

Private Issue Scouting Square Knots (Experimental, Locally Authorized, Fake and Spoof) Part 2 of 5: Rafi Sharif Knots

George Crowl
No changes from V. 13.0.



Type 1 (Ace)

The most prolific producer of private issue square knots was **Rafi Sharif** of Baltimore, Maryland. He produced primarily for the Sea Scout market, with some green background knots for Exploring/Venturing. He was accessed through the www.seascout.org website, but went out of business in early 2003. He passed on in March 2006. ☺



Type 2 (Ace)

In April, 2002 he advertised 64 different knots or backgrounds, but he had more in the past and added more since which were not reflected in his on-line catalog. He produced knots with white backgrounds for Sea Scout whites, Navy blue/black backgrounds for Sea Scout blues, tan backgrounds for Sea Scout tans and BSA tan shirts, and green backgrounds for Venturing green shirts.



Type 3 (Ace)

Sharif produced all the knots that the BSA no longer produces in multiple colors, i.e. the Silver Beaver, Eagle, Quartermaster, Scouter's Key, and Scouter's Training Award. In addition, he produced some obsolete knots, such as Ranger, Ace, Silver Award I, and Skipper's Key. Finally, he produced some of the above and some others in backgrounds that were never produced by the BSA.



Type 4 (Silver Beaver)

Sharif's knots come in six different easily identifiable varieties. I have labeled these **Types 1 through 6**. The types are illustrated to the left, with the **Ace Award** illustrating three of the six types. All were available, though some appear to be older manufacture.



Type 5 (Award of Merit)

Type 1 is closest to the official BSA template, the left side (as observed) turns up at almost 45° and the right side slopes down gently. These were his latest issue.

Type 2 ropes are longer (go all the way to the border) and have square flared ends.



Type 6 (Unknown)

Type 3 ropes are smaller than the BSA template, and are more horizontal in direction, with blunt ends. These were probably produced in the late 1980s/early 1990s.

Type 4 ropes are "V"ed on the left, producing a narrower pair of ropes, with the lower rope pointing down instead of up at the end. These were probably originally produced in the late 1980s.

Type 5 ropes are thin, diverging and symmetrical. The patch has a rolled edge. The only examples are labeled National Award of Merit, but are the colors of the Medal of Merit. These were issued in 2002.

Type 6 ropes are thin, parallel, symmetrical, and when examined carefully, are not a square knot. Sharif did not identify this knot to me. Issued in 2002.



Ace/Silver Anchor




Sharif produced the three **Ace** knots above. None of them match the single variety the BSA produced, which was on Air Scout blue. In addition, Mike Walton shows the **Silver Anchor Award** on his web page. As illustrated, it is a Type 4 Ace knot on dark blue, and the dates are 30+ years ago. The correct Silver Anchor Award is red and blue, not as illustrated. See Part 3 for Sea Scout Ship 90 knots, or <http://home.stny.rr.com/ritterme/wrknots.html>, by Mark Ritter, a former committeeman of Ship 90, New Milford, PA. The Silver Anchor Award is for the most active and outstanding Sea Scout or leader in Ship 90 each year. A recent version advertised as a Silver Anchor is still the Ace color combination with a white border.

Sharif's knots also come in a variety of backs, with plain gauze (no plastic), or with gauze covered by a solid flat plastic backing. Because Sharif produced over 130 different knots and varieties, I will not attempt to show his knots that build on the official BSA knots. I will, instead, provide a table with information about many of the varieties he produced.

