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Components
We design and manufacture a wide range of custom components that help our clients craft particularly distinguished rods, functionally and aesthetically.

Tools
From simple wooden tools, to the most advanced bamboo milling machines, glue binders, and oven shells, GW can help you outfit your own rod shop. We’ve got products and technical know-how that you can count on year in and year out.

Education
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Golden Witch Technologies, Inc.
Presenting
Making Bamboo Blanks

Whether you’re a novice or you run a light production bamboo rod shop, this video will teach you tips and techniques that are sure to improve your blank quality and your blank making productivity.
The First Cast
Todd Talsma, Editor

Well, as one person called this, welcome to my new adventure! I’m sitting here at my kitchen table, writing my first editorial comments running the gamut of emotions from excitement to fear. Fortunately, my predecessor is never too far away, either via email or phone.

I want to thank Bob Maulucci not only for the opportunity to take on this adventure, but also for his hard work that has given Power Fibers the fantastic start in its first few years. Unless you have created a newsletter or magazine (which I hadn’t before), you can’t realize the time and effort that it takes to create one. Bob, your work has been incredible. Thank you so much.

With that said, I need to confess that it is more than just a little daunting for me to take the magazine over. To keep up the quality content and delivery is sometimes overwhelming. On the other hand, it constantly amazes me that the people involved with this craft are incredibly giving. I can’t count the number of times I’ve been encouraged by members of the rodmaking community.

I hope that you continue to enjoy the content of the magazine. We have a lot of ideas in store for future issues and see a bright future for the magazine.

If you have any comments, suggestions or would like to write an article for us, please drop me a line at: power.fibers@bamboorodmaking.com
Heat Treating Fixture Brackets
Text & Photos by Tony Spezio

When Martin-Darrell announced that he was having some fixtures made with "V" grooves in them I decided right there I wanted a set. I had been using some oak strips with 60° grooves in them to straighten my strips while drying them in the oven. I received the fixtures and was very pleased with them, but I had a small problem. When I loaded the strips in the fixtures and set them in the oven, a lot of times the loaded fixture would roll off the screen shelf and hang up between the screen and the inside wall of the oven. I decided to do something about that. I made some brackets to hold all three fixtures together so they would not roll. At first I just drilled three holes on a length of aluminum angle. To keep the fixtures from rolling, notches were filed around the outer edge of the hole to accommodate the shape of the fixtures.

It worked OK, but needed some improvement. The fixtures were not solid in the brackets. Then I decided to add a couple of screws, top bar and wing nuts to tighten the fixtures in the brackets. By doing that it the first place, there was no need to file the notches in the brackets. A hole big enough to pass the fixture through would suffice. This works great and makes the fixtures easy to handle.
A collection of articles, drawings, essays and anecdotes by today’s bamboo rod makers from around the world.

“A splendid collection, essential reading.” James Babb/Gray’s Journal

In Volume II, the reader will discover the latest creative genius from professional and amateur craftsmen worldwide.

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“Wow! A superior Collection.”
Joe Loverti/bamboo rod maker

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Kathy Scott takes us on tour of the North Woods in search of truth that only a life of simplicity can reveal.

“Entertaining and thoughtful, I loved Kathy’s new book.”
Nick Lyons/author

“Headwaters is a lovely book by an author of substance.”
Jerry Dennis/author

“This is such a beautiful book!”
Kathy King/Sheridan Books
I guess there are many reasons why we become obsessed with bamboo fly rods. For some, it might be the history and tradition that goes along with them, for others it’s the undeniable beauty of the things. For me, it’s always been the smooth, delicate, precise way they cast. I have been at this for nearly 20 years now, building a couple rods a year, tinkering with the tools, restoring old rods, and always looking for that elusive “perfect” rod.

This part of the quest began about 5 years ago, when someone gave me an F.E. Thomas 3 piece 8 foot 4 weight to restore. It was a wonderfully fancy rod with hundreds of intermediate wraps. It took me forever to complete, and when I did I took it out and cast it a bit. It had a lovely slow action, and I thought it would be just perfect for fishing small soft hackles. It wasn’t the type of medium progressive action I like for all around fishing, but I thought it would make a nice special occasion rod. I promised I would make a copy for myself. That finally happened this year.

The taper looked smooth enough that I thought I could build a 2 piece version without modification, and have a slightly faster rod, but still a wet fly specialist. I finished the rod just in time for a trip to Spruce Creek, PA for some classic limestone stream fishing. A funny thing happened. I did not want to fish with any of the half dozen other rods I brought along. The rod was a superb spring creek model. You could stand in chest high weeds, and present tiny dries delicately, it roll cast great, and it even had enough punch to fish moderately sized streamers in the early morning. No one is ever going to win a casting contest with it, but it just seemed to fish great.

Last summer was a blowout in the Northeast, nothing but rain and high water, I only got out fishing a few times, but still found myself much attached to the new rod. When September, and the Catskills gathering rolled around, I took the rod with me to see if it would get the same reaction from other people. Among those I showed it to were old friends Bill Harms and Joe Lauver, both of whom live in Pennsylvania’s Cumberland Valley, and have a lot more spring creek experience than I do. Both liked the rod and reassured me that I wasn’t crazy to like it so much. I think it was Bill who planted the seed. “You know Tom, if you made this rod as a one piece, with no ferrule weight at all, it would be fantastic.”

Well, I resisted for a couple weeks, but the idea just would not go away. It seemed to me, however, that strips 8 feet long to the delicate dimensions of the Thomas taper would be next to impossible for one person working alone to glue up, bind, and straighten. I determined to cheat a bit, and make a separate butt and tip, and join them with a repair splice. Having done dozens of splices for restorations, I knew I could make it both visually and functionally undetectable. Here is how to go about it:

Step one is to provide yourself with a splicing block. There are several ways to make them, depending on the tools available to you. There is a typically excellent description in “A Master’s Guide” by

(Continued on page 8)
(Continued from page 7)

Hoagy Charmichael, and there is another method detailed in Issue 83 of “The Planing Form” by Ron Grantham. I use a method similar to Ron’s, except that I first rout in the 120° grooves, then cut the 25 to 1 angle in the top of the blocks with a table saw. These blocks do not need to be as accurate as planing forms. The depth of the 120° grooves, and even the angle of the grooves are not that critical. As long as the sections to be spliced are held firmly at the correct angle to the top of the block, there will be no problem. You would think that the ideal depth of the grooves that hold the rod section would be just slightly less than the width of the section, so that the tip of the splice would be fully supported by the block. In fact, it’s better if the splicing block stays open about the width of one flat on the hex section. I’ll explain that in a bit.

The photo above shows a well used splice block. The rod sections used to come out of the middle of the block, but the top has been planed and dressed so many times, the opening has moved rearward. Note that there is a pencil mark on the side of the block. This indicates the intersection of the rod section with the top of the block, in other words, the thin end of the splice. Also note that I have placed the rod section so that it extends about 1/8” past the line. That’s the reason I didn’t want the block to completely close. The thin tip of the splice will bend away from the plane, leaving about .010 of bamboo. When the splice is glued, these flexible ends will bend up, leaving a bump at both ends of the splice. When those bumps are carefully filed away, the splice will be virtually undetectable. If the tips of the splice were too short, an unsightly gap in the rod’s surface would result.

Some tips on splicing:

- Think about where the splice will go. The ends are the most visible, try to get them under a guide wrap, or an intermediate wrap, if the rod has them. Match the sections to be joined very carefully for dimension and color. If you get it right, the splice will disappear.
- Dry fit the splice, marking the center with a pencil line. Check with a caliper to make sure the center thickness is correct. If one end of the splice is .240, and the other is .220, the center should be close to .230. Wrap with thread and check for straightness.
- Use a powerful glue; these joints get some stress. Resorcinol works, but the glue lines will show a bit, and each end of the splice will have a red splotch. URAC is excellent and I recommend it. Hardware store epoxies will fail, and Titebond type glues will also fail.

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fail. The only epoxy I recommend is Evercoat epoxy paste, which is available from boat building sources. The stuff is amazingly tough, has excellent gap filling properties, and color matches cane nicely. It’s great for ferrule mounting also.

- Near the tip, I reinforce the splice with an invisible thread wrap. If the section is thicker than about .150, I don’t bother. I don’t know if that’s right or wrong, it’s just what I do.

The photos below illustrate the sequence from glued splice to finished rod. The glue used is the Evercoat epoxy. Note that I got one end of the splice under a guide.

So maybe the magic wand is finished. Yes, an 8-foot rod is a clumsy thing to have around. Compared to the two-piece version, it does have a lighter feel in the hand, and it does cast a bit farther, too. The action seems a bit faster, but you can definitely...
tell the rods are related. What I have found with this taper is that it can’t be judged in the back yard, you have to fish it. The way the weather is starting to look around here, it seems like I’ll have to wait until next year to find out if I really did it. I’m not taking any bets, as I said, that perfect rod is an elusive thing.

All text & photos © 2004 Tom Smithwick
Although rodbuilding tools & classes are a part of our business, our main focus continues to be the actual building and restoring of cane rods.

As we embark on our 11th year in business, we remain focused on making the best cane rod we can, using only the finest available materials.

