Bamboo Journal

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Italian Bamboo Rodmakers Association

In this issue:

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Front cover:	Tom Morgan and his wife Gerri Carlson
Photo on page 2:	The IBRA booth at the fair of Chialamberto 2014
Photo on page 85:	The IBRA booth at the fair of Forlì 2014

HERE WE ARE AT ISSUE 14...

Here we are at issue 14. Actually, the previous issues are fifteen, if we count the magical number zero of May 2008. All full of news and above all, precious technical information. Therefore, it is not a special issue, it is not the journal's anniversary, it is not the tenth issue and 14 is not even a prime number. However, it is 2015 and IBRA will symbolically blow out ten candles in May. There is also a lot of news to share with our loyal readers and members.
First, the new board, which was mentioned by Gabriele Gori in the previous issue. Allow me a few words as the new editor: the board is, yes new, but with a spirit of obvious continuity; Alberto Poratelli is president and Gabriele Gori is now honorary president. To the former, on behalf of all the members and readers of the BJ, I would like to "affectionately" wish him to continue the tireless work of his predecessor (without renouncing the work he has always done for IBRA and above all, for the BJ).

To the latter, I wish him to continue, even in his new role, to be the reference point he has been in all these years. Heartfelt thanks to him. I also wish our vice president Moreno Borriero and the other members of the board, old and new, Massimo Giuliani, Davide Fiorani and Silvano Sanna a profitable task that will bring IBRA even more recognition.
There are also some new names among the "technicians" of the association. I, myself, as the writer of these few introductory notes to the new issue on the "newsstands", am new. I inherit a task that was of famous and experienced rod makers. I got involved in bamboo and planing two years ago and as the President told me at the course I attended last year, I may consider myself a rod maker at my twentieth rod at least (perhaps) ..... but I do have the enthusiasm and I hope it will compensate for my inexperience as a rod maker, with the help of many who are already assisting me with advice, news and most important, articles for the journal in the months and years to come.

The website is also new: I am sure many have noticed. New personal pages, where members can have private access to data, news and precious information. This is an excellent incentive to become a member and play an active role in IBRA!

Allow me also to mention the annual gathering in May, which will not only celebrate the association's tenth anniversary, but will also be the European Rod Makers Gathering!

A wish for our fishing: we all hope that 2015 will bring better weather conditions than 2014. Unfortunately, the long-term forecasts foresee a very, very hot summer. As usual, the dreaded El Niño is to blame. Nonetheless, I am optimistic and I tend to be sceptical of forecasts for such long periods.

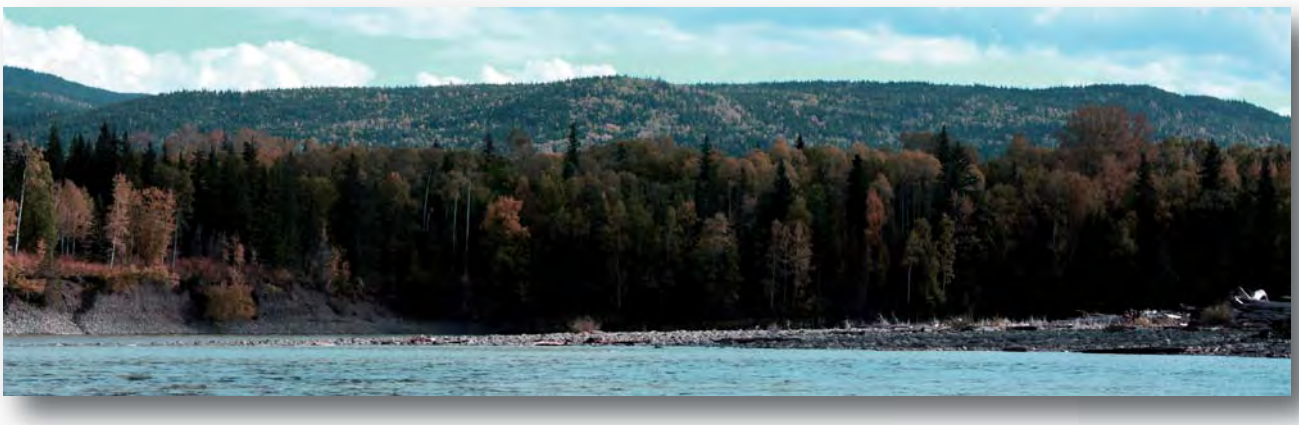
Finally, speaking of the BJ #14, here is a summary of what you will find in this issue.

The first article is by Giovanni Nese, who gives us a detailed, "infallible" and simple method to calibrate the calliper. A stroke of genius that deserves attention. This is followed by Alberto Poratelli, with again something technical and very useful for many: how to (successfully) write on rough bamboo. Stefano Ferri amuses and excites us with the report of a pleasant day on the river organized by the Bologna May Fly last October.

Massimo Giuliani takes us back to techniques, with a spreadsheet to simplify and optimize the cutting of the rough piece according to the measurements of the ferrules and other accessories. Very useful for those who seek absolute precision in their work. The spreadsheet will also be available in the Members Space on the IBRA website. Paolo Zetti illustrates his "hybrid" method to obtain a "pocketed butt cap" with many technical details and images. I have seen it and I can confirm the great quality of the result. We have an interesting report by Massimo Tirocchi on the last Catskill gathering he had the "luck" to visit (a lot of envy, at least from me!). Then there is the moment for an almost philosophical reflection from Giorgio Grondona and I am certain his words will provoke many debates. Next, there is the introduction of an interesting machine by Dennis Bertram. Not an absolute novelty, but some of the solutions he has adopted and come up with are worthy. We then come to a "cultural" moment, the interview to a fly-fishing legend: Tom Morgan. Finally, another fitting and amusing report: In 2014, IBRA again "sacrificed" six new victims of the plane and planing form in the construction course. One of them tells us about it: Mauro Moretti.

Hence, I wish you a pleasant read. We definitely accept any advice (or criticism) to improve our journal. Write to me at: editor@rodmakers.it. Write to me also with new articles for the next issue. I'm waiting!

Maurizio Cardamone



Evening rise, Fabriano rough paper, 75x55cm

CALIBRATING THE DEPTH GUAGE

by Giovanni Nese

Hello!

I was in Prato and looking at the new rodmakers of IBRA. I was chatting and I realize that for them as for quite a number of manufacturers, some even older, it is not very clear what it means to calibrate the depth guage. A few years ago, thirty! I did a university exam on measures, not on the taper. Let us now see the problems and then seek a solution.

An analogic depth gauge is relatively easy to calibrate. Using a calibrated block, loosening the screw on the base and you try an approximate fit, then adjust the outer ring (scale mark plate) to the calibration value, adjusting the movable ring to fix the position of 0, if fixed in place it remains so until the next fall on the ground.

The reading error of the apparatus is 1/100 mm. It's ok! Really ok.

Actually, we should add the systematic error of the instrument, which is what we read in the booklet that accompanies it, when it is new in the box, and that it is useless to look in the boxes of the Chinese gauge. It is about 1/100 mm; two, two and a half for Chinese tools,

this means that if we measure our rod with the two different instruments, as actually happens when we use the centesimal gauge calipers and we check our recently glued and cleaned rod, we could find that 2/100 mm of error of an instrument is to be added with the 2/100 of the other instrument. Plus the error of reading. The total error could be of 4 or 5/100 mm. and here perhaps we should start worrying.

Then there are two possibilities. The first is: use high quality tools that we know what is the systematic error of the instruments and take it into account or the second possibility: we are "satisfied" with the result.

It is not true that good tools are always perfect, far from it; just a knock can ruin a dial and change its origin and nationality. Transformed from Japanese to Chinese in one fel swoop. Great magician!

So 5/100 mm of error between taper and finished might be a good starting point. It could be the standard result of a great rod maker with modest tools …

Nonetheless, almost all have and use a digital Mitutoyo tool, I do not know why but I guess it's that when I started those analogic gauges cost 3 times less, but I'm a proponent of analogic dial indicator, I have never loved digital, not even watches. In some instruments, the digital appears at present, the best solution. Now it's even cheaper and this is the reason for the success: it costs less than a digital one analog.

Just to say, if a person has to choose between an analog and a digital dial, someone who uses such a tool and knows the exact measurements, he chooses the go/no go gauges. It is not our case; it would be if we were to make only one type of rod, always the same. But it is not so, thankfully.

Garrison used a calibrated strip to calibrate the planing form. That shows that once you are over the frenzy of the originality of the taper and the desire to reproduce the rods of all the major manufacturers, all you need is a well-planed strip and a Knife-Edge Straight-Edge. The first has the advantage of being in the environment in which to operate and is therefore in the same conditions of humidity and temperature of the strip on which you are working, the second gives to a trained eye for the precision of 1/1000 mm! This is called expertise, knowledge of the process and intelligent use of the instruments. The simplest, easily available and the most accurate.

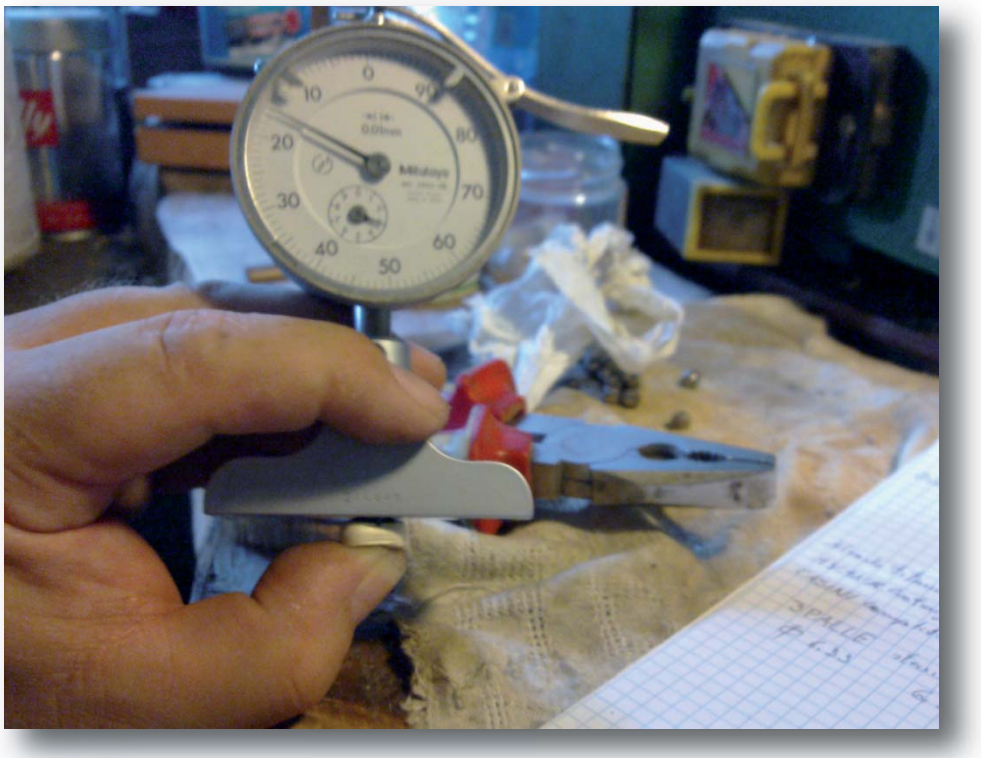
Then we adjust the digital gauge, what we need:

the depth gauge
the base of the DG
the Allen key to loosen the small screw
a metal plate about 1 cm thick and 10 cm wide.
A center drill of excellent quality
a Striking Knife or marking gauge
a weevil
ruler and metal square
bastard triangular file
scraper
a calibrated cylindrical rod,
sheets of metal of various thickness
a drill press.
a pair of small ball bearing, of two different measures 3 and 4 mm.

Step. 1 we need to create the base and the calibration hole...

I wrote 4 pages to illustrate the method to build a calibration set base. Then I invented this. (I assume that I have invented!)

and all that I have written, read and done in previous years was utterly useless. It's easy to do. This is done in 5 minutes and is accurate.