| AWARD | ROPE COLORS | BKGRND | FABRIC | BORDER | BACK |
|---------------------------|--------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|
| Eagle Award | Red/White/Blue 2 | White | F Twill | White | G-P |
| Eagle Award | Red/White/Blue 1 | Black | F Twill | White | G-P |
| Eagle Award | Red/White/Blue 4 | Blue | Twill | RoyalBlu | Gauze |
| Eagle Award | Red/White/Blue 1 | Green | F Twill | Blue | G-P |
| Eagle Award | Red/White/Blue 1 | Gray | F Twill | White | G |
| Eagle Award | Red/White/Blue 1 | Black | F Twill | White | Gauze |
| Eagle Award | R/W/B 1 different | Green | F Twill | Green | G-P |
| Quartermaster | Blue/Blue 3 | Tan | F Twill | Tan | G |
| Quartermaster | Blue/Blue 3 | Lt Tan | F Twill | Lt Brn | G |
| Quartermaster | White/White 2 | Black | F Twill | Black | G-P |
| Explorer Ranger | Green/Copper 1 | White | F Twill | White | G-P |
| Explorer Ranger | Green/Copper 1 | Black | F Twill | Black | G-P |
| Ace Award | Blue/Red 2 | White | F Twill | White | G-P |
| Ace Award | Blue/Red 1 | Black | F Twill | Blue | G-P |
| Ace Award | Blue/Red 3 | Tan | F Twill | Tan | Gauze |
| Ace Award | Blue/Red 1 | Gray | F Twill | Blue | Gauze |
| Ace Award | Blue/Red 4 | Blue | F Twill | Blue | |
| Ace Award | Blue/Red 1 | Black | F Twill | White | Gauze |
| Silver Award I | Red/Yellow Trad 2 | White | F Twill | White | Gauze |
| Silver Award I | Red/Yellow Trad 1 | Green | F Twill | Green | Gauze |
| Silver Award I | Red/Yellow Trad 1 | Gray | F Twill | Blue | Gauze |
| Arrow of Light | Green/Red 1 | White | F Twill | Yellow | G-P |
| Arrow of Light | Green/Red 4 | White | F Twill | Yellow | Gauze? |
| Arrow of Light | Green/Red 1 | Black | F Twill | Yellow | G-P |
| Arrow of Light | Green/Red 4 | Black | F Twill | Yellow | Gauze? |
| Arrow of Light | Green/Red 1 | Green | F Twill | Yellow | G-P |
| Arrow of Light | Green/Red 1 | Green | F Twill | Yellow | G-P |
| Medal of Merit | Blue/Yellow 5 | White | F Twill | White | G-P |
| Medal of Merit | Blue/Yellow 5 | Black | F Twill | White | G-P |
| Silver Antelope | Gold/White 2 | White | F Twill | White | G-P |
| Silver Antelope | Gold/White 2 | Black | F Twill | Black | G-P |
| Distinguished Eagle Award | Red/White/Blue 4 | Black | F Twill | Gold M | Gauze |
| Distinguished Eagle Award | Red/White/Blue 4 | Dk Blue | F Twill | Gold Myl | Gauze |
| Silver Beaver | Blue/White 1 | White | F Twill | White | G-P |
| Silver Beaver | Blue/White 4 | Blue | F Twill | Blue | Gauze |
| Silver Beaver | Blue/White 1 | Green | F Twill | Green | G-P |
| Silver Beaver | Blue/White 1 | Gray | F Twill | Blue | Gauze |
| Silver Beaver | Blue Grn/White 1 | Black | F Twill | White | Gauze |
| Spurgeon Award | Gold/Gold 1 | White | F Twill | Gold | G-P |
| Spurgeon Award | Gold/Gold 3 | Tan | F Twill | Gold | Gauze |