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Quad Forms! We began making quads about three years ago and the first thing we needed to do was design the tools to do the job. The first project was making the planning forms and rodmaker Don Schroeder and others recently asked us to make them available. These forms are a full 1” thick to accommodate the wider quad strips. We used the same steel as our regular and swelled butt forms. The tip side bevels are extremely fine so that one can make quad tip tapers smaller than ever before. See our website for full details on these forms as well as our **quad ferrule punches** and square **winding check forming** punches.

Don’t forget about our splicing block for making nodeless rods! Cut nodeless splices with ease. Cuts a glass-smooth splice in 15 seconds! See more details at our web site.

WWW.WAGNERRODS.COM
Some thoughts about bamboo fishing & rodmaking  
*Text & Photos by Marcelo Calviello*

Always, when I’m working in my shop my computer is connected to the Internet in the Rodmakers list and Bamboo Forums. Time to time when I’m waiting on the oven process or dipping rod sections in varnish I take a look at new things, new thinking, tools and bamboo philosophy. I mean the different ways that different people feel about cane rods and rodmaking. Also, I make my posts trying to help find answers. Some of the conclusions I make are full of passion. Passion for the work, for the fishing, for new experience, for our great rods…

I feel that we are the owners of a very special touch. We can feel things in a different way. We appreciate the forms, the making process, the finish, and we can imagine that rod casting and fishing. I write sometimes that fishing a good bamboo rod is an accumulation of many kinds of sensations. Just for me, it’s not important to take a fish when I’m casting a good cane rod. I can do it for weeks just for the pleasure of the casting feeling. Also when we are walking trying to find a rising fish or special spots, we can’t stop looking at our rod. We always find new things that make that perfect communion between the man and his tools. That cane that is now really a part of our body takes perhaps many hours into the rod maker’s process. Many hours full of passion and love of our craft have come before.

Any rod I start to make is a new timeline in my rod maker history. Because of my hand planing process I’m really in contact with that piece of grass. I can feel it’s behavior and make a true sense of what taper it will work better with. Also the flaming process can show us what kind of character that will in turn become its personality in the long building process. So we are really making something dead into a full of life ‘Bamboo Fishing Rod’. I will emphasize this because “fishing” is the real thing that will turn that rod into life again.

In two recent post to Clarks Classic Forum I said that rodmaking is a “Magic Art” and that “We are helping to make a new Bamboo age”.

The “Magic Art”

Sure it is, love and passion for our rods is always surrounding our shop and turns this Craft into an Art. You know that I’m one of the first in our community to push for new techniques and investigation. Always I point my search to new tapers, materials and action. I also love digital dial indicators, calipers and micrometers, wrapping machines, binders, drying cabinets, block planes, etc. But there is a thin area where I think we can lose the "magic". Our job is just a sum of magic moments, mystery, test, frustration and happiness.

I for my part will always try to

(Continued on page 14)
I think I was born to do this, and I'm sure many of you feel the same. For that reason I think that our hands can feel a good piece of wood, a culm, we can make strips, flame, and straighten nodes, plane to thin dimensions, glue and dress our cane. I think that many new machines will attempt to make the magic, and we cannot let this happen. If any of you feel the same, help to protect this art, improve it and not just make it "simple". I think that many good moments are still to come for bamboo.

So if we feel that we are the owners of the magic secrets and honor all the teachings of our predecessors, we have to fight to let the art continue like an art, the art of making magic fishing bamboo rods.

"A man that work with his hands is a worker, a man that work with his hands and his thoughts is a craftsman, but a man that work with his hands, his thoughts and his heart is an artist".

Never will my "art" turn into a "repetitive craft". I never will make one more of my rods if I feel like that sometime. If you do not consider yourself a "gifted individual," it may be difficult to keep yourself out of the box. Come on man! You can do it! For example, today one of my rods is going to Japan, really a very difficult and new market for one of my rods.

"Passion".

What a great word. Perhaps this turns my work into "art"? I love my work. All my life I waited for these years to come. As a bamboo fly fisherman, as a bamboo rod collector, I read all the books that I could find and tested all the rods that I could for about 35 years.

I used to work with art for most of my life, as an owner of an advertising company, and then because of the "passion" I became a rod maker for my own pleasure. Then the difficult economic situation in Argentina turned the hobbyist rod maker into a full-time shop. I had to make all my shop tools by hand and I promised myself not ever forget that passion I use to make my own rods,
(Continued from page 14)

when I made the decision to sell my rods to other fishermen. "Passion." What a wonderful word! This turns problems into solutions, little boxes into really big ones, and sometimes you can make something new too, but the most important is the feeling that you are doing what you love, the art of making magic bamboo fishing rods.

Everyone can learn to speak and write, but only a few can do poetry; everyone can learn to run, but only a few can run the 100 meters in less than 10 seconds. Somebody will say, “the secret is in the planing form.” Yes, and the selection of the culm, the splitting, the flaming process, the straightening method, the design of the appropriate taper, the oven treatment, the gluing, the varnish, the wraps and the making of all your rod components.

I think if rod making is so easy, what are the classes for? Four days, 4 months, four years or a century? Do you really think that you can learn rod making in 4 days? Or are classes for getting information about all the steps you have to sort in the making process?

The beauty of the music we can play depends not on the material of our instrument. It depends on how open our minds are to understanding and feeling all the sounds we are playing.

1. I don't use Tonkin. I make my rods with a new kind of cane that grows in my country. Just for breaking the rules and because it really works like Tonkin.

2. I make all my ferrules with bamboo, just for the pleasure of doing it, and getting away from the rules, and because I get a really new action and a great power transference.

3. I make all my components, just because I love that my rods own that personal touch.

4. I make all my own tapers, because of my ferrule design, and not to offend any of the old masters. That way I can feel that my rods are really my creation.

5. Sorry, I don't spin my own silk, just because Pearsalls does it better.

The owners of the passion feel like this, and many fishermen around the world will fish and enjoy the results of our making, building or that magic that we feel and name art; the "magic" art of making bamboo fishing rods.

Well, you and others, as passionate about bamboo like me, must forgive me for my Latin soul. I couldn't imagine myself thinking in "strictly speaking" terms. As I’ve said many times, I was a bamboo rod collector for many years. Many excellent cane rods from the most famous rod makers passed through my hands along my life. My beginnings with fly-fishing were with bamboo rods, and I feel something very special for them. Then when I made the decision to make my own, something in my heart said that I have to do something different. Just take all the knowledge received during my life as a fisherman and collector. Put all my efforts and continue with the "magic" craft, that years later would become an art for me. (I feel like this and it doesn't mean that everyone as a rule has to think the same).

Like I cannot consider fly-fishing as a
port, I couldn't think of a rod as a tool (again, my "no strictly speaking"). For me fly-fishing is a way of life and a good cane rod, that perhaps will be with me for the rest of my life, is much more important than a simple tool.

As you are probably thinking, without this passion and creativity perhaps never would I have finished my first rod. But you know, the great rivers were there; the great fish waiting, the passion and also because I tie my own flies, I thought, "just do it". Imagine that, in Argentina...

Well it’s ok for those of you who don’t think the same about little boxes, rules, creativity, passion, work, craft and art. One of the things that fill me with passion is trying to go on with the learning from the masters. Those great gentlemen were masters in working with all the things that involved their creations. This is what I'm trying to do. Just break the rules, always staying in the background that they leave we can find many new things to make, design, change or test (materials, actions, tools, etc). They are there, only we have to do our part.

I find the magic in every step of rodmaking, because we are taking a dead piece of grass, with our passion, into a full of life bamboo fishing rod. Sometimes in my life, because of the kind of fish I was fishing for (ie: peacock bass in Amazon rivers) I had to use graphite rods. Oh man, that was so mechanical, every cast the same as the previous one. Please God, I want little rivers and a little bamboo rod, fish will be welcome but certainly they aren’t a necessity to have a great time.

How many times during winter time do we find ourselves opening our rod tubes just to take a look to our rods, how they are, feeling its action, touching his grip, looking at them like idiots? This also is the "magic" I’m trying to explain. But feelings are just that, and are a personal touch that we came with.

We can help with the Bamboo new age

A few days ago when I dropped off a letter to Mr. Bob Maulucci and Mr. Todd Talsma some new thinking emerged, and I want to share it with the friends of the list. Every day I spend some time in forums reading about our passion, Bamboo rods and Bamboo rod making. Every time I get something to increase my knowledge, and I must say thanks for that. I have said many times that in my country it’s very difficult to share or exchange information, tips, tools, etc. I'm a full time rod maker and I live off my work. Lately I've been reading discussions about antique and new,
late rod makers and live ones, hobby
rod makers and full time ones, swelled
butts vs. not swelled, hand planed vs.
machines, etc., etc.

Here in the last part of the world
I'm thinking: Hey guys we are making
Bamboo come alive!!!

BUT, I think that now is our
time. We learned a lot from the late
gentlemen that began our passion. That
time when rivers were full of wild trout
never will come again. We can do noth-
ing to take the 2003 year to the 30th,
40th or 50th. But perhaps we can take
the post and do our work. Perhaps we
have to leave those gentlemen to rest in
peace and do our work. I think that
those who can do it can get their names
into the bamboo history, because of the
results of ones own work, own designs,
and own improvements. I think that
many can make it. With a little of mad-
ness, some tests and errors... some new,
NEW, NEW thinking can put our
names in the books.