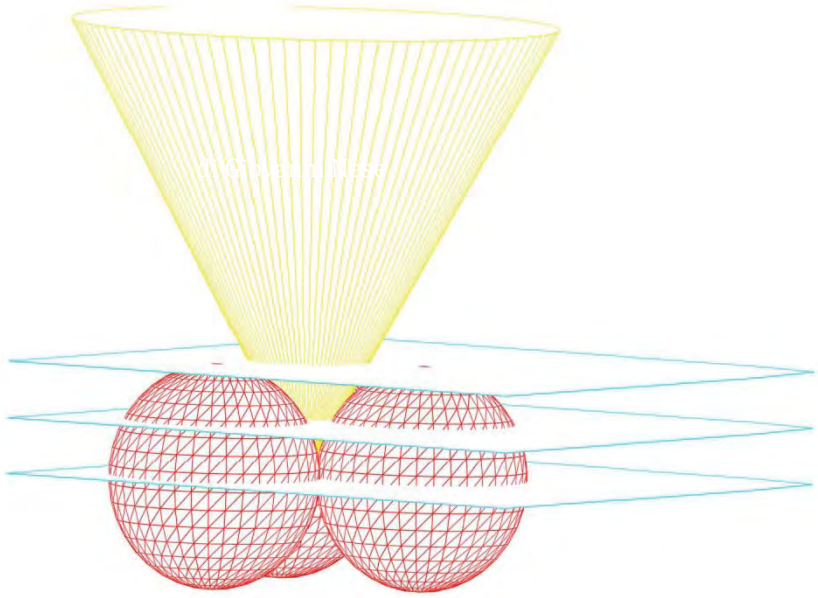
Want more?

A little theory to explain how it works.

Pass one plane to get three points. The support surface of the spheres is the base of the depth gauger that is flat; the balls are equal with the accuracy of 1-2/1000 mm. The flat surface of the tip of the depth gauge is a plane parallel to the base. The diameter of the spheres is 6.33 mm; the plane in which the cone with 60 degrees tip and the three spheres are in contact is at -6.33 / 4; the plane on which the tip is at a height = - 6.33 / 2.

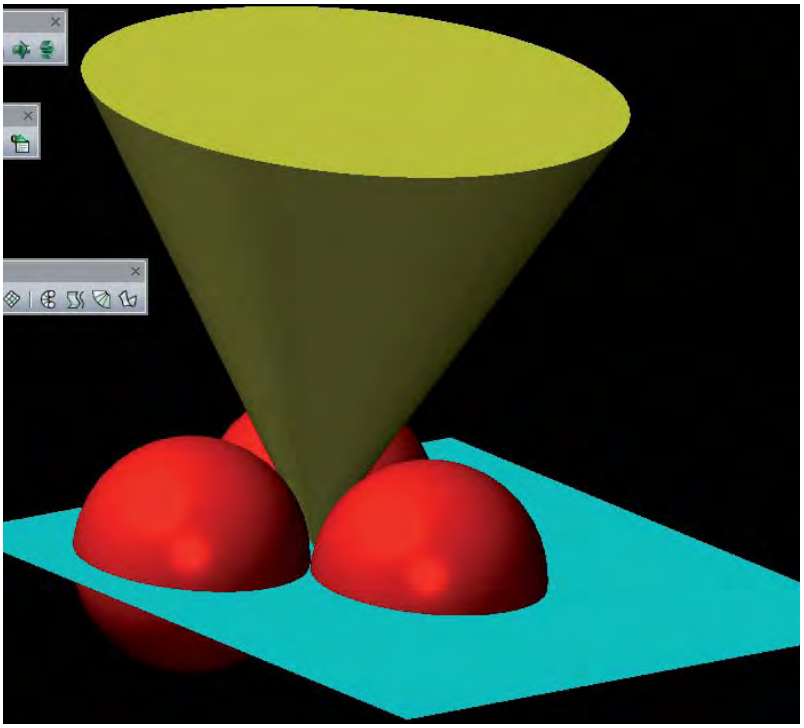
The value of the depth on which to calibrate the tool is 6.33 / 2 = 3.165. This is the value to set, the value to be read in the depth gauge.

Goal achieved!



3 small balls! Glued with a tiny drop of cyanoacrylate and held together by 5 or 6 turns of tape.

I spared myself from taking all the photos, explaining several steps of the text and doing another base.



Is it patentable? I think so but I just want to see the fool who will insist on patenting solid geometry.

Ciao

Morning mist, Fabriano rough paper, 55x37cm

HOW DOES ONE WRITE ON A BAMBOO ROD?

by Alberto Poratelli

The cleaning of the glue from the rough bamboo rod is one of the most gratifying moments of the entire construction (at least for me). The rod is like a butterfly escaping from its cocoon of glue and shows all its magnificence, beautiful and silky to the touch.

I let it slide through my fingertips, without looking, trying to feel any imperfections but most of all to enjoy its softness.

Then all the phases of mounting and dressing of the rod begin and they must be worthy of the rough piece: ferrules, tyings, reel seat, handle and….writings!

Indeed, the writings.

Besides deciding what to write, you need to decide how and with what to write.

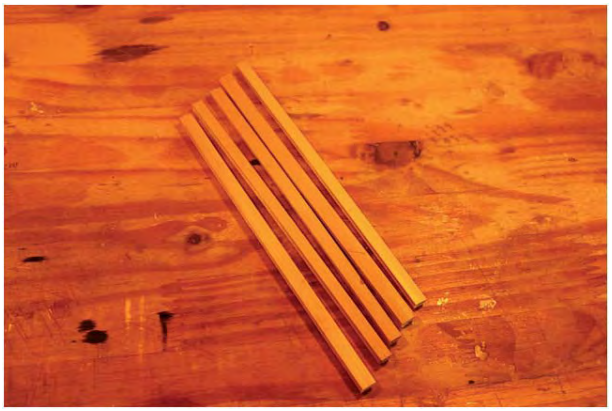
Usually we write with Indian ink and …. what? Some use Rapidograph pens; some use the classic reservoir and nib, some use special ballpoint pens with Indian ink.

Considering the characteristics of the bamboo on the external part of the culm, very similar to metal, I thought we could use bamboo for writing and I discovered that a bamboo nib works just as well as a metal nib.

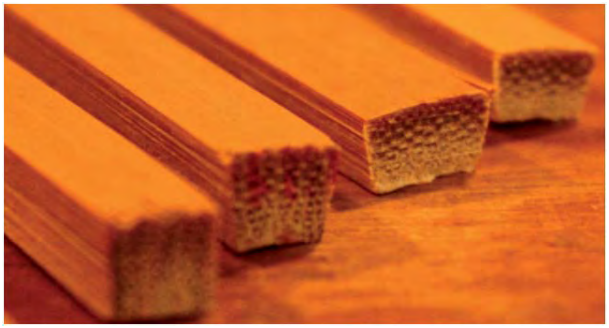
Bamboo to write on bamboo, fantastic.

However, how do you make a bamboo nib, a pen; it is surprisingly simple and it doesn't take more than ten minutes.

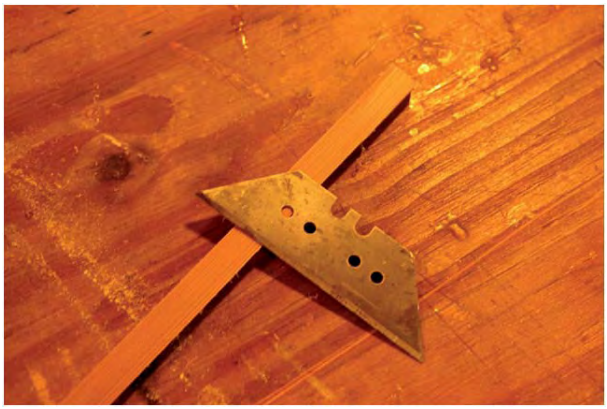
Every rod maker has pieces of strips in his shop that usually end up in the fire or in the garbage,

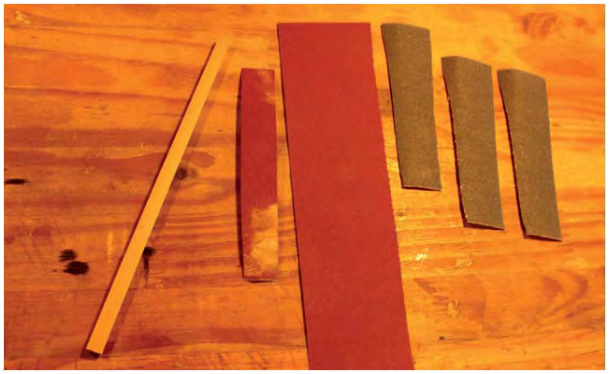


well, choose one that is not too big, at least twenty centimetres long and above all from the tip part of the culm because the density of the fibres on the outside greater than in the lower part.



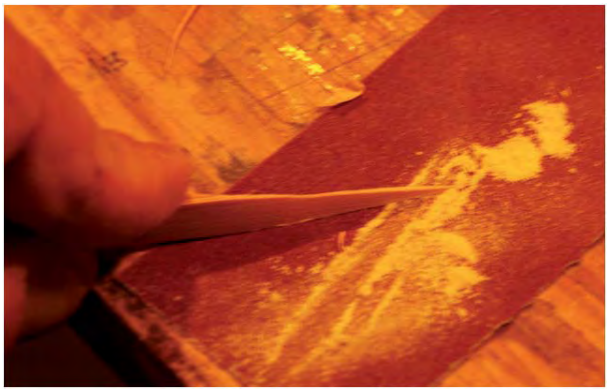
first, scrape the enamel with a blade and then sand it with paper up to 400 to make it very smooth. I usually sand the side and inside parts because it will be more pleasant to hold the finished pen.





After sanding, cut 5/6 centimetres from the internal part with a cutter and leave only the external part about 7/10 centimetres thick. We should now have a small, quite flexible spatula.

Now first with the cutter and then with sandpaper taper the sides to shape the point and before continuing make a vertical incision with a blade; this will help the regular flow of the ink. Without the incision, the nib will not work well and writing will be rather difficult.



At this point, reduce the thickness of the point with sandpaper until it…pricks!

A good nib must have a thickness on the point between 0,3 and 0,4 mm, less would be too soft and only useful as a small brush, while more than 4/10 would be too hard.

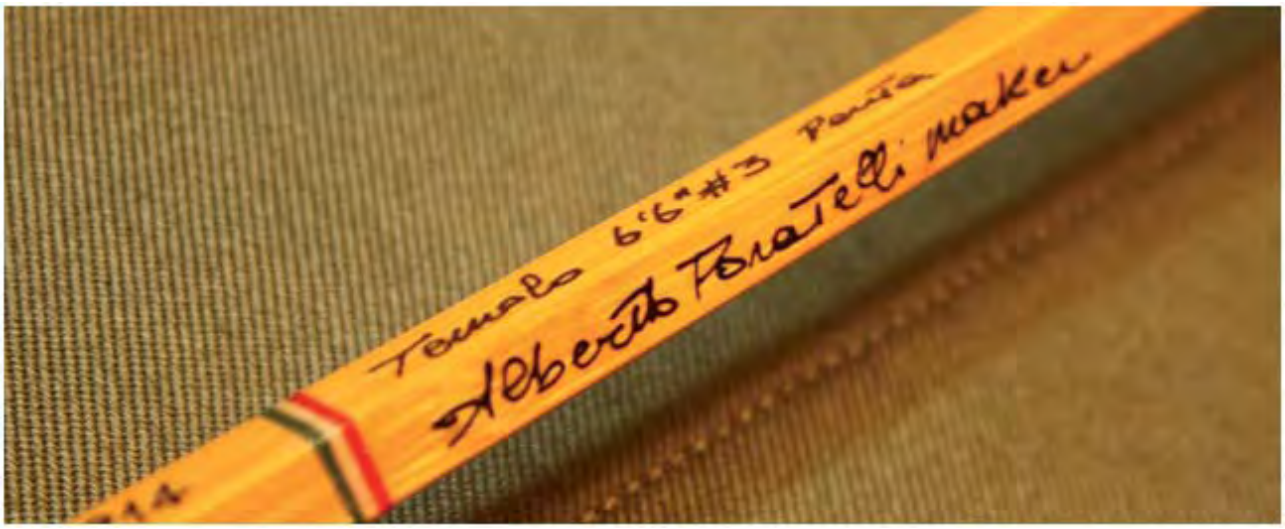
Well, the pen is finished, it did not take longer than ten minutes to make and it is “our” pen, a unique piece.