| AWARD | ROPE COLORS | BKGRND | FABRIC | BORDER | BACK |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|
| Spurgeon Award | Gold/Gold 3 | Cream | F Twill | Gold | Gauze |
| Spurgeon Award | Gold/Gold3 | White | F Twill | Gold | Gauze |
| | Silver Metallic | | | | |
| District Award of Merit | Overhand | White | F Twill | Silver M | G-P |
| | Silver Metallic | | | | |
| District Award of Merit | Overhand | Green | F Twill | Silver M | G-P |
| | Silver Metallic | | | | |
| District Award of Merit | Overhand | Black | F Twill | Silver M | Gauze |
| James E. West Fellowship | Green/Yellow 1 | Green | F Twill | Red | G-P |
| James E. West Fellowship | Green/Yellow 1 | White | F Twill | Red | G-P |
| Adult Religious Award | Purple/Purple 1 | White | F Twill | Silver M | G-P |
| Adult Religious Award | Purple/Purple 2 | Black | F Twill | Silver M | G-P |
| Adult Religious Award | Purple/Purple 3 | Tan | F Twill | Silver M | Gauze |
| Adult Religious Award | Purple/Purple 1 | Green | F Twill | Silver M | G-P |
| Distinguished Commissioner | Silver/Silver 2 | White | F Twill | Silver | G-P |
| Distinguished Commissioner | Silver/Silver 1 | Black | F Twill | Silver | G-P |
| Distinguished Commissioner | Silver/Silver 3 | Tan | F Twill | Silver | Gauze |
| Distinguished Commissioner | Silver/Silver 1 | Green | F Twill | Silver | G-P |
| Scouter's Key | Green/White 1 | White | F Twill | White | G-P |
| Scouter's Key | Green/White 3 | White | F Twill | White | Gauze |
| Scouter's Key | Green/White 1 | Black | F Twill | Black | G-P |
| Scouter's Key | Green/White 1 | Green | F Twill | Green | G-P |
| Scouter's Key | Green/White 1 | Green | F Twill | Green | G-P |
| Scouter's Key | Green/White 1 | Gray | F Twill | Blue | Gauze |
| Scouter's Training Award | Green/Green 1 | White | F Twill | White | Gauze |
| Scouter's Training Award | Green/Green 1 | White | F Twill | White | G-P |
| Scouter's Training Award | Green/Green 1 | Black | F Twill | Black | G-P |
| Scouter's Training Award | Green/Green 1 | Green | F Twill | Green | G-P |
| Scouter's Training Award | Green/Green 1 | Green | F Twill | Green | G-P |
| Scouter's Training Award | Green/Green 1 | Gray | F Twill | Blue | Gauze |

Seabadge was one of Sharif's major private issue series. While BSA issues one Seabadge knot, Sharif issued participant, staff and course director knots in white, blue, and tan. These were actually referred to in older Seabadge staff guides, so they have a measure of legitimacy not normally accorded private issue knots. There are at least 20 different varieties of Seabadge knots. Some are illustrated and identified on the left. The distinguishing characteristic is the trident, which is broader and differently shaped. They come in white, black, tan, cream and gray. Borders come in plain colors, silver Mylar, purple, gray, and "rope." I have identified eleven different Seabadge knots, ten different staff knots, and six different course director knots. They mix and match the options. Following is the table of information about Seabadge knots. The Seabadge knot displayed by Mike Walton is one of those listed below.

