

notes of a pattern weaver

As HGA enters 1984 and the fifteenth year of publication of *SS&D*, we recall ideas and techniques that many of our newer readers may not have seen. The "God's Eyes" described here by Philis Alvic first appeared in our Winter 1971 issue. Then, in our Winter 1973 issue, Betty Atwood showed how to make God's Eyes on a stick.

They seem to have originated in Mexico, where the Huichol Indians believed in their ability to ensure long

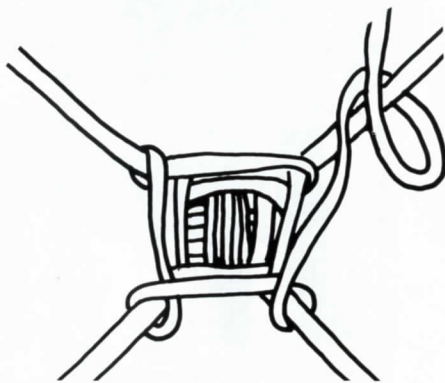
by Philis Alvic

During the first Christmas season after my marriage, confronted by a bare tree and limited finances, I began making "God's Eyes" to use as tree ornaments. Each holiday season since, I have added to the original stock.

I have also taught many other people to make God's Eyes. As the two public school teachers in Pelican, Alaska, my husband and I taught the 24 children in our charge how to make the ornaments. By the following winter, most of the women in that small community were making God's Eyes for their own trees. During presentations to hundreds of Kentucky school children as a visiting artist, I have used the making of God's Eyes as a way to introduce them to the vast variety of yarns available in different fibers, colors and textures.

Over the years, I have made hundreds of God's Eyes, and as with any repeated activity, I have gotten better at it. Not only has my craftsmanship become neater and more refined, but my artistic vision (if such a lofty phrase can be applied to such a simple item) has become broader. With such a simple, rigid format, my attention has been focused on the variations that are possible in the areas of color distribution, proportion of the stripes and contrast of yarn texture.

life and a plentiful harvest. Other South American peoples cherish the legend of the sorrowing mother who created them in the image of the god's eye so that her daughter's blindness might be cured. The god was so moved that he restored the little girl's sight. Even our own U.S. one dollar bill contains a God's Eye, on the back, above the pyramid.



These directions for making God's Eyes are general and can be used to make God's Eyes with sticks or yarn of any size. Cross the two sticks at right angles and wrap the yarn tightly around each of the opposing angles formed by the crossed sticks, to hold the sticks at rigid angles. Don't worry about the end, just let it hang until later.

Next, begin wrapping around one of the individual arms of the sticks. Go over the stick and back around the same stick, completely encircling it. Then carry the yarn to the far side of the next stick; over this stick, too, and wrap back around it. Proceed to the next and wrap around it, remembering to first bring the yarn over the stick and then under the stick and back around to the top.

Before wrapping the next stick, run the beginning end of the yarn alongside this stick and wrap it. All four arms of the sticks have been encircled in succession. It does not matter whether you advance in a clockwise or counter-clockwise direction. Continue wrapping each stick in the direction started, laying



the row neatly next to the one preceding it. After several rows have been wrapped, the connecting yarn between the encircling of the sticks grows longer and begins to look like the squares of yarn associated with God's Eyes.

To introduce another color, I simply begin wrapping it and stop wrapping the first color. Sometimes it is necessary when starting another color to secure the yarn by wrapping it a couple of times tightly around the stick. To avoid the problem of knots on the back of my work, I carry the unused yarn end up the side of the same stick on which I placed the original end, and wrap over all of them as though they were part of that stick. This stick is also the one that I hold and the point at which colors are changed.

When I reach the desired size of the God's Eye, I finish with several half-hitches to secure the end. If the God's Eye is to be used as a tree ornament, two of the wrapped-over ends that emerge from one of the sticks are carried up several inches and tied in a knot to make a hanger. Then, the remaining ends are snipped close to the half-hitches to make a small pompon of the colors used in the piece. After completion, I secure the yarn on the back with white glue diluted with water, to prevent the yarn from slipping during handling.