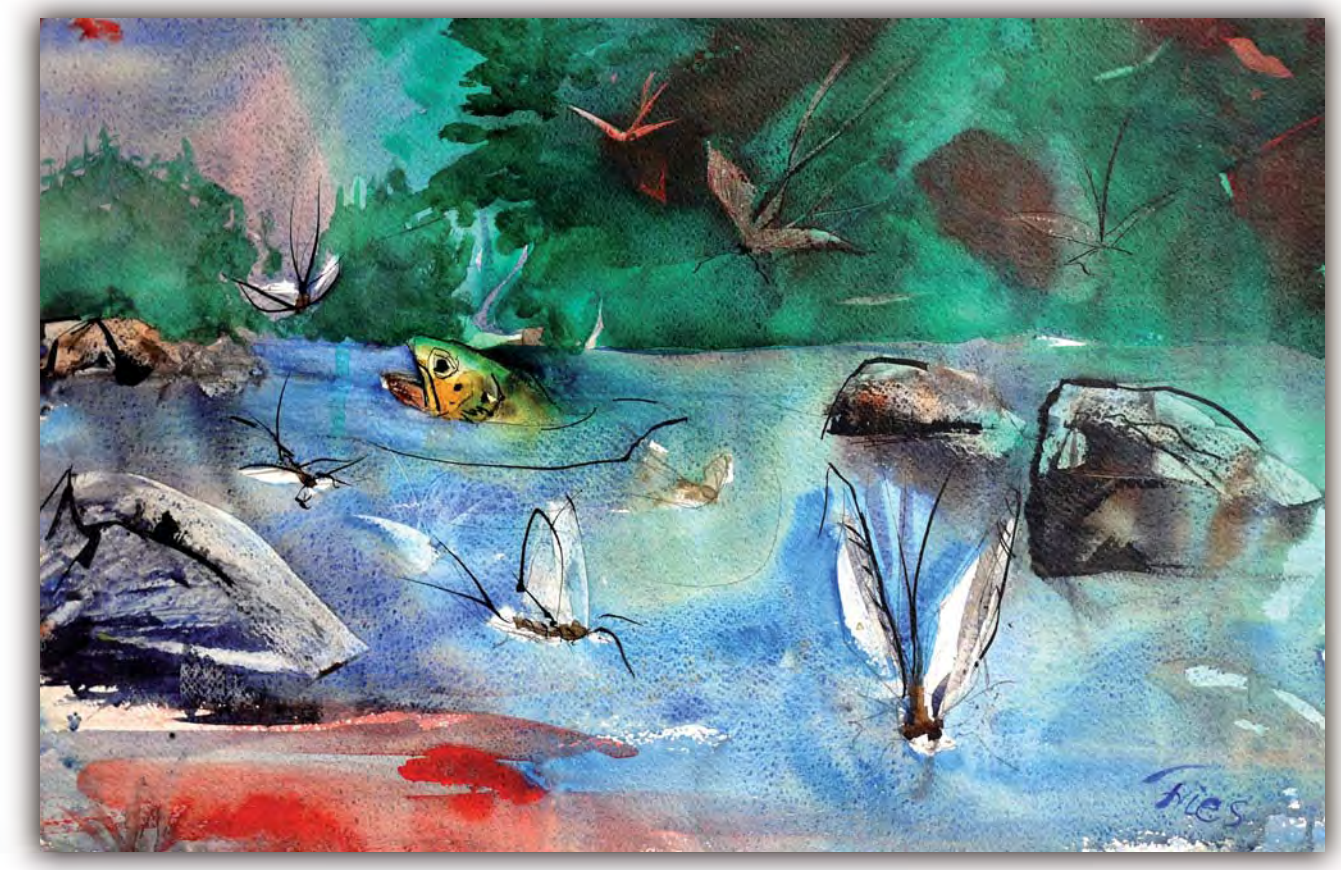
All that is left to do now is dip into some ink and write on the rod, the result is the same as writing with a metal nib, but the satisfaction is double!

For good results, the surface on which you need to write must be adequately prepared; I suggest rubbing it with a soft eraser and then with a piece of paper dipped in alcohol to remove any residues of fat or silicone.

I normally use the bamboo nib, naturally before writing on the finished rod, I try it a few times and the result may not be excellent, but it is definitely unique.

I almost forgot. If you use Indian ink to write, do not use a water-based varnish or a disaster is guaranteed!





Evening rise2, Fabriano rough paper, 55x37cm

Welcome to the bamboo day

Tongue – in –cheek report of a fantastic day

by Stefano Ferri

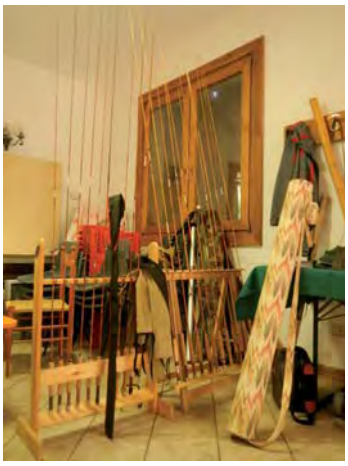
On 5 October 2014, the bamboo day was held and it was organised by the ASD May Fly Bologna..... what can I say?

It was a great success, beyond the organisers' expectations, but let us proceed in order. What is it all about?

The first two gatherings were born with the carefree intention to gather the enthusiasts of the club, let them fish in the Reno River equipped with bamboo or fibreglass rods and vintage fishing clothes; an event among friends in the mood for fishing, laughing and spending time together…there was even a "best dressed" award …

This year was different because there were 80 participants and most of them not of the May Fly, thanks to the Internet and the fame of the club. They joined us from: Ascoli, Tolentino, Viterbo, Cervia, Reggio Emilia, Carpi, Imola, Prato, Perugia, there were instructors from FFM and SIM.

Everyone with the desire to share the passion of beautiful bamboo rods, without stress or competition, in total relax.
The first "taste" was on the Reno River in the catch and release of Lagacci, where there is also a field for casting and easy access to the river is in a small ancient hamlet with its typical humpback bridge, which takes us back in time, in the atmosphere of the day…over the bridge the area "D waters" (trout) and, lower down at Molino del Pallone, there is the boundary between the catch and release and the D waters, a long stretch of fine water, which never dries out, with accesses that are easy to see.

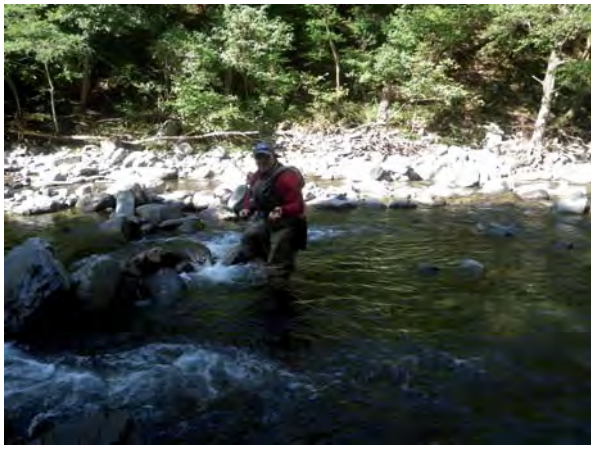


SOME RODS EXHIBITED FOR EVERYONE TO SEE…A PARADISE FOR FLY FISHERMEN

ALBERTO CALZOLARI TRIES THE NEW ROD WITH GALLO

AND FISHING? The river was low and the water transparent as you can see in the photos, some fish were caught, even if the banks were crowded with onlookers, practically the dream of all fly fishermen…low water and people watching…although it must be said that it was quickly set aside because all the participants had at least one personal rod and they all wanted to try them and show them to the others.

LOW WATERS…HIGH DIFFICULTY…STUFF FOR CONNOISSEURS



FERRI & FERRI … STEFANO AND OSCAR SMILE WITH THE STOCKIES. THEIR REPUTATION IS SAFE

FRACTURE TEST: MARCO CAVICCHI TRIES A FRACTURE TEST WITH A ROD OF GALLO'S, WITHOUT SUCCESS. GALLO JOKINGLY REMINDS HIM THAT HIS LIFE COULD MEET AN ABRUPT END, IN THE BACKGROUND, CALZOLARI HOLDS ON TIGHTLY TO HIS

TWO EVERGREEN REELS…

OTHER RODS WITH MODERN REELS

FLYFISHING IN POPULAR IMAGERY....
A VERY FAMILIAR SCENE BUT STILL EVOCATIVE

NATURE'S SMALL MIRACLE....IT WILL GROW...WE HOPE

A PERFECT LOOP IS ABOUT TO COME FROM MARCO VENTURI'S CAST

INSTRUCTORS IN ACTION

YOUNG FLYFISHERMEN AND RODMAKERS...THEY WERE THERE....

Obviously, there were also some rodmakers who gave their "creatures" for the trials on the field, satisfying the tastes of everyone. I saw rods from 6' to 12' for 2 hands with all the known power and actions, proof of the fact that there are no construction limits with bamboo, as many think, but the possibilities are almost endless because rodmaking is not only a tradition, but in the community of rodmakers, there are people that experiment all the time, building rods with modern actions that surprise those who do not know this exceptional material.

But who are these strange characters? They don't fish much, but are continuously planing, obsessed with building the perfect rod.

The following joined us: Oscar Ferri, Michele Gallo, Andrea Ferranti, Bruno Generali, Sergio Dal Lago, Paolo Nanni, Gabriele Ciarrocchi and I (Stefano Ferri). Below is a small part of their work you can admire.

GABRIELE CIARROCCHI (EXAMPLES OF FLAMING).
THE FIRST ON THE LEFT IS BY W. LUZI

MICHELE GALLO (TRANSPARENT TYING ON STEP-DOWN FERRULES)

ANDREA FERRANTI (FROM THE ROUGH TO THE FINISHED ROS)

BRUNO GENERALI (BAMBOO AND LEATHER CASE, HANDMADE)

STEFANO FERRI (OLD STYLE TYING)

SERGIO DAL LAGO (GARRISON 209E)

OSCAR FERRI (8'6"#10-11) A LETHAL..... WEAPON

PAOLO NANNI (COMPONENTS)

Each builder brought the rods that best describe his personal vision of bamboo and of fly fishing, I saw some noteworthy work, done with passion and competence, increased by my knowledge of the difficulties one encounters in rodmaking and I can say that the level was really high. This created an appealing occasion for all enthusiasts who were able to touch high quality and high performance artisan tools; and also discuss actions, power, silk lines, varnishing, accessories, number of pieces, etc. directly with the builders and thus comparing the various constructive opinions of the rodmakers present and perhaps get a sense of a future rod. The bamboo day has never been and will never be only about fishing. After the "gruelling" fishing and the casts on the lawn, a welcome with starters consisting of Mortadella and other typical Emiliani cold meats, was reserved to those who came back "exhausted" from the river.

THE GUARDS.....GUARDING.....THE COLD MEATS... IN THE BACKGROUND G.BOSCHI (WITH A HAT) INCOGNITO BUT HE IS VIGIL TOO

ANDREA FERRANTI IN FRONT OF THE.....COMES TO

But the height was reached in the "RIFUGIUM PECCATORUM", the refuge of sinners, the house of the local tourist board of Biagioni, where the cooks spoilt everyone with a lunch defined as "NOT for dieters" - consisting of lasagne, roast ham with potatoes….an attack on cholesterol, but after all we are in Emilia, are we not?...well, to be truthful, with one foot in Tuscany....
They were given a deserved and sincere standing ovation; they satisfied trained "jaws" and there was already talk of the next "bamboo-lasagne day"...

HERE ARE THE ARTISTS....THE COOKS....CESARE, THE "KING OF LASAGNE" IS MISSING BUT HE MUST HAVE BEEN AROUND COLLECTING WELL-DESERVED COMPLIMENTS

THE PRESIDENT MASSIMO MATTEUZZI STARTS THE DANCE

I take the opportunity to say that, considering the success, this will be an annual event and entirely dedicated to fishermen enthusiasts of bamboo; we will not only speak about construction or different techniques, but we will also try the rods exhibited by the participating rodmakers. We will probably move to an area more suitable for casting and it has already been spotted.

The fly tier Walter Luzi was a pleasant surprise when he astounded everyone with the live construction of amazing flies. We hope to have him again next year together with the whole likeable company behind him, with other magicians of the vise, because it is true that we admire the nice rods, but all good fly fishermen cannot ignore interesting flies.

FOR NEXT YEAR: it is good to know that the place where the gathering was held is very near Porretta Terme with all the accommodation it offers, but it must be said that in Lagacci there is a very good Bed and Breakfast that deserves a visit. Those who stayed there were very happy and it is on the river. We recommend it.

The Reno River is interesting from the Venturina Bridge up to Lagacci and beyond…the piece is very long and to fish one must pay the annual fee and have the booklet for D water that is given free of charge by the municipalities of these waters and the flies must be barbless.

I end by again thanking the organisers, rodmakers, cooks and all the friends that decide to join us, regardless of the distance.

