

**NEW ENGLAND CHAPTER
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A FATHER AND SON'S JOURNEY TO FIDS AND FIBERS 2015

NEW ENGLAND CHAPTER 2015 SPLICING WORKSHOP RE-CAP

By Doug Doll

I came across Fids and Fibers by the Fireside [the New England Chapter ISA 2015 Splicing Workshop] while looking for an event to travel to with my son for his 10th birthday. We signed up and made travel plans from Milton, Florida to Weare, New Hampshire and the excitement began to build. I own a small tree care company in Milton and my son, Tyler works most days with me. He loves tree work as much as I do. Fids and Fibers is a 3-day workshop perfect for anyone interested in learning to splice ropes used in arboriculture. The workshop is held at Renaissance Acres Tree Care and put on by owner, Mark Przekurat.



Doug and Tyler Doll discuss a splice at the workshop. Photo courtesy Mark Przekurat

The day before our flight was to leave snowy conditions in Atlanta caused the airline to cancel our flight. Due to poor weather forecasts throughout the southeast, I was unable to reroute our travel and we were forced to cancel our trip. Tyler and I were bummed. About an hour after we canceled the trip Tyler called me and asked what I thought about renting a car and driving. I Googled the directions and learned it was 22 hours each way. I asked, "Tyler, are you sure you want to spend 44 hours in the car over the next 7 days?" He

adamantly replied, "Let's do it Dad!" I found a car to rent, left work and rushed home to pack. We departed home with 36 hours to make it for the class. Five hours into our trip we hit snow. The Carolinas got six inches of snow but we never had a problem. At around 2:00 a.m. we pulled into a gas station and put the seat back to catch some sleep. Four hours later we were rolling again.

Since we were rushed to leave I did not get to plan my route much and was heavily relying on Google to get me there. We made it to Renaissance Acres at around 1:00 a.m. and were greeted by a very sleepy Mac Swan who pointed us upstairs to our room. We would be sharing a room with about 12 miles of rope. It was the most rope I'd seen in any one place and Tyler thought it was amazing too. We were finally falling asleep after 14 states and a short unintentional detour on NYC's famous Broadway. Google must have thought it was faster than staying on the interstate.

When morning came we awoke to the smell of egg casserole and the bustle of 18 people in a wooden farm house. We got right to work splicing 16-strand. Our first project was a lanyard with an eye splice on one end and an aluminum snap spliced to the other. We learned a ton and not just from Mark. It was great to be in the company of so many arborists and small business owners. The room was full of experience. I shared a table with another small business owner and one of his employees who were very knowledgeable, particularly when it came to tree biology. My other table mate was a salesman who sold tree care and was an experienced splicer and climber. I learned a ton from those guys.



We went on to learn to splice Tenex as well as double braid. We made several products: a ring and ring friction saver, an X ring sling and numerous eye and eyes to name a few. We left with a significant supply of fiber to practice on once we got home.



2015 group photo. Photo courtesy Mark Przekurat.

On the way home we stopped in Indianapolis at the TreeStuff.com headquarters. Phil Whitten who manages ABR was at the workshop and offered us a tour of the splicing department. We were able to break some of our splices on their break test machine and were very proud when they broke well above the manufacturer's average breaking strength. Tree Stuff as well as Shelter Tree, Sherrill Tree, All Gear, New England/Teufelberger, Plymkraft, Samson Ropes, Yale Cordage, and Marlow Ropes made this workshop possible because of their generous support.

Our total driving time tallied nearly 50 hours. Was the workshop and trip expense worth it? Getting the only guest bed at the workshop was much appreciated. Soaking up first-hand knowledge regarding several aspects of the business was extremely valuable. Spending the entire week with my son learning and discussing Fids and Fibers was priceless.