**Step 4**

Pass both the left index finger and thumb through the loop and grasp the two free ends of the monofilament.



**Step 5**

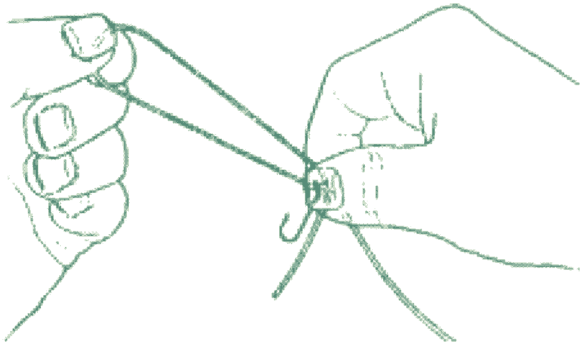
Pull the free ends all the way through the loop and gently tighten forming a loose knot.



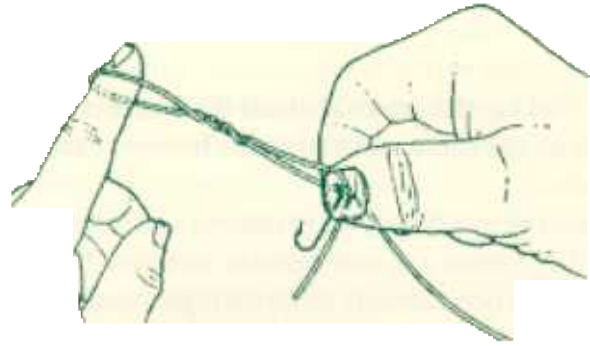
**Step 6**

Moisten the knot and firmly tighten with an equal steady pull on all four ends of the monofilament. When the knot is firmly tightened, trim the short ends, and the knot is complete.

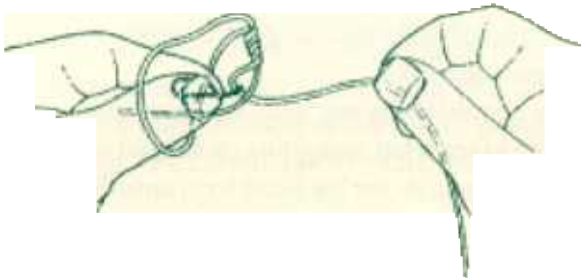
Tying the Christopher 2 - (continued from page 2)



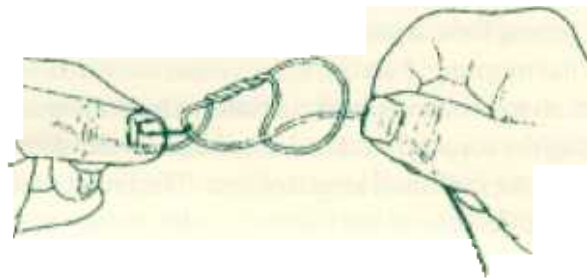
**Step 1**  
Pass the tippet through the eye.



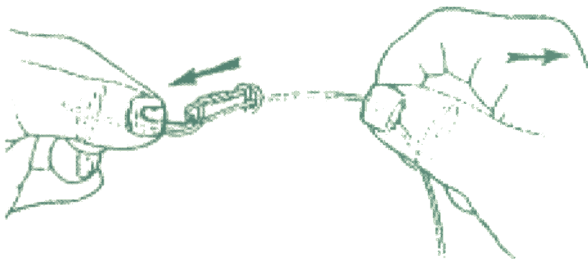
**Step 2**  
The ends held in the left hand are passed to the right thumb and index finger forming a large loop.



**Step 3**  
Place the left index finger in the loop and twist three times (more twists make the knot difficult to tighten).



**Step 4**  
Pass both the left index finger and thumb through the loop and grasp the two free ends of the monofilament.



**Step 5**  
Pull the entire hook and free end of the tippet through the loop being sure that the loop is passed beyond the eye of the hook.