In my personal life, Mr. Garri-
son is Mr. Garrison; a Payne rod is
only, and thank God, a lovely Payne
Rod. From my adolescence I always
preferred an original Ford than a Por-
sche copy. Those original antique rods,
why do I call a Garrison an antique?
Because in the last 30 years many,
many changes were made in every
point you want to talk about. Only the
passions still live and all the original
rods sometimes aren't compatible with
today's fishing. But we, the rod maker
can support the passion continuity by
making bamboo rods to be fished. It's
difficult I know, with the big market of
graphite rods, titanium with the "you
break and we give a new one" "lifetime
warranty"...

Bamboo lovers had to spend 60% of the
price in marketing, telling the market that
the rods are good and making many fish-
ermen believe this. But bamboo is still
alive. We can make it. We can make a
new Bamboo age. A lot of people are
leaning towards natural products. Perhaps
we can help by showing that bamboo
rods are not just for professional fisher-
man, princesses, etc. We have to design
new tapers, new actions, using new mate-
rials, and new bamboo. We have to test
everything to help our dreams come true.

Those great gentlemen that began
with this art made a great work, great
pieces of history and this will point to us
the way that now we have to follow. I'll
respect those gentlemen in the same way
I respect my grandfather and my father.
But one day God decided that my grand-
father had to go. Then I took the past and
with all my learning I began my own life.
The same will happen when my father
has to go. That doesn't mean that I have
to live the same lives they did.

I love antique fishing rods, but
I'm a rod maker and I feel that I have to
do my work. I don't like to take credit
from Mr. Garrison, Mr. Payne. Mr. Gil-
lum, Mr. Edwards, Mr. Leonard, Mr.
Howell... I feel as an artist, sure I can
learn from the styles of the masters, but
never try to copy any piece of work.

I don't know if you can under-
(Continued on page 18)
stand what I’m trying to say. This, please without trying to take out the value of anybody, is only a call to the rod maker’s community to make the best effort to continue our masters’ traditions.

Just a wish,

Best regards from Argentina
Marcelo F. Calviello
MFCALVIELLO RODS

HIGH GRADE  HAND PLANED  SPLIT BAMBOO RODS

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mfcalviellorods@datamarkets.com.ar
Over the last two years I have tried to become more production oriented in my rod making, as orders pile up and I frantically try to catch up. There comes a time when every rod maker needs to consider his or her current set up and try to maximize efficiency in the shop. One way to maximize efficiency is to incorporate everyday shop tools into your rod making routine. More than any other tool, my band saw is becoming an integral part of my rod making routine, not to mention its numerous uses for non-rod related projects.

As I have written previously, I believe that power tools should be utilized as much as possible in rod making. They make things quick, and they add a repeatability and efficiency that one cannot match in “hand” technique. I have the greatest respect for the rod makers out there who use hand tools to do all of the aspects of blank making from splitting, roughing, tapering, sanding, and final planing. It is just not for me. The following is what I do now. When I stick to this plan, it works well for me and gives me exceptional control over the blank making process.

My goal in working with the band saw was to get strips that are uniform in size. By having equal length, depth, and width strips, machines further along in the process like Medved style bevellers and Bellinger roughing bevellers can be set up for the first strip and be set to go for all the rest with little adjustment. By having the entire initial strips “in the same ball park” you eliminate many of the problems that are associated with “machined” rod making. I would highly recommend the Golden Witch Technologies video, Roughing and Tapering under Power. Much of my methodology comes from that video, and the rest comes from various rod making advice I have picked up along the way.

**Splitting the raw culm**

My first step is to chop the longer 12’ culms down to more easily handled 6’ sections. I use a hacksaw with a bi-metal blade simply because it is convenient to bring to the sun porch where the culms are stored. If I had a big shop where the culms were stored, I would most likely use my miter saw to quickly chop the culm in two. I find the halfway point and then I cut the closest node out, chopping about 3 inches on either side of the center of the node.

I mark the lower end of the butt sections with a black permanent marker, and I mark the tip sections in red. Generally, I plan on making two rods at a time, and I usually get enough strips in the end to make two butt sections and three tips.

The culm is first split using a four-way splitter from Hida Tools. Insert the pointed end inside the butt of the culm and give it a firm whack with a rubber mallet. Make sure the splitter blades are centered on the culm (see above) and aligned to your drying/check split. After the blades have split an inch or

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two into the culm, grab the handles of the splitter firmly and strike the opposite end of the culm against the cement shop floor or some other hard surface (cinder block?). This is the most liberating of all shop exercises, smashing the splitter down the culm towards the floor. As I get towards the floor, I continue to hold the splitter with my left hand and gather the strips dangling above with my right hand to keep them from striking me when they come unattached. One more wallop and the splitting is done. I now have four fairly equal width strips.

**Flaming the culm and prepping for the band saw**

It is at this point that I will flame the strips if I desire a flamed rod. I do not worry about slightly charred edges, as these will be removed later during sawing, roughing, and tapering. I find the quarter culm sections to be a good handling size for me.

From here, I plan to saw my strips out into equally wide and square strips. First, I must remove the inner nodal dams that remain on the culm’s pith side. I simply whack them out with a small hammer. I just want to remove enough to minimize the amount of cutting the saw blade will have to make.

After the nodal dams are removed, I switch to the disc sander and quickly take of the lip of the nodes. I try to limit work on the nodes until they are at their smallest, but at this stage, a large lip on the node can inhibit the culm as it passes through the saw. Once again, I am simply prepping the nodes prior to cutting the culms into strips. I have a large 12” disc sander, but you might also use a 6” version like the one commonly attached to belt sanders. Another alternative is to use a sanding disc on your table saw. Either way, I would recommend the largest diameter disc you can accommodate. The larger discs have less of a tendency to cut into the bamboo and leave unsightly dips in the enamel.

**Sawing out strips**

At this point, I have four equal strips that have no protruding nodes that will catch on my saw table or slow down the blade. My band saw is a Jet 14” ¾ HP model. The 93 ½” blade I use for sawing out strips is a Starrett bi-metal 10 tpi
3/8” raker toothed blade. Upon the recommendation of several Rod makers’ List members, I have been using the bi-metal blade with great results. It cuts through bamboo like butter and the 3/8” blade keeps the cut straight as the bamboo passes through the saw. (14 tpi ½” wide blades have also worked well for me). Other than the blade, one must consider the fence that is used for sawing. A long table length fence would not work correctly for the sawing procedure because we want to cut parallel to the split out side. This preserves power fibers by cutting along the grain not across it so much. My fence is a 3/8” thick piece of plywood that is clamped to the band saw’s table. Parallel to the blade and equal to its length is a short 1” protrusion. This allows the strip to rock on a point as it is pushed past the blade. This insures the parallel sides of the strip. A long fence would cause the saw blade to cut across the grain and it would give you very unequal width strips. This would be a lot to overcome in the stages to follow.

Using a small ruler, I set the fence up for my cut. Generally, I use .250” for hexagonal butts and .175” for tips. You can use any figures you feel comfortable with, but make sure you give yourself enough extra cane to square up and rough out the strips. I need the extra dimension for the next steps in the process in which I mechanically straighten the strips. I tend to not worry about wasting bamboo, and I see it as the cheapest part of the rod next to the thread and varnish.

The quarter culms are pushed through the saw blades with the enamel side down. I try to keep the split edge flush against the nub of my fence as I push the strip through. If you are using a good bi-metal blade, be careful, as the strip will move through faster than you would think. When the strip is about 6” from being all the way through, I reach around the saw with my left hand and pull the remaining section through staying very clear of the blade. I continue until all the strips are cut out. I always get more strips than I need.

Squaring up the strips
The next step that I do is rather unique to my knowledge, and I have seen very few mentions across the grain and it would give you very unequal width strips. This would be a lot to overcome in the stages to follow.

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Squaring up the strips
The next step that I do is rather unique to my knowledge, and I have seen very few mentions
of it outside of the teachings and writings of Chris Bogart and George Maurer. I have always been a big fan of the Medved style beveler. One pushes the strip through this router-based machine and by flipping the strips side for side you can get a nice triangular piece of cane ready for planing. It was Chris Bogart who first mentioned using the squaring bed to straighten up the bamboo before roughing it into triangles. I simply mount the square grooved bed on my Medved style mill (by JW Fly Rods), and I take passes on each side. Because my strips are all equal in width to start, I set the machine to take a light pass on the first strip and feed the strips through. I then flip the strips and take a pass on the opposite side. After four to size light passes, I get very square and very straight bamboo strips. This is why I left a little bit extra when band sawing.

If you do not have a Medved style mill, I would recommend that you build one. However, by making a simple form with various straight grooves, one could easily accomplish this step with a block plane or bench plane. See The Best of the Planing Form for more details on George Maurer’s jig.

It is simply amazing how these squaring passes eliminates the need to heat straighten all but the worst node down the line. Since using this method, my strips have come out straighter and better than ever.

Next time…tackling the nodes and roughing into triangles.

Sources

**Hida Tool Bamboo Splitter**

- Golden Witch Technologies (http://www.goldenwitch.com)
- Hida Tool (http://www.hidatool.com/bamboopage/splitters.html)
- J.D. Wagner, Inc. (http://www.wagnerrods.com)

**Starrett Band Saw Blades**

- Enco (http://www.use-enco.com/)
- MSC Industrial Supply (http://www.mscdirect.com/)
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The More You Rake, The More You Rake
Text by Carl DiNardo

Editor’s note: This is the second in a series of open-ended articles about beginning rod making from someone new to the craft.