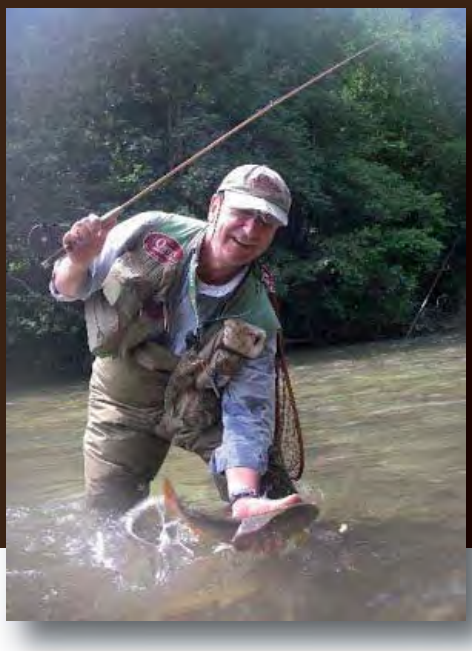
We look forward to seeing you at the 2015 gathering.

Greetings from Stefano Ferri and the May Fly Bologna.

Trout, Fabriano rough paper,55x37cm

A spreadsheet for cutting the blank

by Massimo Giuliani



The first rods I made were three pieces: the first and second with ferrules in “leftover” bamboo (I was very willing to build, but I did not have any ferrules).

The third one, I finally bought nickel silver ferrules, with the traditional metal Super Swiss.

The choice of the three-piece was originally mainly for the positioning of the nodes on the strip, which was fine for this type of rod, less for a two-piece. From that strip, kindly lent to me by my friend Gabriele, I succeeded in making three three-piece rods, of which two with double tips. I was obviously forced to use some strips with cosmetic imperfections.

The idea was right, but I had not chosen the easiest path to start and I realized this in time. However, I slowly managed to reach the end and as the saying goes … "what doesn't kill you, makes you stronger".

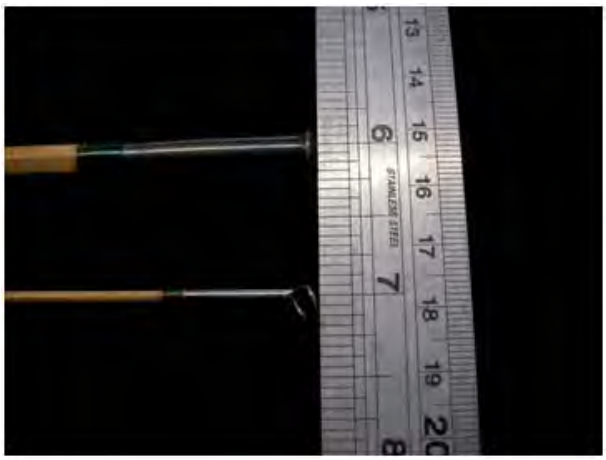
My greatest difficulty was in something that seems banal: cutting the blank.

As we all know a "well" cut rod has three requisites:

a) It must be the same length as the design
b) The pieces must be equal.
c) The taper must have continuity.

Taking c) for granted, a 7'0" rod must be a "seven feet" (and not about seven feet) and the length of its pieces must be equal.

The exceptions are rods with differentiated pieces, but that is another topic.



We are dealing with numbers, so any consideration is superfluous because a mm or inch tape measure does not lie.

Cutting the blank is not complicated and technically easy, but doing it correctly is not a simple operation. I remember the calculations, trials, retrials and again retrials, etc. I finally succeeded, but it took me a whole day or more for one rod…a full day or more of stress.

Subsequently, after making seven or eight rods, when it came to cutting the blank, I was again faced with the same stressful problem: where to cut it exactly and without errors. Stressful because after three or four months I had already forgotten how I had made the previous rod and I was very scared to ruin hours of work with a thirty-second careless cut.

If, for example, we have made a two-piece 7' (84'' or 2133, 6 mm), we have two 42'' segments (or 1066,8 mm.) that will measure from 0'' to 42'' for the tip and from 42'' to 84'' for the butt. Obviously, we will also have the relative margins of excess for each segment.

Therefore, the rod is made correctly, but if we cut it with the abovementioned measurements and then applied the relative components to the two segments, (tiptop, ferrule, reel seat) we would have a longer rod with unequal pieces.

These differences are caused by the tip, the ferrules (the different lengths of the male and female, by the thickness of the internal tops of the male and the female), by the male/female junction space, by the thickness of the butt cap.

Thus, to have a rod with the measurements of the design and equal pieces, we need to adjust the tip and the butt. In fact, if the application of the female ferrule increases the length of the butt, by 24mm, for example, to make the pieces equal, I must "shorten" the butt by 12 mm. and "lengthen the tip by 12 mm.

This must be repeated with every component that we insert on the rod, which will alter the original length. This principle is valid for any type of junction we use, with metal or bamboo ferrules or spliced.

I decided to construct a spreadsheet to help me in this operation.

The one I present to you is with metal ferrules for a two-piece rod and it can be downloaded from the IBRA website www.rodmakers.it in the Members Space. The one for three-pieces will be published in the next issue of the Bamboo Journal.

The spreadsheet needs the measurements of the M and F ferrules and of the butt cap; it will give you the two values to adjust the tip and the butt of the rod.

The following measurements and values need to be inserted in the spreadsheet:

1. Male measurement. External length (value in B/Ext); internal depth (value in B/ Int); length of the insertion of the male into the female (value in E/Ins in F)
2. Female measurement. Internal depth male side (value in C/Prof. F); internal depth wood side (value in D/Ins.Wood); total length (value in Total D/L.)
3. Butt cap measurement. External length (value in F/RS Ext); internal depth (value in F/RS int)

Note:
• Even if it can be inserted in the spreadsheet, I have purposely omitted the measurement of the thickness caused by the tip because it is simpler to make this adjustment when the rod is finished with the other components mounted.
• Obviously, the adjustment marks on the blank are made with a very sharp pencil to keep the precision and when cutting…left or right of the marking, keep in mind that the blade has its thickness too.

In total, the measurements are eight…and two or three minutes of time; it is far more complicated to explain that it is to do.

I hope this spreadsheet is helpful and facilitates the task of cutting the rod correctly because it would be a pity to spoil it in an instant after hours of work.

I wish you fruitful work, but never forget the old saying: “measure twice, but cut once”.

Also because even the most cunning fish prefer to bite on rods with the right measurements and equal pieces.

Tight lines!

Massimo Giuliani
www.giulianirods.it

how to access the “Members Space”

• Go to the IBRA website www.rodmakers.it

• Click on the key (top right) or on “Members Area” (drop-down list on the left)
• The system will ask you to Login (Email + password)

• Click on the Members Space . The downlaodable documents will appear, among which this spreadsheet

Spinner's dance, Fabriano rough paper 55x37cm

A Pocketed Butt Cap with "mixed" working method

by Paolo Zetti

One day a few years ago, when I decided it would be nice to build a fly fishing rod with my own hands, one of my fixations was to make all the components I could myself.

I must add that I have some experience in working mechanical parts, as it was my job for many years, before I moved to design. The first part of the rod that revealed itself to me was the reel seat and my first attempts at making the hardware started from turning the butt cap and ring from solid nickel silver stock, which I would then match with the mortised insert for the foot of the reel.

I was annoyed by the fact that I could not make what is known in English-speaking countries as a pocketed butt cap, in the style that is often attributed to Garrison, since this was the hardware he preferred.

As is often the case, this shortcoming stimulated a new challenge to experience in my mechanical workshop, which over the years, I have equipped quite well with a lathe, a mill and a drill press; all of which came from local retired artisans, therefore industrial machines, perhaps a little dated, but definitely with more precision and solidity than is normally found with the equipment destined for hobbies. All my machines, of course, came equipped with a series of accessories and tools, which are a little out of the ordinary and allow me to make things that one would usually have made by professional machinists, who do not always have the time or the will to listen to a crazy guy that makes strange requests and every now and then says a word that sounds strange to their technical ears – bamboo!!

I would like to point out that what follows is not all my work, but is the fruit of several ideas from the web, particularly from American websites and so you will not see anything new if not a different way to obtain something you already know.

The normal approach in manufacturing pocketed butt caps consists in die-cutting thin strips of nickel silver discs with a press, which will then use a subsequent series of dies to press out the cap with its little pocket. This semi-finished product is often machined to improve the finish. The disadvantage of this method, per se relatively simple, lies in the need to have a press and to make a series of dies. This is not very cost-efficient for someone wishing to make a limited number of pieces.

Considering that my small collection of machines does not include a press, or rather, I have a small screw-press, which is completely manual and so it does not develop a great deal of pressure and therefore I was not able to achieve the required result.

Anyway, the manufacture of the necessary dies, even though they are within my reach, would have entailed a quantity of tests to refine the right coupling, which I do not have time for. The last difficulty, perhaps surmountable, is the fact that the nickel silver sheets are not readily available.

All these considerations lead me to change my approach and to make the caps by turning a solid nickel silver bar stock, as I was already doing with wooden reels seats with a recess, and only at this point do I make a single die to punch the pocket. This approach is surely not cost-effective if we need to bear in mind the quantity of raw material that is wasted and therefore would not be commercially viable. It does however satisfy my need for a dedicated production, which at the moment is a few pieces a century.

Turning the bar stock

The productive process of the semi-finished butt cap begins with a solid rod of round nickel silver stock. For convenience I cut cylinders of about 150mm (5” 29/32), to fit them easily in the chuck of my lathe.

The first step is to face it off and then to turn the outer surface; drill the centre hole and machine the hole. I then surface the bottom of the cylinder with an end-mill that I had made to the right diameter (16.7 mm or 21/32”). I do it like this, but you can just as easily hollow the cylinder with a lathe tool. At this stage, I part the piece.

I mount the cap on an expandable chuck to finish the cap externally and to radius it.

Look at the photographs for the simple manufacturing steps.

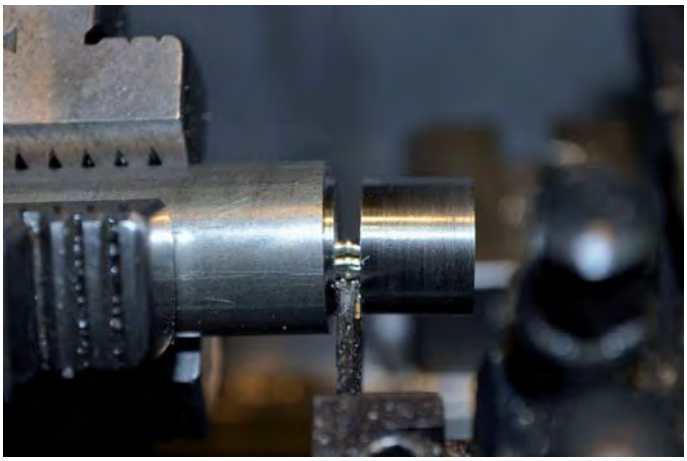
1) Facing off the bar stock in the lathe.

2) Rough turning and external finishing.

3) Centre hole drilling.

4) Centre drilling.

5) End-milling the bottom.



6) Parting the cap.

7) The expandable chuck that we will use in the next phases.

8) With the cap on the expandable chuck, face off to remove the little nipple caused by the parting tool.