**Step 6**  
Tighten the knot by firmly holding the short end of the tippet against the hook and pulling on the long end. If the tier pulls on the short end, a long tag end results and tippet material is unnecessarily used.

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**Step 7**  
When the knot is partially formed, it should be moistened and then firmly tightened onto the eye of the hook.

A properly formed knot should wrap around the metal at the end of the eye. When trimmed, the knot is complete.

# The Elusive Tick

by Gordon Hill

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Ticking the ground behind the caster is an elusive fault. The caster can't really see or hear it. It can rob power and control from the forward cast. Often an observer can identify the tick, but not always its cause.

Last year, while trying to sharpen my distance casting skills, I thought I was doing really well. My distance had increased and was easier to achieve. When I began to carry a bit more line out of the rod tip, my cast began to occasionally falter enough to make me aware that I'd developed a fault. Try as I did, I couldn't figure what the problem might be. I carefully watched and was pleased with my backcast, and my forward stroke seemed unchanged.

Tom White critiqued my cast and said, "You are ticking the grass behind you."

Now this is a fault we've all observed, on occasion, with our students. It had been, for me, easy to see....and not easy to cure until I could get the caster to elevate the back cast enough to prevent it. Here, however, I could look back and note what seemed to me to be a good back cast; high, with a tight loop. A fine setup for the forward stroke. On the next forward stroke, Tom noted that I ticked again. Evening visibility was getting to be a problem, so we stopped casting without a real solution.

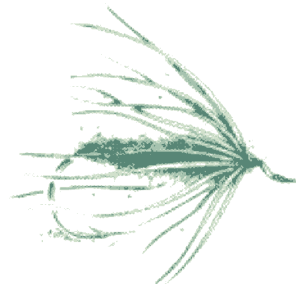
In the morning, I set out to solve this dilemma. The only way I could really see what was happening, was to watch my backcast, and continue to remain turned long enough to see what was going on behind me while starting my forward stroke. I noted that I was waiting just a bit too long after the backcast loop unfurled when carrying the increased length of line. The line started to fall just enough that the fly had started to settle toward the grass. As I began the forward stroke, the initial loading move felt good, but it resulted in the fly continuing on enough of a downward and forward trajectory that it ticked the grass.

All I had to do was to change my timing a tiny bit. This resulted in starting my forward stroke exactly as the backcast loop was straightened. To prove the point to myself, I purposely made it worse by exaggerating the fault. I ticked every time. By backing off from that exaggerated timing fault, I was able to train myself to avoid it completely.

I have since studied this by watching other casters who sometimes tick. I learned that this is only one method of doing it. Another is to combine poor timing with an open loop cast, and to compound the problem by making that backcast too low.

Then I decided to learn to duplicate the move on the forward cast, where it was easy to see. I got to where I could do so, and produce a tick every time. I now use that method as a teaching tool. The caster can see it, since it's out in front, and once learned can back off from the fault which produced it and better understand what is going on in the backcast.

*Gordie Hill is a new member of the Casting Board of Governors. He lives in Big Pine Key, Florida*



## Stop the Rod

by Stan Steele

If you find yourself with a casting problem and your loops are poorly formed, or the fly line and leader end up in a pile at the end of the cast, you probably didn't *stop the rod* properly. Completing the cast with a firm stop is, in my opinion, as important a component as any in the casting stroke. This applies to both the forward cast and the backcast. Don't get lazy on your backcast. It's as important as the forward cast. When you are out practicing on your own, try stopping the rod as abruptly as possible and look how it can affect the size of the loop. If you haven't done anything wrong while doing this (abrupt application of power, rod tip traveling a crooked path, etc.), you should be able to notice the difference. The loops will get progressively narrower and line speed will increase, as you are able to stop the rod more firmly. It is OK to look back over your shoulder to see what's going with the back cast. (Be careful not to rotate your body, as you are apt to form an in and out cast, "side to side" loop). The backcast and forward cast should be the same. High line speed is essential in most casting situations. It is the best remedy for casting in windy conditions. *high line speed* is also a 'must' for distance casting and for accuracy. It has no replacement.