I could see that the project was coming along quite nicely. As the crew labored to achieve a smooth flat surface upon the earth with a 1% grade from east to west, I painted white circles around the spots that were too high or too low. This stage of the project was merely the sub-grade of a future tee on the golf course, but as is often the case in many ventures, an outstanding job is in the prep work; never mind that nobody will see it. Rakes were dragged across the not-so-clean fill material, bringing rocks and hard clumps of soil to the surface. This was about the third go around on this tee, but still the chunks remained. The talk turned to how raking seemed only to make things worse when one of the crew experienced a moment of clarity when he said, “the more you rake, the more you rake.” We all laughed and the phrase caught on and we now use it for a number of similar instances. An excellent example of this from a rod maker’s perspective is the truing of a block plane sole. When the sanding starts it looks as though all will be well, and within a matter of minutes a true sole will be realized. An hour (and many paper washings) later there are still areas that refuse to sand true; the closer you draw to completion, the farther you begin to understand that the end will be. The more you rake, the more you rake. Undoubtedly, anyone who has drawn a file across the steel on a set of handmade planing forms also understands this to the fullest. I think another interpretation of this concept applies to craftsmanship as well.

Following the completion and subsequent love affair with my first rod making effort I sobered up and took stock of the situation. I scrutinized every detail with a critical eye. I did not want to be objective; did not want to allow my hours of labor to bias my assessment. I found that nearly everything I observed could not be quantified in concrete terms, save measurements. Qualities I looked for were often categorized using terms like “craftsmanship” and “aesthetics.” The most challenging for me to assess were the very subjective “cast ability” and “fish ability” qualities of the rod. The wiggle test never really did tell me much about any rod. This meant fieldwork would be in order, so with steeled determination I went fishing.

The fishing aspects of the rod notwithstanding (too much of the fuzzy feelings shine through when I think about fishing trips), I tried to be ruthless, even merciless in my resolution to deconstruct the long work I had so carefully done, so I might better analyze that to which I had signed my name alongside the word “maker.” I made a mental list that I then decided would better serve me if committed in black and white, where the improvements that I wanted to make in my rod making endeavors stared me back in the face.

In my mind, the most important thing that I could have improved upon was my node work. A poor understanding of what I needed to achieve in this area had left me with some glue lines around a few of the nodes. I did not like this, so I resolved to find my best way to deal with them. In the process I threatened a number of not-so-innocent nodes with a belt sander, and at that prospect they started to

(Continued on page 26)
(Continued from page 25)

bend (and straighten, and flatten) to my will. Either that or I was really getting better. The idea of
belt sanding them has never set well with me for completely irrational and unfounded reasons, but I
implore you not to tell the nodes; I may lose my control over them.

And so I marched down my list looking to improve what I did not like, certain that all I needed to do
was fix these items and be happy with what would soon become an “acceptable” rod. I was right;
sort of. The trouble was that the more you rake, the more you rake. Things that I had never thought
about or encountered in my first rod making experience surfaced in my second. I found that I had set
a new standard for myself, and so could not accept some of the things (like improper nodes) as I had
done the first time around. I began looking at my work through more learned eyes, and so could be-
gin looking for areas destined for improvement with a finer toothed rake.

As it turns out, many things in my first rod went rather well, of course I did not know or understand
this at the time. As I diligently plodded along on my second rod, problems started to arise that I had
not encountered before. But perhaps the actual journey of that rod and me is best left for another
tale. It should suffice to say that the second rod deserves names that I will not utter for all of the
heartache it has given me. Of relevance here and now is that through all of the troubles that rod pro-
vided for me, I emerged with node work that pleases me, a nice tight glue job, and many other vari-
ous improvements. So for this I pat myself on the back. Do not worry that I have become overly
comfortable with my work however, as I will probably never retire my rake, and this rod will soon be
under its teeth.

I am certain that I will never want for things that I would like to improve in my rods. The more rak-
ing I do, the more raking I will find needs to be done. I hope that the more you rake the more you
rake. There was a long period of time where I had claimed to rake “everything under the sun.” I now
realize that I was wrong. I had never raked bamboo fly rods before.
Cork Ring Slicing Jig
Text & Photos by Jerry Snider

Here is a simple cork ring-slicing device that will permit the use of a band saw to saw cork rings into various thicknesses. For those who require only 1/8” thin rings, Golden Witch lists such a device that would be well worth considering. However, I wanted to be able to slice cork rings in half, into 1/8” thin rings and also into sliver thin (.050”) sections of cork “burl” to use as decorative rings. The jig (fig. 1) allows this, and ½” thick sections can be used in each of the three cork gripping slots (fig. 2) without having to pass the ring through the entire series. The deeper (left) slot permits slicing 1/2” cork into 2 equal thickness rings, the center slot allows trimming cork to 1/8” rings (three 1/8” rings from one 1/2” ring), and the shallow (right) slot allows one to trim 1/2” cork burl into .050” thin rings. Using a different jig head I have had no difficulty in slicing cork burl into consistently uniform rings as thin as .030”. Fig. 3 shows a cork ring inserted in the jig and ready for slicing.

Except perhaps for the 18” length of 1 1/4“ O.D. swimming pool vacuum hose and the shop vac universal tool adapter, the remaining parts can be made from materials laying around the shop. The base of the jig is 12” x 5 1/2” x 1/2 “. The cork ring holder is 6” x 1 1/2” x 1 1/2”. The cork gripping and vacuum holes are drilled to depth (determine depth for your own needs) with a 1 1/4” Forstner bit. Use a center gauge with a broad base to constantly check for depth accuracy. Prior to drilling the holes, drill a 3/32” pilot hole completely through the center of each cork gripping hole location to insure that when drilling the vacuum hose holes on the opposite side they will line up with the cork gripping holes. The wall thickness between the vacuum hose hole and the cork gripping hole should be about 3/32”. This is not critical as long as you don’t drill completely through. After completing the three 1 1/4” cork gripping holes and their associated vacuum holes, drill a series of small 1/8” holes through each (visible in fig. 2) to allow a vacuum to be pulled when the cork is inserted. Align and square the cork ring holder with the front edge of the jig base and screw/glue in position. Drill a hole near the rear of the jig base to insert the shop vac universal tool adapter (fig. 1). A 2 1/2” dia. shop vac hose is attached to the lower end and a 1 1/4” dia. swimming pool vacuum hose to the upper after trimming the adapter to the proper hose size. The terminal end of the 1 1/4” vacuum hose is left loose and can be inserted (Continued on page 28)
into the vacuum hole of choice on the backside of the cork holder to provide suction for holding the cork rings in position when sawing. The cork gripping holes can hold the cork in place by friction fit alone (although cork dimensions do vary a little), however the vacuum provides a secure seal for holding the ring in position once it is inserted into a gripping hole. Applying vacuum is absolutely necessary when sawing full 1/2” wide rings into .050” thin sections.

To attach the jig to the band saw, cut a piece of wood or other material to fit the miter slot on the band saw table (I simply used the aluminum slide attached to the miter that came with my band saw). Carefully align the cutting face of the jig so that it is parallel to and makes light contact with the band saw blade (fig. 3) and mark the site of the miter slot. Attach the miter slide to the bottom of the jig base at two points (fig. 1, a, b). One point serves as pivot (fig. 1 a), while the hole for the second should be made linear to allow the jig face to be brought into contact with the saw blade (fig. 1 b).

I used a 10 TPI, 1/2” wide, .025” thick blade already on the band saw to cut the cork slices shown in the photos. The blade has been used heavily but seems to work fine, although a newer blade with a higher TPI likely would result in an even cleaner cut. When sawing cork slices keep a piece of 400 grit sandpaper nearby (fig. 1) and give the face of the cork a light swipe across the paper to remove any edge particles prior to reinserting it for the next cut. I now glue the strip of sandpaper to the top of the cork holder for added convenience. When a slice of cork is cut, an aluminum push rod (fig. 1 c) can be inserted through the vacuum hole to lightly force the cork slice from the cork-gripping hole.

I use this jig on a band saw, however I have also used it on a scroll saw by removing the miter guide and clamping an edge guide to the scroll saw table the correct distance and parallel to the saw blade. The blade must be under high tension to get clean, uniformly thin cuts.
Like many rod makers, I started out on a tight budget and my first block plane was a new Stanley 9 ½ purchased at a local hardware store for about $30. I carefully tuned this plane, grooved the sole, and outfitted it with a couple of Hock blades. This plane was followed several months later by a Stanley model 60 ½ that was treated the same way. These 2 planes have served me well and are perfectly adequate for the hobbyist rod maker. A couple of years later I also picked up a 1940’s vintage Stanley 9 ½ that I found at a swap meet. This plane has stayed in its original configuration and I’ve used it for the first stages of rough planing on wooden forms, while the newer Stanleys were reserved primarily for final planing on steel forms.

