



Look! Up in the Air!

Kitemaker Jon Burkhardt Soars to Magical Heights



Stability, agility, strength, color — all qualities that make for a winning kite, says master kite builder Jon Burkhardt. He should know: He has been building and flying kites for nearly 30 years. With the Smithsonian's 42nd annual kite festival coming up on March 29, Burkhardt shared some of his secrets with KidsPost's **Brenna Maloney**.

Burkhardt's Potomac workshop is an explosion of color. Kites of every size and shape hang from the ceiling and on the walls.

The room is crowded and well-stocked with interesting things used to produce his magical kites: rolls of sailcloth in a multitude of colors, a wood-burning tool to seal cloth edges when cut, hand-carved kite-winders made from wood found in his yard, bobbins of thread and a homemade glass-topped desk with a light underneath to help him view a kite's colors. In the corner is a sewing machine with a kite in progress on it.

Burkhardt's passion for kites was fueled long ago by an Indiana man named Ansel Toney, who lived near Burkhardt's parents. Toney had become a legend in the kite world, having taken up the craft at an advanced age.

"He began seriously making kites when he was 89," Burkhardt says. "He was turning out a dozen 12-foot Delta kites a week on a treadle [foot-powered] sewing machine, cutting his own spars out of Indiana basswood. I don't think I had ever seen anyone so much alive. I said, 'Hey, this guy has found the secret of youth.'"

After spending time with Toney, Burkhardt was hooked.

How many kites has he made? "Not as many as I'd like," he says with enthusiasm. "I've gotten such pleasure from kites. No matter who you are, there is something in kite-flying that appeals to everyone."

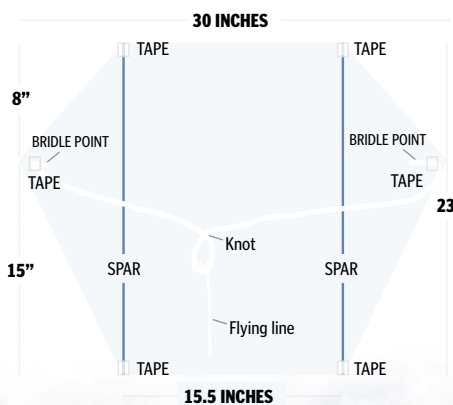


Jon Burkhardt creates a new kite in his Potomac workshop, searching for the best stitch, at left. Below, he flies a kite he has named "Kabuki," which is a type of Japanese theater.

How to Make a Sled Kite

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- 1 kitchen-size trash bag, preferably white. (Brown wrapping paper, craft paper or Tyvek also can be used.)
- 2 wooden dowels
- About 100 feet of kite string
- Packaging tape and scissors
- Colorful permanent markers



1

TOP

MY COOL DESIGN

2

MY COOL DESIGN

3

MY COOL DESIGN

4

MY COOL DESIGN

1: Using dimensions at lower left, cut the kite face from the trash bag and decorate with markers.

2: Lay the kite **face-down** on a table, with the top farthest from you. Attach four 2-inch strips of tape to the kite face, as shown. About half of each strip should hang over the edge.

3: Lay one stick on each side, with the tips touching the corners. **Fold over** the tape to hold the stick ends to the kite back.

4: Create a bridle, using a piece of string about eight feet long. Lay two to three inches of each end of the string on the two bridle points and tape to the back. Find the center of the bridle, tie a knot and attach your flying line. Let's fly!

Know the Basics

Bridle and flying line: Help control the kite. Where and how the bridle is attached determines whether a kite will fly. A good flying line needs to be strong so the wind doesn't break it, but light enough for the kite to fly.

Kite covering (or face): Like a sail, its job is to catch the wind.

Frame: Made of sticks or poles called **spars**, it keeps the kite stiff.

Tail: Provides stability by keeping the kite properly positioned in the wind.

Try It Yourself

The 42nd annual Smithsonian Kite Festival will be held Saturday March 29 on the grounds of the Washington Monument from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. (Rain date: March 30.) This free event, titled "Brush Strokes in the Sky," features kite displays, demonstrations and handmade-kite competitions.

There will be competition awards for children, adults and master kitemakers. Kites must have been made by those participating, and will be judged on design, appearance, construction and performance. Kites must be able to fly a minimum of 100 feet in the air for at least one minute.

Visitors are welcome to fly non-competition kites throughout the day. More than 800 free kites will be given to kids on a first-come, first-serve basis.

For more information, visit kitefestival.org or call 202-633-3030.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

10 a.m.: Opening ceremony, registration begins

10:15 a.m.: Kitemaker/Master Kitemaker competition begins

Noon: Children's competition

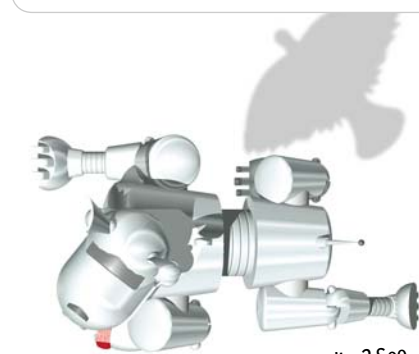
12:30 p.m.: Registration ends

1 p.m.: Children's award ceremony; Kitemaker/Master Kitemaker competition resumes

2 p.m.: Hot Tricks Showdown

3 p.m.-4 p.m.: Rokkaku challenge

3:30-4 p.m.: Awards ceremony



Want to learn more? Need kite supplies? See Jon Burkhardt's suggestions at www.kidspost.com. Check out the video while you're there.