| | AWARD | ROPE COLORS | BKGRND | FABRIC | BORDER | BACK |
|---|---|-------------------------|---------|-------------|-------------------|-------|
|  | Sea Badge | Dk Blue W sq Trident | White | F Twill | White W Silver | Gauze |
| | Sea Badge | Lt Blue W Trident | White | F Twill | W Silver rope | Gauze |
|  | Sea Badge | Dk Blue W Trident | Black | F Twill | rope | Gauze |
| | Sea Badge | Lt Blue W Trident | White | F Twill | N Silver rope | Gauze |
| | Sea Badge | White W Trident pt | Black | F Twill | Black | G-P |
| | Sea Badge | White W Trident dmd | Black | F Twill | Black | G-P |
| | Sea Badge | White W Trident | Black | F Twill | Blue | G-P |
| | Sea Badge | Lt Blue W Trident | Tan | F Twill | Silver | Gauze |
| | Sea Badge | Black W Trident | Tan | F Twill | Silver | Gauze |
| | Sea Badge | Black W Trident | Tan | F Twill | Tan | Gauze |
| | Sea Badge | Dk Blue W Trident | Lt Tan | F Twill | Silver rope | Gauze |
| | Sea Badge | Blue W Trident | Gray | F Twill | Blue | Gauze |
| | Sea Badge Staff | 2 Black W Trident | White | F Twill | White | G-P |
| | Sea Badge Staff | 2 Black W Trident | White | F Twill | Silver M | G-P |
| | Sea Badge Staff | 2 Blue W Trident | White | F Twill | Silver M | Gauze |
| | Sea Badge Staff | 2 Blue W Trident | White | F Twill | Gray rope | Gauze |
| Sea Badge Staff | 2 White W Trident 2 Sil Mylar W Trident | Black | F Twill | Purple rope | Gauze | |
|  | Sea Badge Staff | 2 Black W Trident | Tan | F Twill | Silver | Gauze |
| | Sea Badge Staff | 2 Black W Trident | Tan | F Twill | Silver Mylar | Gauze |
| | Sea Badge Staff | 2 Blue W Trident | Lt Tan | F Twill | Silver rope | Gauze |
| | Sea Badge Staff | 2 Blue W Trident | Gray | F Twill | Blue | Gauze |
| | Sea Badge Course | 3 Black W Trident | White | F Twill | Silver M | G-P |
| | Sea Badge Course | 3 Blue W Trident | White | F Twill | Silver M | G-P |
| | Sea Badge Course | 3 Silver M W Trident | Black | F Twill | Purple | G-P |
| | Sea Badge Course | 3 Silver M W Trident | Black | F Twill | Black | G-P |
| | Sea Badge Course | 3 Blue W Trident | Tan | F Twill | Silver M | Gauze |
| | Sea Badge Course | 3 Blue W Trident | Lt Tan | F Twill | Silver M | Gauze |

Seabadge CD

Rope Border

Gray



Skipper's Key 1

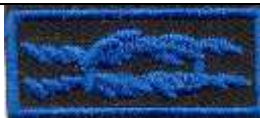


Skipper's Key 3

Sharif made **Skipper's Key** knots, using royal blue and white ropes. The actual Skipper's Key was only awarded 1947-48, and not awarded from 1948 until 2002. The Scouter's Key was awarded to skippers 1948-2002, and that is apparently the target population. At this time, www.seascout.org shows the green and white Scouter's Key knot with the reestablished Skipper's Key. Sharif's tan variety is an error, since the ropes are colored backwards.

| | | | | | |
|---------------|--------------------|-------|---------|-------|-------|
| Skipper's Key | Royal Blue/White 1 | White | R Twill | White | G-P |
| Skipper's Key | Royal Blue/White 1 | Black | R Twill | Black | G-P |
| Skipper's Key | White/Royal Blue 3 | Tan | R Twill | White | Gauze |
| Skipper's Key | Royal Blue/White 1 | Gray | R Twill | Blue | Gauze |

NOTE: Sharif advertised Skipper's Key knot as Squadron Leader's Key knot also.



Sea Scouter's Training Award

The **Sea Scouter's Training Award** is an example of an award that never existed. It builds on the Scouter's Training Award. I believe those who wear it would be those who earned the Scouter's Training Award as Sea Scouters, i.e. would be entitled to wear the Sea Scout device.

| AWARD | ROPE COLORS | BKGRND | FABRIC | BORDER | BACK |
|----------------------------|-------------|--------|---------|--------|------|
| Sea Scouter Training Award | Blue/Blue 1 | Black | F Twill | Blue | G-P |
| Sea Scouter Training Award | Blue/Blue 1 | Gray | F Twill | Blue | G |



Distinguished Eagle

Sharif also made a **Distinguished Eagle** knot. Perhaps this knot originated in the several year period in the late 60s and early 70s when there was not a Distinguished Eagle device available. These are Type 4 knots.

| | | | | | |
|---------------------------|------------------|---------|---------|------------|-------|
| Distinguished Eagle Award | Red/White/Blue 4 | Black | F Twill | Gold Mylar | Gauze |
| Distinguished Eagle Award | Red/White/Blue 4 | Dk Blue | F Twill | Gold Mylar | Gauze |



Wood Badge

There is one final national award for which Sharif produced knots, the **Wood Badge**. I understand he stopped several years ago. Sea Scouting uniform regulations direct that the Wood Badge beads not be worn with the Sea Scout uniform. While it is not explained, a reason for it is safety. The Wood Badge bead necklace could become caught on a part of a ship's equipment and cause serious injury. I illustrate only two white and a tan version. Mike Walton's web page illustrates the red beads on tan with a purple border.