It wasn’t until attending Grayrock in 2002 that I finally moved up from the basic Stanley planes to a Lie-Nielsen 9 ½, purchased from Jeff Wagner. While I’ve always tended to buy inexpensive tools, when I have occasionally splurged and purchased a really quality tool, I’ve never regretted it. The Lie-Nielsen is so much more solidly constructed, elegantly designed and carefully finished than the Stanleys that there is simply no comparison. I have not yet grooved the sole of the Lie-Nielsen, and don’t know if I will. With its ductile iron body, 1/8” thick A2 tool steel blade, bronze and stainless fittings, you don’t even need to use it to appreciate it.

Once I had one high-end plane, it wasn’t long before others caught my eye. While at a meeting in Vancouver last January, I stopped by a Lee Valley store and bought one of their Veritas low angle block planes. This is a plane that I think has been overlooked by many rod makers because of its limited availability in the US. I’d seen these in the Lee Valley catalog and thought some of the features were a little hokey, like the 3 round depressions on each side for your fingers. But picking one up for the first time, I realized that my fingertips naturally fell into those same 3 depressions, the plane is superbly designed, and is comparable in quality to the Lie-Nielsen. Moreover, at a price of $89 US (the price was just increased to $99 because of a weaker US dollar), it is more affordable than the ~$150 Lie-Nielsen, and some of its features are far superior.

When Veritas came out with a standard angle block plane this past spring, I just had to have one of those too. The standard angle model is based on their low angle model and shares most of the same features, but there are some minor differences besides the obvious bed angle. There is a minor difference in the blade adjusting mechanism, which I discuss later, and the top of the cap iron is narrower where your hand rests to keep the overall height of the plane similar to the low angle model while accommodating the steeper bed angle. The body of the low angle model is also machined and tapped to accept an optional rear handle which is not available for the standard angle model. With the addition of a standard angle, adjustable block plane, to the Veritas line, both standard and
Now, with a collection of a half dozen planes, I thought it would be an opportune time to provide a review of the Veritas block planes to bring these really first rate tools to the attention of other rod makers. For the most part, I will make comparisons among the planes I have to highlight the differences between the Veritas planes and the other ones.

Like almost all of the adjustable throat block planes, the basic geometry of the Veritas planes can be traced back to the Stanley 9 ½ and 60 ½ models. The low angle model has a bed angle of 12° and the standard angle model has a bed angle of 20°. The blades are oriented with the bevel on the top of the blade, so the cutting angle is the sum of the bed angle and the bevel angle that the blade is sharpened to. This means that the cutting angle is actually determined by the user depending on the bevel angle the blade is sharpened to. I’ve heard a number of rod makers make statements to the effect that the low angle block planes are not suitable for planing bamboo because the have too great a tendency to lift grain. That’s bunk. I sharpen all my blades to 45°. This gives my standard angle planes a cutting edge of 65° and my low angle planes a cutting edge 57°. That’s still steeper than the 45 to 50° cutting angle of someone using a standard angle plane with the blade sharpened at the standard 25 to 30°.

Block planes are either wide- or narrow-bodied depending on the width of the blade they use. The wide-bodied planes have blades that are 1 5/8” wide while the narrow-bodied planes have 1 3/8” blades. The Stanley 9 ½, both models of Record, and the Veritas block planes fall into the wide-bodied category. The Stanley 60 ½ and the Lie-Nielsen block planes are narrow-bodied planes. Which one feels better is a matter of personal preference. I have small hands and find the narrow-bodied planes to be a little more comfortable, but the difference seems pretty minor.

The Veritas and Lie-Nielsen planes share the features of having a body cast from ductile iron instead of gray iron. The lie-Nielsen planes have a smoother casting, finer finish details, and are a little heavier than the Veritas planes. The Lie-Nielsen planes also have that beautiful bronze knuckle lever cap while the Veritas planes have an aluminum lever cap that is much more utilitarian. I’m no metallurgist, but Lie-Nielsen and Veritas claim that the ductile iron used to cast these bodies is much tougher than gray iron, and is more likely to survive a fall from a workbench. I’ve actually had an experience to bear this out. I tend to plane with my thumb and fingers extending below the sole of the plane to help position the plane over the forms. However, when planing a poor man’s quad, the strips are simply placed rind side down on a flat surface while the pith side is planed to half of the rod thickness. I use a scrap of maple 1x6 to support the strips because the surface of my workbench is somewhat rough. While planing a rectangular strip for a poor man’s quad, my thumb came in contact with the strip and got sliced open. I recoiled, and knocked my Lie-Nielsen plane off the bench. My heart sank; the plane was out of reach and I couldn’t catch it or even get a foot under it to break the fall. I watched helplessly as my beautiful Lie-Nielsen crashed onto the concrete floor of my (garage) shop. I’ve seen...
lots of Stanley planes with shattered bodies and/or cap irons, which I assume occurred as a result of a comparable impact. However, when I picked up the Lie-Nielsen plane, I could find no immediate damage. Later I discovered that I had difficulty adjusting the throat opening and noticed that the front edge of the slot that the adjustable foot slides in had been narrowed on one side right at the front end from a slight deformation of the front of the plane where the actual impact occurred. This was easily remedied with a couple of strokes of a small file, and certainly beat replacing the plane.

I’ve heard that Lie-Nielsen planes come with the soles milled dead flat and they require no tuning. I assumed that the same was true of the Veritas planes. My initial impression using both planes was that I had more difficulty getting a uniform shaving than with my Stanley planes. Weeks after my Lie-Nielsen plane got dropped; I noticed a tiny bump on the sole at one end of the throat. This bump was less than a thousandth of an inch high and I assume it happened from the blade hitting the side of the throat on the impact when it fell. I attempted to take the bump off by flattening the sole on a piece of plate glass with a PSA backed Mylar sheet of abrasive on it, but to my surprise, the bump didn’t contact the abrasive at all. The sole of the plane only contacted the abrasive on the front and back of the plane. I checked my Veritas planes and they were exactly the same. All were cupped on the bottom by a couple of thousandths. It took me at least as much time to flatten the soles on these planes as it did to flatten the soles on my Stanleys. I could tell no difference in this regard between the Veritas and the Lie Nielsen, except that the Veritas planes may have taken a little more effort because the soles are a little wider and thus have more surface area to remove. I suspect that the soles of these planes are milled flat at the factory without a blade in them. When you put a blade in the plane and tension on the blade, it lifts the center of the sole and results in a concavity there. There is simply no way that you can accurately plane with a concave sole. These soles must be flattened just like any other plane. This also really makes me wonder about how prudent it would be to get the optional rod maker’s groove milled in the sole by the Lie-Nielsen factory. If the groove is put into a sole that is not flat, you cannot subsequently flatten the sole without messing up the groove.

The Lie-Nielsen and Veritas planes also come with A2 tool steel blades that are a full 1/8” thick. These blades hold an edge at least as well as the Hock blades I bought for my Stanley planes, but I’ve been told that they cannot be sharpened to as keen an edge as the carbon steel that Hock uses. I have a vague sense that that may be true, but I can’t tell for sure and I lack the resources to do objective testing. The Stanley 9 ½ plane has a blade that’s 1 5/8” wide while the 60 ½ has a 1 3/8” blade. Both are relatively thin at 0.080” and come with fairly roughly machined surfaces.
and coated with clear plastic. These blades require quite a bit of work to flatten and get them into a condition that’s serviceable for planing bamboo. The Veritas standard angle and low angle planes come with blades that are 1 5/8” wide and are interchangeable. They are machined flat with a smooth finish, requiring much less work than the Stanley blades to flatten and polish out the machining marks. The blades are comparable to the Lie-Nielsen blades except that the Lie-Nielsen blades are 1 3/8” in width, and the Veritas blades taper down to a narrower width at the top to allow more side-to-side (camber) adjustment.

This brings me to what is probably the best feature of the Veritas block planes. The mechanisms that the Veritas planes have for adjusting and tensioning the blades are unsurpassed. The Veritas planes have a large wheel underneath the cap iron to adjust tension on the blade. This looks superficially like the tension adjustment on the Lie-Nielsen. However, unlike the Lie-Nielsen, which has a single point of contact between the wheel and the blade, the Veritas has a large brass foot that rests on the blade to evenly distribute the pressure over a large area. While both of these tension adjustments are far superior to the simple cam lever tensioners on the Stanley planes or the knurled screws on the Record planes, the Veritas allows finer control of tension on the blade and a more positive feel than the Lie-Nielsen. The Veritas planes also have set screws in the sides of the throat to allow control of the width of the throat, and the lateral position of the blade. Again this is a minor touch, but I have been inconvenienced on a couple of occasions by the degree of slop in my Stanley planes, especially when a Hock blade is used which is a little narrower than the original Stanley blades. If the blade is not centered in the throat, there may be insufficient camber adjustment to get the edge of the blade parallel with the sole of the plane. When this happens you have to release the tension and center the blade in the throat. With the Veritas plane, you can move the blade with the set-screws if you want, but you can just set the width so there’s little or no slop in the first place.