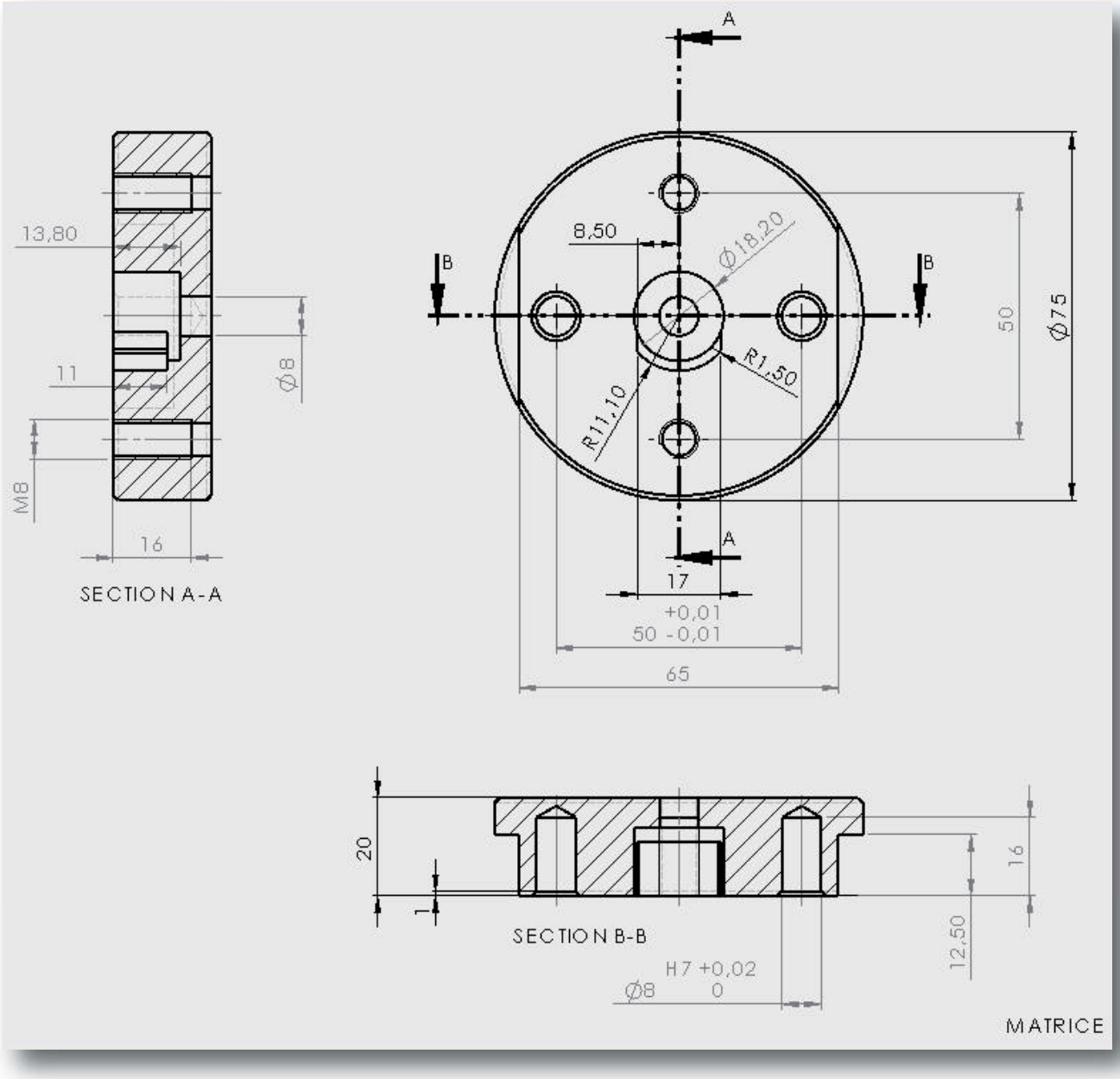
9) Creating a radius, if you like.

10) Butt cap ready to be punched.

Making the die

At this point, the lead role is played by the die, which is composed of three parts, each with its own specific function. Unfortunately, I did not take photos during the manufacturing steps that I describe, also because at the time I could not imagine I would write this article.

The base, which acts as a mould (drawing) was obtained by turning a round sheet of C45, and then with a mill and the turntable, I milled the pocket. This step was very delicate because the steel I chose and the mill diameter three, which was necessary to achieve the required radiuses, forced me to proceed very cautiously and to repeat the same forming process an infinite number of times. The mill has two tempered splines that act as a guide for a perfect alignment with the other components; the two tapped holes allow the assembly of the lid.

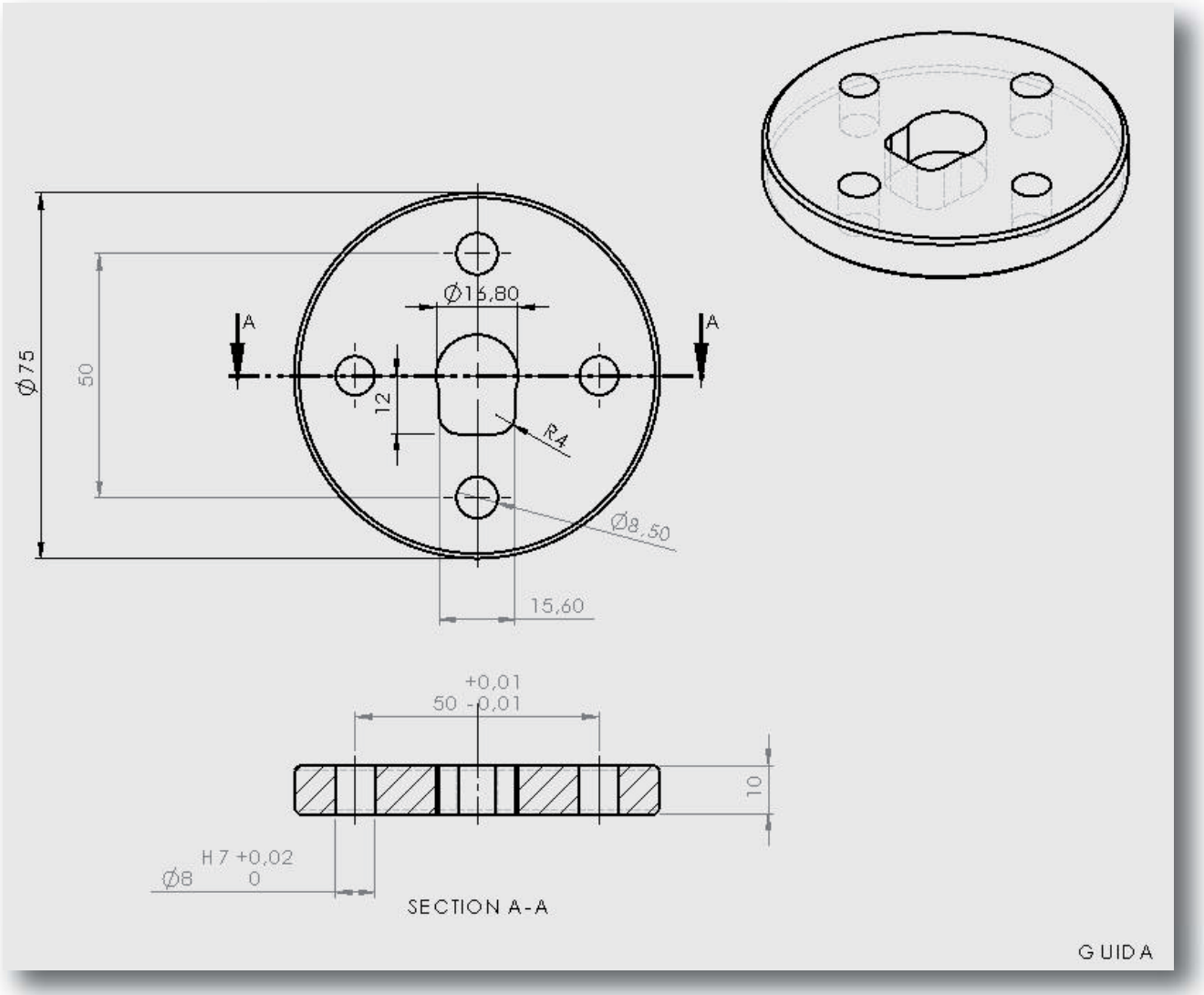


DRAWING 1

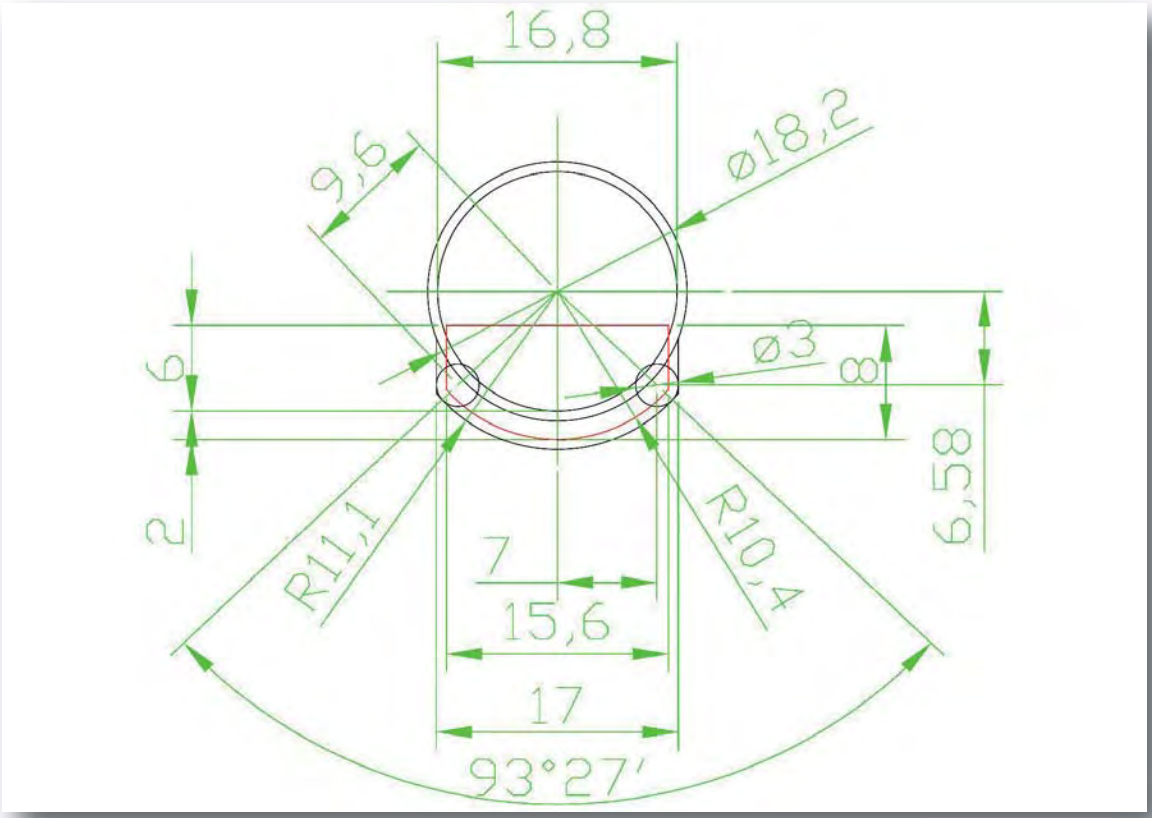
I then made a "lid" or counter die (drawing 2) that keeps the cap in position and prevents it from shifting during the pressing. It keeps it on the 0.7 edge and acts as a guide for the punch. The material is same one used for the mould.

Finally the shaft that acts as a punch was turned to size 16.7mm or 21/32" (internal diameter of the cap) from a rectified spindle in C40 and diameter 20mm and I milled a pocket to fit in with two screws to the part that creates the divot, which was milled to size and then turned while mounted to create the radius and the right shape. All the radiuses were realized with a good, old file.

Unlike my usual practice, I did not prepare a detailed diagram for the punch, but only a sketch of the profile with rough dimensions (drawing 3) because I knew that I would have to adjust the various tolerances so as not to tear or ruin the rim of the cap.



DRAWING 2



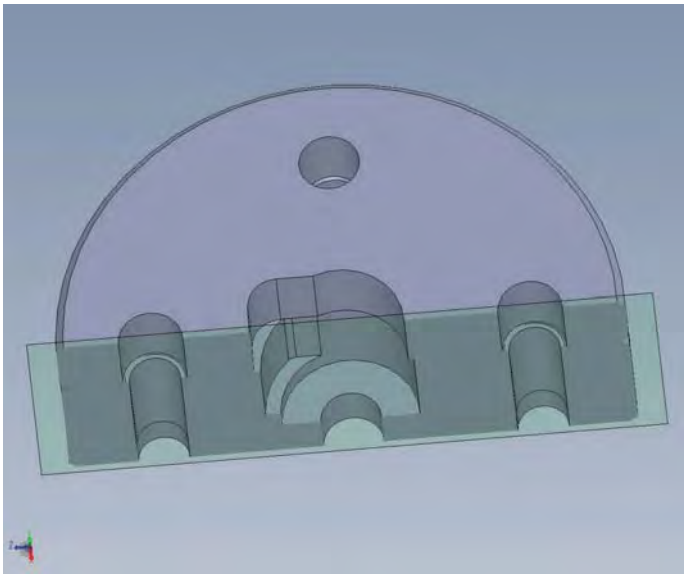
DRAWING 3

11) Components of the die, from left, punch, mould, counter-mould.

12) Detail of the mould.

13) Detail of the punch.

14) The assembled die.



15) Cross-section of the mould and counter-mould.