Wood Badge

| AWARD | ROPE COLORS | BKGND | FABRIC | BORDER | BACK |
|------------|---------------|-------|---------|-------------|-------|
| Wood Badge | 2 red beads | White | F Twill | Silver Rope | Gauze |
| Wood Badge | 2 blue beads | Black | F Twill | Silver Rope | Gauze |
| Wood Badge | 2 red beads | Tan | F Twill | Purple | ? |
| Wood Badge | 2 brown beads | White | F Twill | Yellow | Gauze |
| Wood Badge | 2 brown beads | Black | F Twill | Green | Gauze |
| Wood Badge | 2 brown beads | Tan | F Twill | Purple | Gauze |
| Wood Badge | 2 brown beads | Tan | F Twill | Blue | Gauze |
| Wood Badge | 2 brown beads | Tan | F Twill | Red | Gauze |



Wood Badge

Many different knot varieties remain in Sharif's products. These are local awards. I do not know which, if any, councils have approved them. However, I will illustrate at least one of each variety. In several cases, these come in several backgrounds, usually white and blue for Sea Scouts, sometimes gray and/or green.

Remember, there is no guarantee that because one group or council has decided to use a particular knot for one award or purpose, that another group or council might put it to a different use. The names and explanations below may not be correct for all cases. If you have different or explanatory information, I would like to hear from you.



Seabadge Service

Seabadge Service is black and blue with a purple border. It comes on white, black and tan backgrounds, with two varieties of tan.

| | | | | | |
|------------------|----------------------|-------|----------|----------|-------|
| Seabadge Service | Black/Royal 2 | Black | F Twill | Purple | G-P |
| Seabadge Service | Royal Blue/Black 3 | Tan | F Twill | Purple | G-P |
| Seabadge Service | Peacock Blue/Black 3 | Tan | F Twill2 | LtPurple | Gauze |
| Seabadge Service | Black/Royal 2 | White | F Twill | Purple | G-P |



Distinguished Leader

Distinguished Leader is silver and yellow ropes, on four different backgrounds, in two varieties.

| | | | | | |
|----------------------|---------------|-------|---------|------|-------|
| Distinguished Leader | Silver/Gold 2 | White | F Twill | Blue | G-P |
| Distinguished Leader | Silver/Gold 2 | Black | F Twill | Blue | G-P |
| Distinguished Leader | Silver/Gold 1 | Green | F Twill | Red | G-P |
| Distinguished Leader | Silver/Gold 1 | Gray | F Twill | Blue | Gauze |



Bronze Beaver



**Bronze Beaver
Regional/National**

Bronze Beaver is blue and orange ropes, on two different backgrounds. An additional knot in blue and orange, but with gold Mylar border, identifies recipients at the regional and national level. I understand this is primarily a Sea Scout award from the east coast.

| | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------|-------|---------|-------------|-----|
| Bronze Beaver | Blue/Orange 2 | White | F Twill | White | G-P |
| Bronze Beaver | Blue/Orange 4 | Blue | F Twill | Blue | G-P |
| Bronze Beaver Natl/Regional | Blue/Orange 4 | Blue | F Twill | Gold MGauze | |



Unit Memorial Award



Unit Memorial Award

The **Unit Memorial Award** honors those who have lost their life in service to their country, and is worn by members SSS 90 in Milford, PA who meet certain standards of participation and skills. See the separate section on SSS 90 knots, whose knots are subtly different.

| | | | | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------|-------|---------|-------|-------|
| Unit Memorial Award | Gld/Gold Metallic 1 | White | F Twill | White | G-P |
| Unit Memorial Award | Gld/Gold Metallic 1 | Black | F Twill | Black | G-P |
| Unit Memorial Award | Gld/Gold Metallic 1 | Black | F Twill | White | Gauze |
| Unit Memorial Award | Gld/Gold Metallic 4 | Blue | F Twill | Blue | Gauze |
| Sea Explrer Memorial Awd | Gold Mylar 1 | White | F Twill | White | Gauze |

The Interfaith Program Award goes to those who have been active in promoting interfaith religious activities.

| | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------|
| Interfaith Program Award | Purple/White 2 | Black | F Twill | Silver M | G-P |
| Interfaith Program Award | Purple/White 3 | Tan | F Twill | Silver M | Gauze |
| Interfaith Program Award (Lotus) | Purple/Yellow 2 | Black | F Twill | Black | G-P |
| Youth Religious Award | Silver/Silver 2 | Black | F Twill | Purple | G-P |

Apparently similar but different, the **Interfaith Award (Lotus Program)** has a separate knot.



Interfaith Program, Interfaith (Lotus), Youth Religious

Sharif also has a **Youth Religious Award** knot. It is somewhat different than the official BSA knot, having silver, non-Mylar ropes and a black background. The border is purple.



Scouter's Patriotic Service Award

The **Scouter's Patriotic Service Award** is for those who have performed a significant act of patriotic service. The gunmetal gray ropes may have significance there.



Emergency Service Award

The **Emergency Service Award** shares the same rope colors and border as the Den Leader's Training Award and the Den Leader's Award.



Rising Tide

The **Rising Tide Award** is a training award for completion of the Sea Scout Leader Specialized Training, unique to Sea Scouting. It addresses all the issues of the unique Sea Scout training program. Note that it shares the knot colors of the Honor Medal and the knot colors and background of the Heroism Award, but can be differentiated by the blue border (and the fact that it is a Type 2 knot).



Special Events Leadership was used somewhere in Iowa (we think) to recognized leaders who helped with events for handicapped Scouts. We don't have any more information than that.

**Special Events
Leadership**



The **National Award of Merit** is, I believe, the **Medal of Merit** knot for Sea Scouts. It is the only Type 5 knot I have seen. The black version is illustrated here.

National Award of Merit



Sharif did not tell me the title or purpose of the **Type 6** knot illustrated.

Unknown Type 6



Sometimes you get things just because you don't know quite what to ask for. The **Ranger error** knot is one of those. A friend asked for one of each of Sharif's knots. This knot was in the pile. We tried to figure out what it was, and could not. So we asked, and Mr. Sharif told us it was intended to be a Ranger knot on gray, but the manufacturer had put the wrong color (silver, not tan) on the right rope, so it was just an error.

Ranger (error)

That completes the survey of knots produced by Mr. Rafi Sharif. In June 2002 he added James E. West, adult religious, District Award of Merit and Quartermaster/Scoutmaster/ Venturing Award of Merit knots on green background to his inventory. A Wikipedia article and several other Google references on him are available.

Please go on to Part 3 of five.

I would like to thank Al Bormuth, Smokey Bassett, Allan Coady, George Cuhaj, Barry Ekle, Jim Ellis, Linda Friedrich, Ron Hall, Frank LaGrange, Shay Lelegren, Len Michaud, Craig Murray, Bruce Noonan, Mark Ritter, Rafi Sharif, Parker Smith, Mike Walton (the Black Eagle), and Ernie Walley for information, help or knots and images to add to the paper. Any errors are mine.

If you are interested in specific varieties of all or a single series of knots over time, a monograph titled *Varieties of Official BSA Square Knots* is available. It covers all official knots from their first issue to the current issues with scans of each major variety. It is also available from the author.

It is the nature of this information to change, sometimes rapidly. I hope this exposition has been of interest. As you can see, there are still some gaps to fill in. If you have information that would help, please contact me at George@Crowl.org or 832-467-1998 or 16213 Congo Ln, Jersey Village, TX 77040-2011.

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