Blade adjusting mechanisms is where the Veritas planes really shine though. The Veritas planes use a combination mechanism that allows you to adjust the depth of the cut, and the camber of the blade with a single control. The newer Stanley planes use a direct screw adjustment that relies on a little nub to engage the slot on the underside of the blade, and a separate lever to control the side-to-side position of the blade. The older Stanley models have a screw wheel and lever mechanism with a separate lever to adjust the camber using a little wheel in the blade slot. The Record 9 ½ plane has a mechanism like the older Stanleys, and the Record 60 ½ has a mechanism like the newer Stanleys with no mechanism for camber adjustment. The Lie-Nielsen planes use a knurled nut with a flange that directly engages
a slot in the underside of the blade. This depth adjustment mechanism is simple and elegant, but there is no mechanism for camber adjustment. The blade must be aligned by hand before tensioning the blade, and there is very little room for this adjustment. This means that the edge on the blade must be maintained very accurately at right angles to the sides of the blade. All of these mechanisms have a lot of backlash (the free play in the depth adjustment that you feel when you change directions in adjusting the depth of the blade).

In contrast the Veritas planes have almost no backlash. The adjusting screw runs through a pivot post with right-hand threads and then through a machined nut with left hand threads. This nut has a machined round post on top that directly engages a round hole in the blade. This makes the adjustment very sensitive because the combination of right-hand and left-hand threads multiplies a twist of the knob on the screw, but the mechanism has almost no free play. You adjust the depth by twisting the knob, and adjust the camber of the blade by simultaneously pressing on one side of the knob and the opposite side of the blade. The combination depth and camber adjustment mechanism makes it very easy to set the blade by putting light tension on the blade, adjusting the depth and side-to-side alignment until you get a uniform depth of cut across the blade, and then lock this position by tightening the tension to assure no accidental movement of the blade setting.

On the Veritas low angle block plane this depth and camber adjustment mechanism rests in a flat-bottomed machined recess in the plane body. This recess supports the back of the nut so the post remains perpendicular to the blade when you change blades. The standard angle model lacks this recess. The nut on the adjusting mechanism is unsupported, except by its contact with the blade itself. This means that when you change blades the nut is free to rotate on the adjusting screw and readily loses its alignment with the hole in the blade. Because the fit between the hole in the blade and the post on the nut has such tight tolerances, it must be perfectly aligned for the blade to seat on it. This can be a bit of an annoyance if you change blades or sharpen blades frequently. It is sometimes easier to remove the adjusting mechanism from the plane body and fit the nut into the blade before installing the entire assembly into the body of the plane. This is the only shortcoming I could find on the Veritas planes.

The last adjustment on the plane is the throat adjustment. All of the planes mentioned above have an adjustable foot on the front of the sole so you can adjust the width of the throat opening. On the Stanley and Record planes, this foot is made from steel, while the Lie-Nielsen and Veritas planes have feet made of the same ductile cast iron as the body. The Veritas planes differ from all the others in that they lack the familiar lever operated cam to adjust the throat opening. I don’t miss this lever at all. On some planes I have, the lever actually prevents the throat from closing all the way down, and even on planes where the lever works properly, I often find myself ignoring the lever and simply sliding the foot using the knob on the top of the plane. The designers at Veritas gave as much thought to the adjustable foot as they did to most of the other details. The foot is slightly shorter than the slot it rides in so even when the throat is set to its widest opening, the foot does not protrude beyond the body of the plane. While this is a minor detail, it would protect the foot from being damaged from a fall like my Lie-Nielsen suffered.

Overall, I give the Veritas planes the highest marks. Aesthetically, I like the elegance and simplicity of the Lie-Nielsen plane, and I prefer the weight and the feel of it in my hand. However, mechanically the Veritas planes are superior in virtually every respect, and compa-
rable to the Lie-Nielsen planes in their construction. Coupled with their lower price (including $23.50 US for spare blades), I consider them the best value available in block planes. While you can buy a Stanley or Record plane for $35 - $60, most rod makers using these planes upgrade to a Hock blade. By the time you include the cost of a Hock blade, a Record or Stanley plane will wind up costing nearly as much as a Veritas plane.

Veritas planes are available from Lee Valley Tools (www.leevalley.com).
The Dangerous Petition, Part IV

Text & Photos by Bob Milardo

Mike, and his partner Laura, operate a B&B of sorts. There is no sign and they don’t advertise. You just have to hear about the place from someone who has stayed there. I usually set up camp in their basement apartment, but a person has a choice. There are two reconstructed turn of the century log cabins, and a 33’ Airstream camper. The Airstream is the old type, slightly rounded fore and aft and pure shinny aluminum, no racing stripes, louvered windows, and fully equipped interior. It’s been there better than a few years now and kinda fits well nestled into the cottonwoods. I imagine Jimmy Dean might have slept here once, pulled up on his ’55 Norton 500, walked in, grabbed a beer and Life magazine. Had a quiet moment to himself. It is that sort of place.

The big cabin will easily sleep two and has a large living area decorated with fur, antlers, and various folksy antiques. It is not the usual B and B décor.

The smaller Caddis Shack is high up the hill, and has a great porch with river view, an old rocking chair, gas lights and various sorts of rodents in the ceilings, walls, and generally here and there. I know because I stayed there for a few weeks one summer. Mike thinks this is a minor miracle and mentions it often. The little cabin is without power or water and a bit secluded. But it suits me fine and the views from the porch are sublime, especially in the rosy glow of evening light when you can see mule and white-tailed deer grazing about the nearby hills. The gaslight set at its dimmest setting attracts caddis when they’re about so you have a welcome indicator of when the hatches are heavy. It’s the last hour or so of daylight, about 9-10, that produces the most active work ups on the Crow. Bows are feeding everywhere, and as long as I can see my fly and keep the leader untangled, I might hook a few.

Mike and I are planning a camping trip into the mountains just west of here. Peter, a carpenter from Whistler, north of Vancouver, is joining us. Peter arrived a few days ago with a new dog, a lab named Chocolate. Mike has two Britney spaniels, one of which had pups in the spring, so we’re all making friends and there is quite a bit of comings and goings on the front porch. We’re taking three vehicles for reasons I don’t understand, but it seems to make sense since there is a lot of stuff piling up. I’m basically living out of my rental car, so it’s no big deal to gear up. I’m packed and loaded by 9ish. But for Peter and Mike there is some complexity.

We manage to leave with dogs just before noon. Mike’s registration is about to expire so we need to stop at the local vehicle registration office before they close for lunch.

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The plan is Peter and I will wait at the sandwich shop in Blairmore, get a bite to eat, Mike will meet us, and off we’ll go. I really don’t expect it to go this smoothly, because it most generally doesn’t. I guess that’s why I like messing around with Mike.

Mike arrives at the appointed time, but he couldn’t get his vehicle registered because he forgot the applications, notarized affidavits and such things as are required. The office closed for lunch and doesn’t open until 1. Meanwhile, Peter decides it would be a good idea to go back home and get some chairs, stopping on the way to pick up some tin foil, which also would be a good idea, and Mike has to go home anyway. Not being opposed to good ideas, I decide to wait and I still have two more books to read and well you might remember I picked up a few earlier in the trip. The line at the vehicle registration office is pretty long when Mike returns so he decides to bag it and by 1:30ish we’re off and the time is not lost since we now have chairs and a large roll of tin foil to bake potatoes in. I’m not asking any questions-- well cuz I’m getting a bit ornery and would really like to avoid irritation and get some fishing in.

I take the lead and we’re now traveling pretty quickly over the pass and into BC. In a few hours time we’re on the upper Kootenai River. We’ve stopped twice. Once successfully for potatoes to go with the foil and once unsuccessfully to look for a stove because Mike realized he forgot to bring one. The Kooteney drains much of this region before crossing south into Montana as the Kootenai, then up into northern Idaho, and back into BC where it becomes Kootenay Lake and then Kooteney River before joining up with the Columbia in Castlegar. It’s a long circuitous journey, which I guess accounts for the variations in the naming of the river. I’m thinking about this when Mike suggests we camp here for the evening before heading up to the Little Kooteney.

He is right, it is late and the road to the Little Kooteney is long, and at best rutted gravel. But Peter and I are not too impressed with camping in dry cow pasture and are thinking high mountain meadow would be much more fun. Plus the map says at mile 41 there is a primitive campsite with picnic table so designated by a small green teepee shape.

Maps stowed, dogs recovered and off we go. There is heavy dust on the road into the mountains and occasional logging trucks carrying the future paper towels of North America, but the views are gorgeous. Although early August, there is fresh snow on the higher peaks and glorious vistas between long stretches of lodge pole pine, Engelman spruce, western cedars and larch. This is heaven for me. Not such a great view for Peter and Mike as they are behind me and I’m kicking up enormous clouds of dust, storms of Sahara proportions. It is about this time I realize the hatch back of the once white rental is not fully closed and that seems to be accounting for the layers of dust covering everything in the back and now the dash as well. No matter, I’m sure Avis will understand. In the leisure pursuit of curiosity, what’s a bit of fine earth?

Luckily the campsite is unoccupied and there are two picnic tables under a stand of huge cedars. The river here is narrow, loud and spills from one pool to another. There are house size boulders, granite you can moor yourself to. I’ve got my tent set up while Mike is fussing with his gear, mostly looking for stuff in his truck, and Peter takes off in order to get to some high ground where he can make a call with his cell phone. It’s a major housing project, Peter is the chief contractor, and I guess there are things to attend to. I’m on the granite riverside and watch cutthroat feeding. The water is deep, clear, and cold. The river here spills into a narrow shoot and down into the pool below, about a dozen or so trout are hanging out on the current edges. They are a few

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feet below the surface and I can watch as they occasionally turn to sip something floating by, maybe a caddis larva. They flash silvery sides when they do so. I imagine they’re friends, chatting as they feed in their own watery way.