Punching and finishing

At this point, all that is needed is to insert the semi-finished cap in the mould, tighten the two fixing screws in the counter-mould to block it and then insert the punch with the press to obtain the pocket. From test that I carried out, you can easily use a bench-vise instead of the press, to obtain the same result. A light lubrication simplifies this step and the extraction of the punch.

This now has to be finished, above all, to straighten the rim, which, after the pressing, will be a little uneven. I do this by mounting the part on the expandable chuck and turning it with a parting tool.

I can now give it a satin finish with a series of finer and finer sandpapers and the final touch with a Scotch-Brite pad. You can continue to polish it with a polishing compound to a mirror-finish (nice to look at, but not so practical to fish with).

Now the pocketed butt cap is finished and ready to fit on the wooden insert, which will have been turned to a cylinder. Like many of you, I start with a square blank that I drill through with a drill press while the rest of the work is done on the lathe. The only refinement I concede is to turn the ring that goes into contact with the cork, which is an embellishment. Though in the past I had no difficulty in working with wood with a recess for the reel, being able to make this on the lathe in one shot including smoothing and varnishing with CA (method already discussed in a previous Bamboo Journal by real experts on the subject) and polishing, leads me to confirm that this benefits the accuracy and finishing of the result.

16) Preparing for the punching of the pocket. Insert the cap in the mould.

17) Close the mould, the cap and the counter-mould by tightening the screw.

18) Place everything in the press and proceed to the punching.

19) Our butt cap ready to be removed from the mould.

20) The result.

21) With the expandable chuck, finish the edge to straighten it.

22) Finish the surfaces with sandpaper.

23) Detail with a satin finish ready to be fitted.

If anyone is interested in more details or is just curious, please send me an email zettip@libero.it , and I will be happy to reply.

I thank the President and the editor for the opportunity to write this article, even if I am a beginner rod maker.

Sunset 1, Fabriano rough paper 35x27cm

Catskill Bamboo Rodmakers Gathering 2014

by Massimo Tirocchi

I know that some of my Italian rod maker colleagues will have a hint of envy after reading this trip report. I therefore prepared myself and filled my laboratory with amulets against the evil eye, mostly of South American and Neapolitan origin. I joke, of course….actually I have a big amulet at the entrance, a very good deterrent for the "curse of the glue lines".

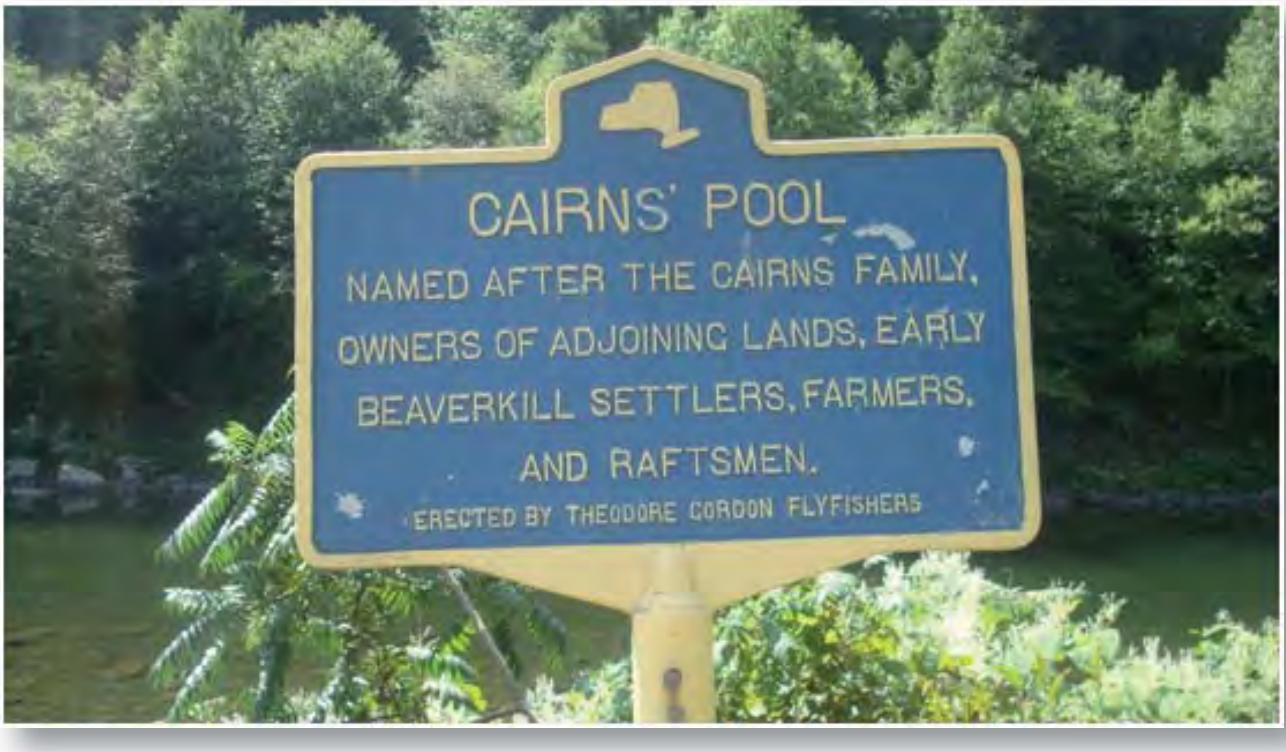
For a bamboo rod maker, visiting the Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum, is like visiting the Louvre or the la Gare d'Orsay for a painter. It is an immersion in a mythical atmosphere and inevitably, your mind goes to the past and those men who made the history of the world Bamboo Rodmaking.

The desire to make this trip to those parts of the world started more or less a few months after the construction of my first bamboo rod. However, it remained only a wish until two years ago, when during the SIM Fly Festival in Castel di Sangro, I had the fortune to meet Jim Krul. Jim is first of all a great person with a bright sense of humour and he is also the Director of the Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum. Last year I was unable to participate to the CFFCM Bamboo Rodmakers gathering due to force majeure. Finally, this year the dream came true. Luck would have it that this year coincided with the twentieth anniversary of the Catskill Bamboo Rodmakers Gathering.

One can feel that Roscoe is a special place for fishing immediately. On the high street of this small American town there are two banks and three fly fishing shops. Undoubtedly a special place. Roscoe is also the location of the legend of the "two-faced trout". It tells the story of a trout stuck, undecided where to go, in the spot where the Willowemoc and Beaverkill meet, for so long that it developed another head. Until about fifty years ago, you could still hear stories of local fishermen that had not only seen the two-faced trout, but had actually caught it. In fact, we all know that a certain quantity of Whiskey performs miracles.

The Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum is less than a ten-minute drive from Roscoe. The programme of the gathering started on Saturday morning and ended on Sunday afternoon with a welcome dinner on Friday evening. However, my wish was not only to take part in the gathering, but also to fish at least in the three most famous rivers of the area: Beaverkill, Willowemoc and Delaware. So I arrived in Roscoe on Wednesday evening, with the plan to fish in the Beaverkill the next morning.

The Beaverkill is one of the legendary rivers of Catskill. To understand the importance of this river, read some lines of the book "Land of Little Rivers" by Austin McK Francis and savour the mythical memories: "At the end of 1873, when the first fly fishing clubs were born in this area, the access to the Beaverkill was still primitive". Contrary to our rivers, at least in the Catskill area, all the rivers have accesses for fishermen. Each access has a name and among these, one of the most famous to the Beaverkill is the "Cairns' pool". A commemorative plaque placed by Theodore Gordon Flyfishers recites: "Dedicated to the Cairns family, a family of farmers among the first to settle along the banks of the Beaverkill and to take care of them". The famous fishing school founded by Lee and Joan Wulff is on the banks of the Beaverkill.



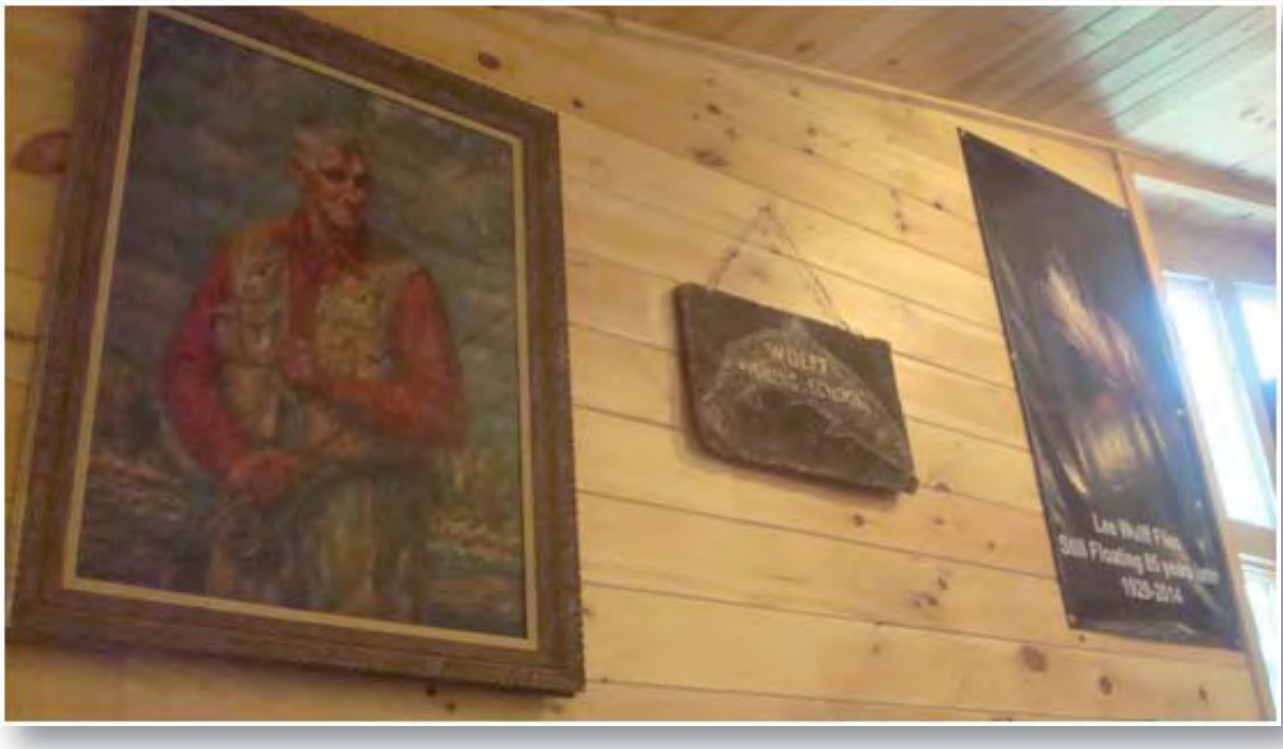
This river is worth fishing in, if only for its part in the history of fly-fishing. I approached the Beaverkill with respect and a sense of peace in my soul; it was not only about catching (beautiful, strong and healthy browns in the Beaverkill), it was about fishing in these waters full of memories that made that fishing day unique and unforgettable.

Friday morning Steve Hoye, John McConnell Jon Lewis ("the Patagonian Brotherhood", whom I see with pleasure every time I go to the USA. I went on a wonderful fishing trip with them to Patagonia Argentina and since then we have shared fabulous fishing memories and a sincere friendship) and I decided to fish in another mythical river in the area: the Delaware, specifically in the West Branch of the Delaware.

After breakfast, a visit to the Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum was necessary. As soon as we arrived, I met Jim Krul. The idea was to greet Jim and then go fishing. However, my friends and I were very curious to see the CFFCM and taking advantage of an exceptional host like the Director of the place, we started to follow him around the centre.

At the entrance of the Museum, one is immediately struck by the collection of Bamboo rods, made by the great Masters. The most precious ones are in a beautiful wooden cabinet, while most of them decorate the walls in a protective transparent Plexiglas tube.

A corner of the museum is dedicated to Lee and Joan Wulff for their role in spreading fly-fishing in the world and for being (Joan still is) active participants in the conservation of the Little Rivers waters.



The corner dedicated to H.L. Leonard is fantastic. In addition to his famous bamboo rods, which are kept in a display case, there are also some rifles he made.

On the ground floor, there is the Rodmaking Workspace. A fantastic laboratory, where a few weeks before the gathering they had brought the workbench used by Garrison. Hoagy Carmichael had also worked on it and with great generosity, decided to donate many historical pieces of his laboratory, with Garrison's workbench, to the Museum. There is also the original lathe used by Garrison and it was very interesting to see his notes with the taper measurements written by pen.