Many of us, over time, may tend to get a bit lazy with our casting. I believe this happens when we are fishing and the primary objective is to catch fish. The fundamentals are often put on the back burner and are sometimes misplaced. Practicing between fishing trips can prove to be very helpful in maintaining and improving your casting skills. You know, the little things such as "a smooth acceleration to a firm stop". A firm stop means *stop the rod!*

It isn't until the rod is stopped and the rod flexes in the opposite direction that the energy stored in the rod is transferred to the fly line forming the loop. The quicker this happens, the faster the line turns over and the better (more compact) the loop. Remember, a firm *stop the rod* at the end of each casting stroke is a must.

## The Three P's in Flycasting

by Stan Steele

I have been fly fishing for many years, and as I look back at my progress in technique and casting ability, I realize that the road to get where I am now has been long and sometimes bumpy. Were it not for the help I got along the way, I might have given up long ago. Instead, I believe there is still much to learn. Flycasting is a never ending journey. Although one can learn to cast well enough to catch some fish, the road to flycasting excellence will seem to go on forever.

If you are like me, you want to continue to get better. Why just cast well enough to get by? Over the past several years I've discovered the Three P's in flycasting; they are **practice**, **perseverance**, and **patience**. First of all, if you really want to get better, you need to **practice** on a regular basis. Your practice routine should be well thought out and have specific objectives in mind.

In other words, practice to increase *distance* should be different than that of correcting a *fault*. Make sure that your practice goals are clear. Don't try to overcome the next hurdle until you've cleared the last one.

The second and third P's, **perseverance** and **patience**, are the ones that will require some time. As you continue to practice, the skill required to reach the next higher level will become increasingly more difficult to achieve. This is where **perseverance** comes into play. In order to get where you want to be, "you must stay the course". Don't give up! No one said it was going to be easy. Now that you are practicing on a regular basis and you're bound and determined to improve, we come to the last P, **patience**. This might very well be the most important of all. One needs to be patient. The process you will be going through will take some time. Remember that learning is not a straight-line growth, but rather a series of plateaus.

Please be aware that you will stumble from time to time. The only real way to overcome this and become a better flycaster is to employ the Three P's, **practice** regularly with specific goals in mind; **persevere**, don't give up and finally, have lots of **patience**.

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*Stan Steele is a CI and lives in Keizer, Oregon*

# *What Happens When You Let Your Certification Lapse*

*by Tom Jindra*

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The standards for becoming an FFF Certified Casting Instructor (CI), Two-Handed Casting Instructor (THCI) or Master Instructor (MCI) are well-established.

But what about maintaining your certification? Though most FFF instructors take the proper steps as a matter of routine, questions about the standards sometimes arise.

What is necessary to ensure that your certification does not lapse? And if it lapses, what can be done to restore your standing in the program?

The standard for maintaining your certification is simple. The only requirement is that you pay your annual renewal fee and continue your membership in the Federation of Fly Fishers. The renewal fee is \$25 for all instructors; the cost of a one-year FFF membership is \$29. The FFF office in Bozeman, Montana, will send you a renewal notice approximately 45 days before your expiration date. To ensure against lost mail, additional notices will be sent within one week of your renewal date.

If the renewal fees have not been paid after a period of three months, your name will be removed from the Certified Casting Instructor list on the FFF website until your fees have been made current. If after one year of the renewal date, you have not paid your fees, your certification will be declared invalid. At that point, you surrender all rights to represent yourself as certified by FFF.

To restore a lapsed certification, you will in all probability be asked to repeat your tests. Exceptions can be made by the Executive Committee of the Casting Board of Governors, but an exception will be granted only if you can demonstrate extreme circumstances.

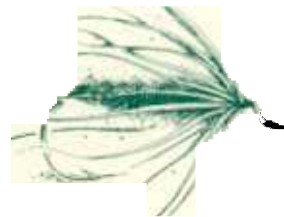
What constitutes an extreme circumstance is not defined; it is clear that misplaced renewal notices and lost mail do not qualify.