Mike and Peter have heaps of foodstuff, steaks and fresh corn and potatoes, but no stove and no pots. Peter decides to stick with peanut butter sandwiches and Mike with a can of sardines for the evening meal. I offer to lend them my stove but it is really no help for cooking red meats and my one pot is not nearly large enough anyway. It works perfect for a small stew or boiling water, but not much else. This is fine with me, traditional in fact, bean stew and a can of tomatoes.

The thing about camping is to let loose all the things you think you need but don’t. Simplify. Essentialize like the trout and speak in murmurs. A campfire makes the process a bit easier; stills the spirit. I guess that’s why I like camping so much, that and the wind, and the trees, and the nearness of earth. I’m sleeping under a larch and on a few centuries of larch litter, a small cradle in the high country where I can hear the mountains breathing, resting.

It rained throughout the night and now in the mourning light all is misty and blue-green. I’m up early because Mike’s dog, Cutter is nosing the entry to my tent and I’m happy to let her in for a few morning licks and mutual greetings. Cutter is ready to do the day dog style, which means running, bounding, chasing and swimming with the fisher folk. I’m ready too, but in a more subdued style. There are miles of river to fish and explore, pools linked in direct line to their origins, but there is coffee first, and drying out a bit.

Mike has fished this stretch before and we head out to some favorite water a mile or so downriver. There the river widens and forms a stretch of currents that arc back and forth through high mountain meadows. On the far side, the river cuts deeply into the fir lined banks forming deep channels and perfect habitat for cuts; the near side is a wide and shallow gravel bar and perfect for casting fly lines. I’m not surprised. Mike has a habit of finding big trout water like some people have a nose for a good diner. He’s been using the same big bushy fly for the last week and fishes it with complete confidence, chatting all the while. Technique and fly pattern may be important, but more important is knowing how to read water, think like a trout, and fish as if there is no possibility of anything but success.

The sun is now beaming in over the eastern slope and warming the water and us. We fish slowly covering likely feeding lanes, behind rocks, along seams of current, up against banks, at the head of pools, at the tail outs. You never really know where the trout may be and there is nothing showing on the surface to hint at activity below. We cast for hopeful hours, time slips away with the current, passing without much memory of having done so. Over my shoulder a small flock of mountain chick-a-dees move into the willows chatting as they feed. Below the river makes a sharp turn cutting into a canyon that glows yellowish in the mid-day sun. A pair of old warm green pines lean over water deliberately moving about stone cast off the canyon walls. I can see Peter and Mike are casting long lines, drifting bushy flies, luring trout from the shadows of river rock and water, releasing wild cuts into the shade of the pines. The dogs are wet and happy. I am finding patience in my solitude, casting hopefully.
Cork Boring Jig
Text & Photos by Jerry Snider

I find reaming and fitting cork grips assembled off the rod a tedious affair and, in my mind, a hit or miss situation at best. Even when gluing cork rings directly on the rod I have not been satisfied with hand reaming rings prior to glue-up. After an unsuccessful search through the Rodmaker’s List archives and Rodmaker’s Tips website looking for info on cork boring jigs, I finally got around to developing one myself. The design is a mindlessly simple, inexpensive, and quick way to enlarge the hole in individual cork rings and can be assembled mostly with discarded parts lying around the shop. Materials required for making the cork boring jig (Fig. 1) are a scrap board approximately 6” x 9” x 1/2”, a couple of small tension springs, a package of four 2” L-shaped braces and screws, two 1/8” x 1 1/2” hanger bolts (although almost any type of small screw will do), and some type of handle for opening the cork holder to insert the cork and for pressing the cork gripper against the cork for added tension when boring.

The minimum size of the base of the jig is 6” x 6” x 1/2”. The cork gripper apparatus is 4 3/4” x 3” x 1/2”. Trim the two pieces to size and be certain all sides and corners are square. Locate and mark the center of the cork gripper. Center and square the cork gripper to the jig base, clamp, and drill a 3/32” pilot hole through the centers of both pieces. Mark an outline of the cork gripper onto the jig base for ease of centering in later steps. Position two of the 2” L-shaped braces and screws, two 1/8” x 1 1/2” hanger bolts (although almost any type of small screw will do), and some type of handle for opening the cork holder to insert the cork and for pressing the cork gripper against the cork for added tension when boring.

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braces near each rear corner of the jig base and square with the rear corners of the cork holder (Fig. 1). The vertical arm of each L shaped brace should extend about 5/8” along the outside edge of the cork gripper as shown in the photos. The vertical arms will serve as guides for the sliding portion of the cork gripper. The horizontal arms will serve as stops when opening the gripper (Fig. 4). After making certain that the two L-shaped braces are square to the corners of the cork gripper, attach the braces with small screws. Once the L-shaped braces are anchored, remove the cork gripper and drill a 3/8” hole through the jig base, using the pilot hole as a guide. Similarly, drill a 1 ¼” dia. hole through the center of the cork gripper using a Forstner bit. After completing the hole, carefully saw the cork gripper lengthwise into two halves. Align and re-center the two sawed halves of the cork gripper on the jig base. Fasten the two remaining L-shaped braces to each side of the upper half only of the cork gripper as seen in Fig. 1. The lower arms of the braces serve as supports to prevent the sliding portion of the cork gripper from lifting when pulled open (Fig. 4). Any type of metal brace will suffice here, but since the L-shaped braces typically come four to a pack, I simply used them for this function. Carefully re-center the upper half of the cork gripper over the jig base and glue/screw to the jig base. Affix hanger bolts on either side of the lower, or sliding portion, of the cork gripper to anchor the tension springs. Cap nuts are optional as the springs hold in place on the threads of the hanger bolt with no problem. Attach two additional screws along the upper portion of the jig base for anchoring the upper ends of the springs. The springs I had on hand were a tad too long, so as a stopgap measure I simply hooked the two springs together and wrapped them around the upper half of the cork holder. They perform so well that I haven’t bothered changing them. If desired, a cork ring centering post can be made from a 1” long x 3/8” dia. length of aluminum rod. Turn the upper ½” length of the rod down to ¼” diameter and epoxy the 3/8” portion of the rod into the 3/8” center hole of the jig base. The cork rings can then be positioned over the post for boring (Fig. 4). The centering post is not really necessary and makes it a tad difficult to remove the ring, but some consistency in hole position placement from ring to ring is gained when using the post (note accuracy in Fig. 5). When using the center post, I release pressure on the handle after boring and allow the cork to pull loose attached to the boring tool. Attach some type of handle as a push/pull tensioning device to the center of the sliding half of the cork holder (Figs. 3, 4). A simple aluminum rod can be glued as shown in the photos, or a short rod can be affixed to the top surface of the slide and used as a finger pull. The jig is now operational.

Since I build small, short rods as well as rods with sizeable swelled butts, a variety of hole sizes in cork rings are required to more easily achieve a correct fit. For boring the holes I use brass telescoping tubing in sizes 9/32”, 5/16”, 11/32”, 3/8”, and 13/32” O.D. Brass telescoping tubing can be obtained from catalogs such as Small Parts, Inc. and similar companies. Cut the tubing into about 4” long sections and insert these into the drill press chuck for boring the cork rings. Although not absolutely neces-
sary, I reinforce the upper couple of inches of each brass boring tube with an aluminum insert to prevent the chuck jaws from crushing the tube (fig. 2). Do not glue the insert in the borer as access is needed for pushing waste cork from the tubing. Sharpen the cutting end of the brass borer with a file for smoother cutting. Be aware that the drilled hole dimension will be closer to the inside diameter of the tubing rather than outside diameter. I use the 11/32” borer for a 5/16” hole, the 13/32” borer for a 3/8” hole, etc. However, unsharpened tubing will work adequately if the hole in the cork is bored slowly.

To center the cork boring jig with the drill press chuck, insert a 9/32” brass boring tube in the chuck and lower the chuck until the borer centers over the centering post, then clamp the jig in place. If a centering post is not used, simply align a 3/8” boring tube in the chuck with the 3/8” hole in the jig base. The jig is now ready for use.
The smell of fall was in the air, and the leaves were starting to turn on the trees in my yard. The time was rapidly approaching for me to pack up the car with fishing gear, a bag full of clothes, a couple of boxes of odds and ends, a few tools, and wend my way to northern Arkansas again. It was the end of October, even though the temperature didn’t quite feel like it. We were still experiencing a daytime temperature in the 80’s in Maryland, and from the weather reports, so was Arkansas.

I finished up my packing the Sunday prior to the SRG, and headed out on the highway. I decided to split my voyage into a two-day trip, and spent the first night near Jackson, Tennessee. I woke up the next morning, had breakfast, and started out on the road again. Almost immediately after getting back on the highway, I saw my temperature gauge start to climb. Uh oh, this isn’t a good thing. I pulled in to the next town, found an auto parts store, and bought a new thermostat. I replaced the faulty part in the car, and got back on the road. The rest of the trip was fairly uneventful, other than trying to get through Memphis during rush hour.

I arrived in Flippin, AR later that afternoon, and was put up for a couple of days by my gracious hosts, Tony and Dorothy Spezio. Tony and I got a couple of decent days fishing the White before the SRG kicked off, both wading and by boat when the generators were up and running. The weather was very unseasonable, with temperatures in the 80’s for most of the week. We were fishing in short sleeve shirts, and I even managed to get a wee bit of sunburn the first couple of days.