The last place we visited that morning was the small Fly Shop run by the CFFCM. After shopping, we realized it was almost lunchtime. We had a quick bite and in less than an hour, we were wading the West Branch Delaware.

To be honest the Delaware is not the prototype of my ideal river. It is very wide, but shallow all the way in many parts. Fishing in slow water pools is not my forte, so I preferred fishing in the small currents and under banks…with pleasant surprises, even if it was September, the levels were low and the heat certainly did not make the trout active in the central hours of the day.

We decided to fish the evening hatch in another area of the Delaware. We drove half an hour downstream and reached a majestic open, 300m space via a regulated access. The trout kept rising until darkness concealed everything, even the shame of not having succeeded in fooling these selective trout.

Saturday morning the friends of the Patagonia Brotherhood left, while I had two more days to enjoy the gathering.

At half past nine, the CFFCM was already teeming with people. The programme of the first day was very intense.

There were simultaneous workshops and presentations that varied from “Universal ferrules” in the Wulff Gallery by Ted Barnhart, to “how to organize your workshop efficiently” by Jorge Carcao. “Rod-makers and Gun makers” by Jerry Girard was very interesting; enthusiasts should not miss “Lathe and band saw” with a demonstration by Jed Dempsey; John Zimney showed various finishings of the rod.

I limit myself to report on some, at least those I managed to attend even for a few minutes. I fondly remember the opening presentation of the gathering dedicated to P.H. Young. A fantastic tale of his life, with interesting anecdotes and the story of one of the Great Rodmakers of the past.

Strolling about the workshops, the Wulff Gallery and other areas of the museum, I saw many groups participating in the various seminars. It seemed that all the people had congregated there, but outside, in the various areas of the Centre there were just as many people casting on the surrounding lawns. In another area, Per Brandin and his wife were organising the Casting competition.

In a flash, it was lunchtime. I spent a few hours with Sante Giuliani (Fish 'n Banjo). An expert of the East Coast Bamboo Rodmaking connected to the famous Clark's Classic Bamboo Rod Forum. Sante's Italian origins allowed us to spend two pleasant hours of cultural sharing. The funny aspect is that in two hours we never spoke about bamboo rods.

As the time passed at the gathering, I became more aware of the place where I was. The CFFCM is a unique container of Bamboo Rodmaking history and knowledge. Not only, the activity of the River Guardians protect and safeguard the waters and the splendid nature around them. Their work is fundamental for the natural conservation of those places, which will benefit the next generations. Not to mention the cultural heritage of Fly Fishing.

As in all gatherings, Saturday is the busiest day. Sunday is usually busy in the morning and quietens down in the afternoon. The Catskill Bamboo Rodmaking Gathering was no different. The meeting on Sunday morning was exciting. They spoke about Garrison's role in Rodmaking history and how to project his knowledge, as a great rod maker, to the future. The sharing of stories, anecdotes, indiscretions and why not, legends, enriches what we know about this great personality, from both a technical constructive point of view, as well as human.

The morning was ending, but the Catskill Gathering had another gift in store for me. As I was leaving the Garrison workshop, I noticed a distinguished woman with a fuchsia sweater looking at the vintage reel seats and other equipment. Right then Jim Krul accompanied me and introduced me to the great Joan Wulff.

I was struck by her passion, which is still so alive in her after many years. The passion as an angler, a caster, but above all, as a teacher and propagator of Fly Fishing. Joan made me the honour of trying one of my bamboo rods and let her brother try it too.

It was an unforgettable moment to see Joan advising her brother on how to cast in double traction and her enthusiasm when he succeeded in drawing nice loops. Perhaps this is the Lady of Fly Fishing's goal in life today, finding joy in seeing other people exercising this sport with style and elegance. After all, this is what she stated herself in an article in an American magazine, when she describes the four phases of an angler's life. The desire to catch at all costs, the search for the right sized animal, the search for difficult prey…to reach a sort of Nirvana where there is joy in looking at other fly anglers.

The gathering closed with an emotional bang. The meeting with this great woman will remain with me forever.

Now it was time to say goodbye. A special thanks to Jim Krul for his wonderful hospitality and likeability and to Thomas Smithwick for his help in organising this trip and the interesting conversations about the design of "modern" tapers. A particular greeting to all the rodmakers present, whom I cannot mention one by one. Let it suffice to say that there was the biggest part of the world Bamboo Rod Making Who's Who.

The gathering was really ending. Nonetheless, there was still time to fish the last three rivers of the mythical area: the Willowemoc (the CFFCM is on the banks of this river). My fishing companion for that afternoon was Frank Payne. Frank knows the area and I could not have found a better mate. Before reaching the river, he asked me if I had ever been to the Dette Fly Shop. I replied no. So he turned the car around and said I could not leave without visiting it. He was right. The Dettes are a family that have been running this small fly shop, specialised in making typical flies of the Catskill area, for three generations. It was founded in 1928. I bought my Dette fly souvenirs and chatted with the owner (grandson of the famous Mary Dette Clark); a couple of casts on the lawn outside the shop with one of my bamboo rods and off we went to the Willowemoc for a few hours of fishing.

Unfortunately, Frank had a 400km drive to get home, so time was short. I did not fish this river for long but I can say I love this type of river.

The last night at Tennanah Town House and the next day, I flew home. Leaving Roscoe by bus to NYC was the last wonderful trip of a fantastic experience.

Sunset and grasses, Fabriano rough paper 35x27cm

Reflections ... from the dunce's desk

by Giorgio Grondona

Five years have passed since I attended the I.B.R.A rodmaking course. A brief period, of course, but sufficient to make me realize how many fallacies and mistakes have harmed the use and the circulation of bamboo rods among Italian fly fishermen in the past; and how these magnificent FISHING TOOLS are still belittled by the same fallacies and mistakes: in time only the mouths that utter them have changed.

The main reason that impassioned me with rodmaking is fruit of my curiosity, which derives from the fact that I was not able to use them when I started fishing with flies; a period that, alas, coincided with the disappearance of the bamboo rods, substituted with fibreglass first and then soon after, graphite rods; aided by the lower cost of working these synthetic materials and I think that this is the only real reason that determined the long period of lull in the wooden rods.

My becoming conscious was probably facilitated by my many faults: for example I am very intolerant of noises, after working for more than thirty years in a metalworks company where racket reigned supreme like a cemetery light, now I love silence, so I avoid using any tool,

even if it is convenient, that may disturb the quiet and the serenity that I find in all phases of the working. In the beginning, I used a hot air gun to press the nodes and straighten the strips; now it has been replaced with an alcohol lamp. The air gun emits its irritating buzz only when it needs to heat the oven for the tempering, but this is only an example.

We live in an age where electronics should make things easier in many fields, exactly…should, all you would need is to know how to use the computer well and everything would be so simple even for bamboo rodmaking, rather to design them, give them the most "modern" action possible with a Section that nobody has thought of, together with the C.O.H (Conical/Overturned/Helical), obviously the same taper would guarantee the identical action (Superlative) in variable lengths from 3'2"(4 pieces) to 15'4"(one piece).

The 3'2" minimum length may seem useless, Fly Fishing will perhaps never become an Olympic sport, but it could become a subject taught at school; this four-piece tool fits in Kindergarten children's' lunchboxes. On the contrary, the 15'4" one piece may seem too much, but after a week of salmon fishing, although it turned out to be the best casting machine ever designed by the human (and computer) mind, not one fish was caught and its designer (and user), blinded by rage at being mocked by his fellow fishermen, reduced it to (at least) four-pieces…differentiated, as a matter of fact, more convenient..

It sounds banal, but I like to say it: the lengths I tried, as well as the ones in between, have the same performance with lines from 000 to 16 of any colour and material, in any place on earth, in any weather condition and on any day of the year...

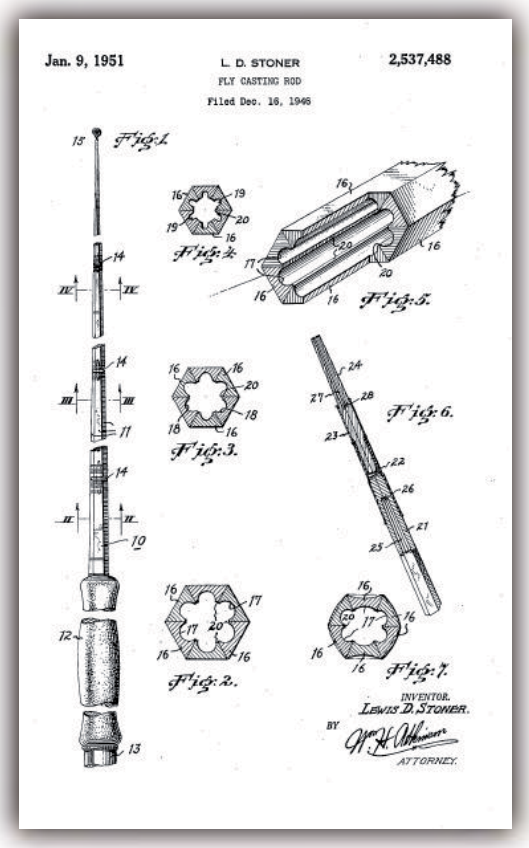
Mmhhh, luckily I am aided by a spare fault, which is a primordial repulsion towards anything that requires mental effort, so I leave the pleasure of "experimenting" to others. In my (very) small world, I am happy to try to copy those who with little information, few tools and a lot of ingenuity have been producing rods for a century and a half, seeking (with success, I believe) to satisfy fishermen all over the world.

Surely many will turn their noses up at the term "copy" and the "Corporation of Innovators" will be horrified, too bad: they cannot blame a poor dunce, ignorant, but respectful of all those whom have really, in various times, brought improvements to the intriguing world of rodmaking.

After an initial phase dedicated to practising the use of various tools and caring about aesthetics, my interest was diverted to researching information on all that had been done since the mid-1800s, when the construction of sectioned bamboo rods began. At first, by using rods from the Gulf of Bengali in India, known as Calcutta. Since then, I think many have tried different species of bamboo and in the end we have come to most using Pseudosasa Amabilis (I preferred Arundinaria Amabilis). It should be taken for granted that this variety is the favourite, nonetheless, there is always someone ready to ascertain that the one growing in his father-in-law's vineyard is much better than the one from the Gulf of Tonkin and there is no botanical treatise that will change his mind!!!

This is a difficult era, globalization is taking away dignity from various productions instilled in uses, customs and traditions of various populations; we must not be surprised by the use of indigenous bamboo from one's area by some who, in addition to endorsing their local products, try to promote them with tapers as close as possible, if not more than the one I mentioned before.

There are not few people who, in time have unwittingly made things difficult for novice innovators.



In 1933, E.C. Powell patented a hollowing method that is still used today; in 1951, Lev Stoner patented the Fluted method and more recently, Alberto Poratelli proposed the alveolar method. I think enough has been done for the hollow and it has become a much lighter rod than it was in the past. The various types of ferrules are another field we have gone far in: Step-down and Super-Z, standard or truncated for the classic metal types, the graphite spigots that disturb the sleep of the purists to reach the bamboo ferrules; from the ones in applied leaves to the integrated ones, among which stick out the practical-utilitarian method of Marcelo Calviello, the ethical-spiritual method of Bjarne Fries and the aesthetic-engineering-architectural method of Alberto Poratelli with the assistance of Gabriele Gori and Marco Orlando Giardina.

Many have also dabbled in the tempering of the strips, starting from Eustis William Edwards (ex-employee of Leonard) circa 1920, to reach Gabriele Gori, who at the last IBRA gathering in May 2014, had to cheek to present a detailed study on various methods used up to now to improve the characteristics of bamboo, leaving little space to those who are not satisfied with the research of others.

Thus, considering that fact that a lot has already been done and I do not have the competence or the will to "experiment" for innovation, I will serenely copy, trying to do so to the best of my ability, because I have illustrious predecessors that are not shy of the path they followed. Jim Payne was not at all shy of keeping models designed by his father Ed in his catalogue; Paul H. Young, also from Leonard, when he became independent, welcomed Bob Summers, who, when he took over the company, had no problems following his teacher's path, keeping not only some models, but also the aesthetic details that characterised Young's rods.

In 2013, at the IBRA gathering, we listened to Andrew Herd explain how Hardy started the construction of bamboo split-cane rods: one was bought by the company that was already producing them; it was pulled apart in all its parts to understand and thus COPY the construction phases. Well, the examples I could bring to the table are many, but I will stop with something Harry Boyd said, guest of the 2011 IBRA gathering: "If in a few hundred years your great grandson will see someone on the river fishing with a bamboo rod, you will also be to blame".