If you have questions about a renewal or the status of your certification, you should direct your queries to Julie Nelson at the FFF office. ([julien@montanadsl.net](mailto:julien@montanadsl.net))

If you have changed your address or other contact information, please notify Julie at the FFF office as soon as possible to prevent any delay in receiving your renewal notice.

Questions about the policy or requests for reinstatement should be directed to Tom Jindra ([tjindra@bellsouth.net](mailto:tjindra@bellsouth.net)), chairman of the Casting Instructor Certification Program.

*Tom Jindra is the Chairman of the Casting Board of Governors*



## **New CBOG Members**

We want to welcome some new members to the Casting Board of Governors.

Our Board is limited in its size and new members are only added when there is a vacancy created by the resignation of a current CBOG member.

Please welcome the addition of Gordy Hill, Liz Watson, and Rick Williams.

The vacancies were created with the resignation of Bill Cairns, John Gayewski and Macaulay Lord.

## From the Editors: Denise and Liz

Time is really flying this year! We hope that all of you have had, or are having a great teaching year!

It's less than a month until the Conclave and we hope you plan to attend. The program and workshop offerings are wonderful! This is a great opportunity to polish your skills and mingle with the experts.

Returning to West Yellowstone will bring back lots of memories. We forget that the Conclave was in West Yellowstone for many years before it started moving around. I've attended the Conclave in West Yellowstone, Livingston, Steamboat Springs, Idaho Falls, Calgary, Kalispell and Eugene to name a few. It just keeps getting better every year!

This past winter saw the introduction of the new Two Handed Casting Instructor (THCI) certification. This program is a little different from the CI and MCI as all the members who will be administering the test also must take and pass the test themselves. This has slowed the testing somewhat but it makes for a strong program and knowledgeable testers.

This Conclave will be the first for this new program. We also have a lot of double-handed programs and workshops being offered. If you are interested in the THCI certification, be sure to check them out.

In future issues of the Loop we are going to have articles about the different casts included in the THCI certification. So stay tuned for the next issue of *The Loop* for the first instalment.

This year we are welcoming some new members to the Casting Board of Governors and saying good-bye to some others. I would especially like to congratulate Liz Watson on her appointment (my co-editor of the Loop) and welcome her to the Board. Liz has been an extremely hard working MCI and will be an excellent addition. Welcome to Gordy Hill and Rick Williams! Both are new Board members and both have contributed articles to the Loop.

Saying good bye is also hard. With such a big board and the area represented, it is hard to meet and know everyone. The Conclave is the one place we can all meet!

We will miss Macaulay Lord (past editor of the Loop) and wish him well.

John Gayewski is resigning due to ill health. My husband & I first met John when he was guiding for

Bob Jacklin out of West Yellowstone (many years ago!)

I learned a lot about dry fly fishing from John (on the Madison) and consider him my favorite guide. An excellent caster as well. Best wishes for his health from all of us.

Just as our members are changing, we have an addition to the staff as well. Julie Nelson, our program coordinator, and her husband will welcome a new (first) baby this August. We suggest automatic enrollment in the FFF and casting lessons as soon as possible! Congratulations to them and we'll keep you posted on the outcome.

As always, we welcome suggestions to improve *The Loop*, suggestions for articles and articles themselves! Don't think you have to be an author or writer to get published. We can edit your submissions and improve your diagrams, so don't be shy!

Have a great summer and don't forget to go fishing!  
Cheers - Denise

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**Fly Illustrations: Jason Borger**

You can have a link from your FFF website listing to your own e-mail address. Contact Julie Nelson.

We welcome your submissions via e-mail or disk. Please attach a short (1-3 sentences) instructor biographical statement, including your location and Certification level. Please indicate whether or not you are willing to allow your submission's possible re-publication on the Program's web site. Any illustrations should be in TIFF format.

*The Loop* reserves the right to decline any submission for any reason, and to edit any submission. All submissions should be sent to the National Office:

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