Wednesday afternoon, I checked in the Wildcat Shoals resort, opening up the group cabin. Our little group included Bret Reiter, his son Adam, Darrol Groth, Tim Wilhelm and Gary Jones. Rich Jezioro arrived the next day and brought Duke the dog along with him. Wednesday evening, most of us early arrivers met at the Steak House in Mountain Home for the traditional early bird steak dinner. It was a pleasure to see many old faces, along with some new ones.

Thursday morning kicked off bright and early, with Darrol, Bret, Adam and myself borrowing Tony’s boat and fishing the White. We headed up to the shoals just above Tony’s home, and waded out. We managed to catch some fish up there, then the generators started coming on line, so we drift fished the river the rest of the day. After we knocked off, we all headed over to Fulton’s Lodge to meet and greet.

We got there just in time to grab a few pieces of pizza, and see old friends and new. The evening was capped off with a “First Rod Show & Tell”. Some really good stories, a lot of laughs (one first rod was brought in a little one ounce bottle – the charred remains, that is.)

Thursday morning had us back on the river, (Continued on page 42)
fishing hard. We eventually made our way over to Fulton’s, just in time for Harold Demarest’s “State of the Bamboo Union” address. Sure is good to see Harold and Eileen every year! They both have been outstanding ambassadors for us caniacs. Right after Harold finished up his presentation, Harry Boyd gave a demo on how he polishes out his finishes, using Dremel tools and other various and sundry items. It was back to the water for Bret, Adam and myself, fishing the shoreline right below Fulton’s. Do you know how hard it is to fish with an audience of 50 or 60 folks watching you, and getting the usual cat calls, Bronx cheers, and shouts when you short strike a fish, or on a remote release? Unnerving, I tell ya…

Lunchtime pulled us up out of the water, and after we ate our fill, it was time for Troy Miller to kick off his yearly casting clinic. Troy gave us the technical aspects of “Feeling” what the rod was doing. Being the gentleman that he is, he dragged me out in front of an audience, and had me casting the rod he used for his demo, and trying to feel what the rod was doing in all aspects of the cast. Must be my stone hands, Troy. You make it look so easy. Troy’s a great instructor, and even managed to make my lousy casting look and feel better. Thanks for the tips!

Steve Trauthwein showed and talked about his spiral rods. Unique and really beautiful rods! The Taper Contest was held this evening, and as usual, the racks of rods, both new and classic were filled and emptied by folks wanting to try other’s rods. Dinner was served, and the traditional Friday Night Party kicked off. Unlike last year, it was pretty comfortable sitting around in light jackets, and shooting the breeze. Last year, we had some pickin’ and singin’ under the big top, and this year was no exception. You guys are sounding better each year! Or maybe it was the beers we were drinking…

Saturday morning kicked off with Tony Spezio giving a presentation on wet planing. That was followed up by Harry Boyd, and Bill Lamberson showing us how to pin ferrules, using the
high tech methods of a drill press (Harry’s method) and the low tech method using a pin vise to drill (Bill’s method.) We did have to get Bill a band-aid, since he pulled a Nunley and drilled into one of his fingers… Ron Barch followed up the ferrule pinning demo with a presentation on how to make hexagonal wooden rod cases. Ron made a daunting task look quite easy, and showed some of his finished products, which were quite beautiful. Then, it was time for lunch, feasting on the famous SRG Saturday lunch hamburgers!!!

After everyone had feasted to his or her hearts content, Olaf Borge gave a working demo of his Hal Bacon Roughing Beveler. Nice and quiet, and did a bang up job on roughing out strips. Mark Cole and Harry Boyd gave their views and demoed how they sharpened plane blades. Mark had built a sharpening jig that was featured in an issue of one of the woodworking magazines, which utilized a drill press, and a table jig that was built from MDF. He had a number of disks, fitted with different sanding grits, from rough down to extremely fine. Harry presented his wheel sharpener, and gave a quick lesson on how to sharpen carbide plane blades, using the leather covered wheel and diamond paste.

After Harry finished up with his demo, yours truly had been asked to give a short demonstration on the fluting machine I’d brought along for hollow building rods. It’s made from a Dremel drill press, a Dremel tool, and some machined jigs, which fit in an aluminum channel. The strip is pulled through, and the depth of the flute is repeatable. The idea for building it, along with much help and inspiration came from a friend of mine, Kyle Druey. Bill Lamberson finished up the day with a demonstration off his Morgan Hand Mill, and had a few of the onlookers give planing with the mill a whirl.

Troy Miller and a few other FFF certified casting instructors put on a one-on-one casting clinic, with the proceeds going to help Randall...
Gregory and his family to recover from a devastating home fire this past year. It was wonderful to see Troy Miller teaching Harold Demarest to cast the rod he received at the Catskill Rod Maker’s Gathering. This was the first time in his life he’d ever cast a fly rod, and by the end of the clinic, Harold was throwing a respectable line. Harold, you and I are fishing the Willowemoc down below the museum at next year’s CRG! Dennis Higham put on an FFF Certification clinic for a few folks that are looking to test and get certified as FFF instructors.

We all had a wonderful time this year. The weather was fantastic (we were in short sleeved shirts during the day time), the people, as usual, were a true pleasure, the fishing was pretty darned good this year (ask Mike Canazon about the break off that happened while night fishing…), and as usual, the SRG was just a plain bunch of fun and enlightenment. Thanks go out to this year’s organizing committee: Lowell Davis, Bill Lamberson, Steve Trauthwein, Mark Cole, and Paul Craig. Job well done guys! This year’s gathering was an outstanding success. See y’all next year!
Flyshishing

The afternoon was a beautiful one. It was early July, the temperature was still bearable, and I was going fishing with a new partner. The latter can always be somewhat tenuous but I knew this time there were not going to be the difficulties normally associated with “feeling out” a new partner’s angling style.

I went through the normal routine; rod, reel, vest, waders all present and accounted for. I assembled the rod, my new Cayuse model from Mark Ruhe, and attached the quaint, little Hardy Featherweight. This setup has proven to be excellent for the waters I chose to haunt this day and was eagerly awaiting the gentle loading and unloading of this impeccably made 7’ four-weight split-cane rod. I donned the vest and made a few adjustments to where I had flyboxes stowed in the pockets then turned my attention to the last piece of gear which I would take as-stream.

Maddie’s look was one of extreme suspicion. I gathered her up and plopped her into the kiddie carrier she had been curiously investigating. She seemed to like the fit, or at least she wasn’t complaining, and I continued to secure the straps. I raised the complete package to my shoulders and squirmed my way into the harness.

As we made our way down to the water’s edge Madison played with my hair, adjusted and readjusted my fishing hat, and goosed and gawed at the new adventure. She had been in the pack before but not with Daddy dressed as I was. Carefully I scampered down the bank and entered the gently rushing water. Maddie was enthralled with the different sights and sounds and, although I couldn’t see her, I knew what that familiar, few-toothed smile looked like.

I stripped out some line and sent the Hare’s Ear dry fly drifting into the currents that lay before me. My fear at picking up the line to attempt a cast was unbearable. I could allow for zero miscalculations that would plant a sharp fly, barbless or not, into my tiny daughter. The first cast lay out like thousands before it; going off without a hitch and presented the fly delicately at the head of a small tongue of current. The fly drifted lazily downstream under some overhanging scrub brush. I anxiously awaited a strike but the first cast was fruitless.

The shallow current was weaving its way

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through my wadered legs in a way that I had grown so accustomed to but little Maddie had never experienced. Its gentle noises percolated upwards in a most entrancing manner. I knew Lil’ Missy would be napping soundly very soon. I had a few more unmolested drifts though the same seam as before until finally I was able to spark some interest. I could see the silvery flash come from under the overhang and soon was fast attached to a wild, elegant trout.

Maddie was startled at my quick reaction of lifting the rod to set the hook. The fish was actually quite heavy; more so than any I had previously stuck in this spot. Mark’s fine rod had an impressive bend in it but I was highly confident that it would more than suffice for a Coeur d’ Alene cutthroat. I could sense Madison’s interest as she was pulling on this and that trying to wiggle her way out of the backpack in an attempt to gain a better view.

The fine specimen came to net after a longer battle than I would have liked. He slid into one of Chris Jaufmann’s handmade landing nets without a hitch and I quickly raised the fish to Maddie so she could survey the catch. “This is a fish, Maddie.” I told her. “A FISH”.

“Shish? Shish!” was her response. Kids have a way with inflection that is indescribable. Well, I’m sure she got the picture. I revived the cutthroat in the cool, bubbly current and when she was ready to go, I let her slippery tail slide from my grasp. I went on to catch a few more “shishes” that fine afternoon, long after my newfound partner had slipped off into a slumber, I decided to call it a day. Clambering up the bank in search of the trail home I began to wonder what Maddie really thought of flyshishing.

There are certain things all of us wish we had a picture of and her first look at a wild cutthroat, exclaiming “shish” while being strapped to my back is one I truly wish I had. I do have the memory though and I know that is something that I can shut my eyes and visit at any time. I also know that there will be more times like this to come and for that I am grateful. Few things in life are as inspiring as children and I look forward to many more “shishing” trips.

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