Contributing to keeping the interest in bamboo rods alive is a gratification that will suffice.

There is a large number of tapers available, designed by single artisans and companies that have a lot of time and energy to satisfy the requests of their clientele with diverse demands; I am convinced that we can make rods that will amuse us as they amused the fishermen that wanted them so.

The drive to write these lines was born from the discussions that sometimes arise on the forum I usually frequent or the discussions we hear at shows and/or meetings of the sector. If the false statements are made by those who do not know bamboo rods or their history at all, the damage is limited. However, the same statements by an "innovator" rodmaker, can put off those who perhaps should be encouraged and stimulated to use fishing tools that are technically valid and undoubtedly beautiful.

Many times, in various contexts, it has been said that there is no radiant future without knowledge of the past. I think this makes sense in rodmaking too: the people I mentioned have, along with others, brought improvements that we can appreciate every day, following their footsteps means recognizing their worth…the rest is vanity.

I thank the donkey* for allowing me to compare myself to it; as it follows the same path around the wheat millstone, I too will follow the path indicated by others to plane the Pseudosasa Amabilis sections, it too is a grass. But I preferred Arundinaria Amabilis!!!

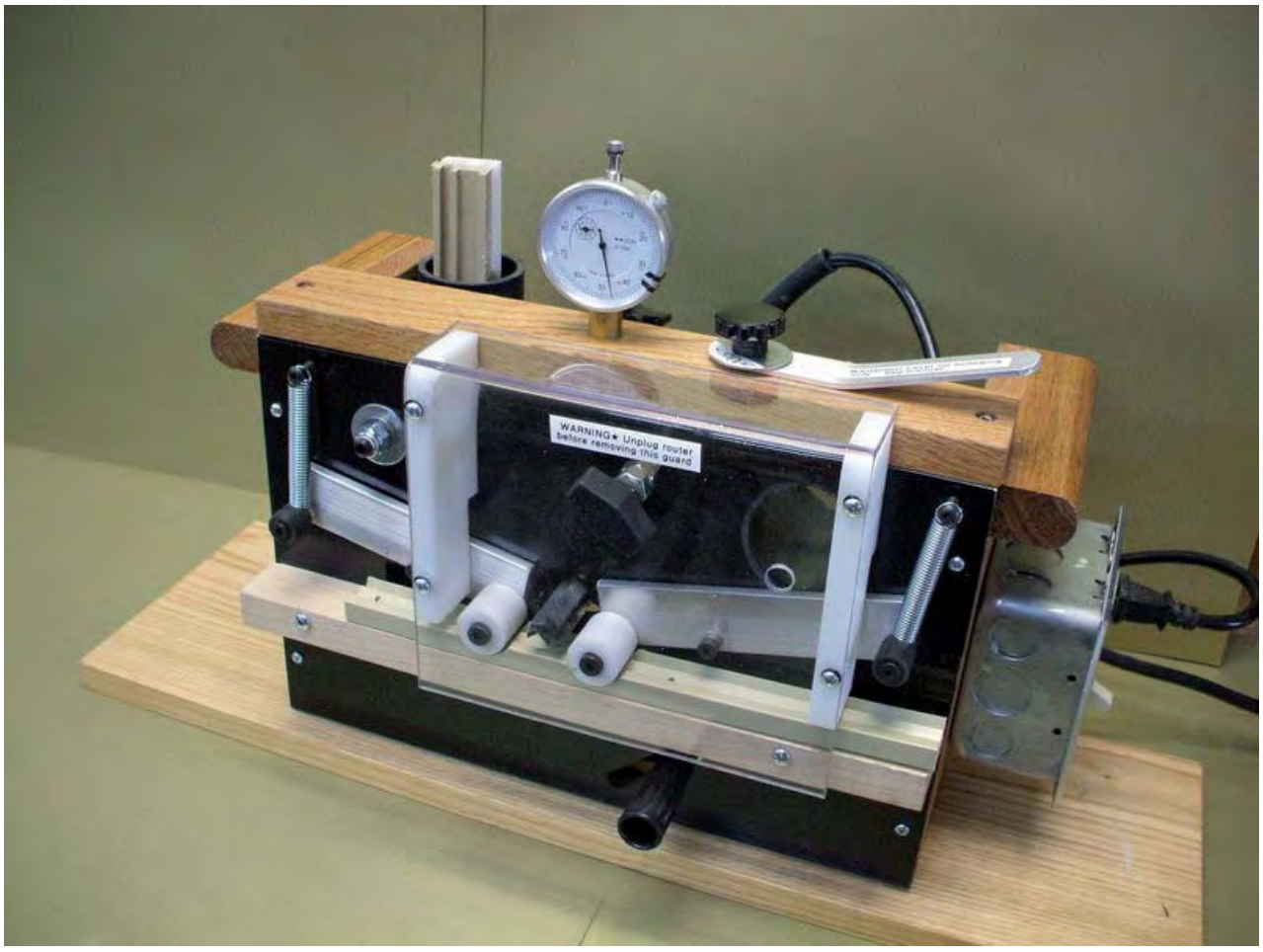
**translator's note:*
in Italian, a dunce is called "asino" (donkey).

Trysil river, Fabriano rough paper 55x37cm

Evolution of the Multi-Track Beveller

. . . from split to glue in fewer strokes

byDennis Bertram (Quinchat Rods LLC)



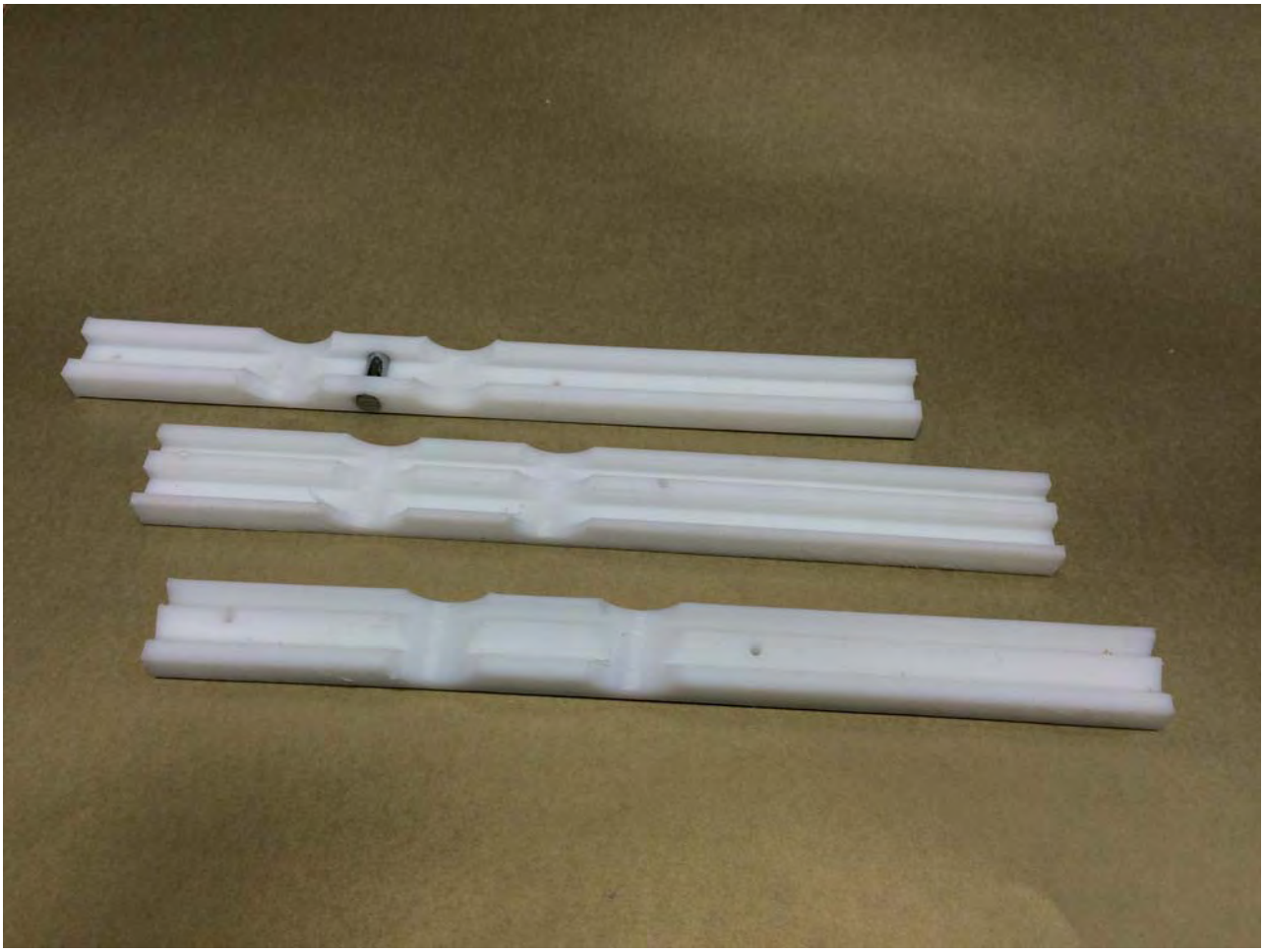
The first Multi-Track Beveller was produced in 2008, since then over 100 units have been built. The design evolved from experience in building a number of machines that for one reason or another did not meet my requirements. The first machine had a two sided cutter but strips pulled thru too hard. Replacing the high-speed steel cutters, which dulled quickly, with carbide was too expensive. Adding a chain drive to pull the strip, proved to be cumbersome and added an unwanted level of complexity. Also the raw strip tended to find its own center and it was not possible to intentionally cut more from one side than from the other (to avoid a worm hole or water mark).

Throughout the development process, the objective was to minimize the number of plane strokes required to make a rod and reduce the time required between splitting the culm and having the strips ready for gluing. It was not only to save strokes and time, but also to reduce the wear and tear on muscles and joints. This should be important to new rod builders who are establishing a hobby for their retirement years.

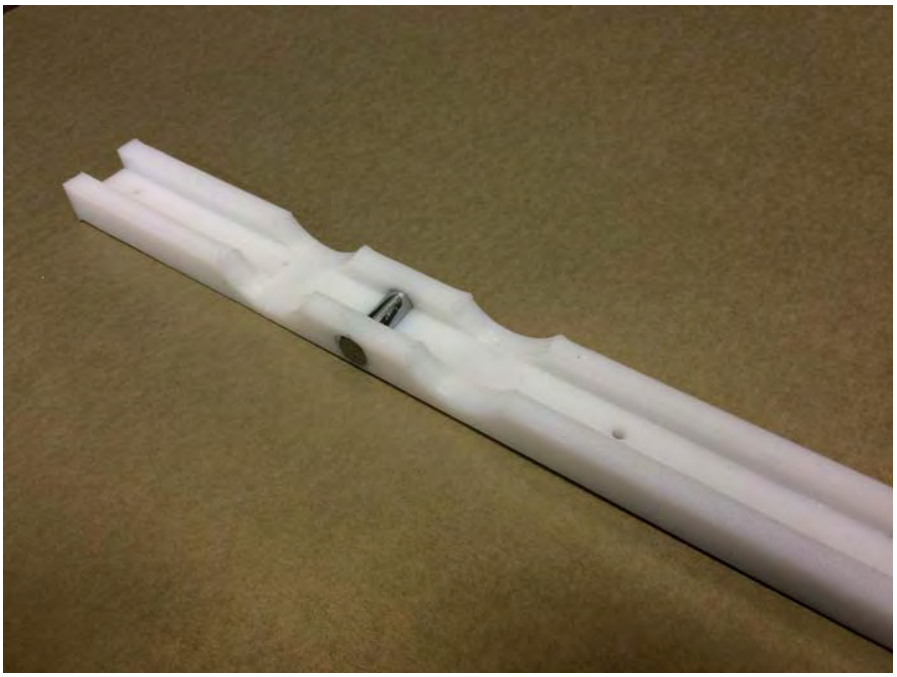
Another objective was to make the machine as compact, light weight and economical as possible for the hobbyist. Consequently we use steel where rigidity is necessary and wood and plastic for other components. Along with the comparative light weight of the unit is the fact that it has a small "foot-print": It is easily stored, is transportable and scarce shop space does not have to be permanently dedicated to the bevelling operation.

The Medved Beveller had been introduced a few years earlier and was a great step forward toward economically mechanizing strip preparation and served as a model or starting point for development of the Multi-Track.

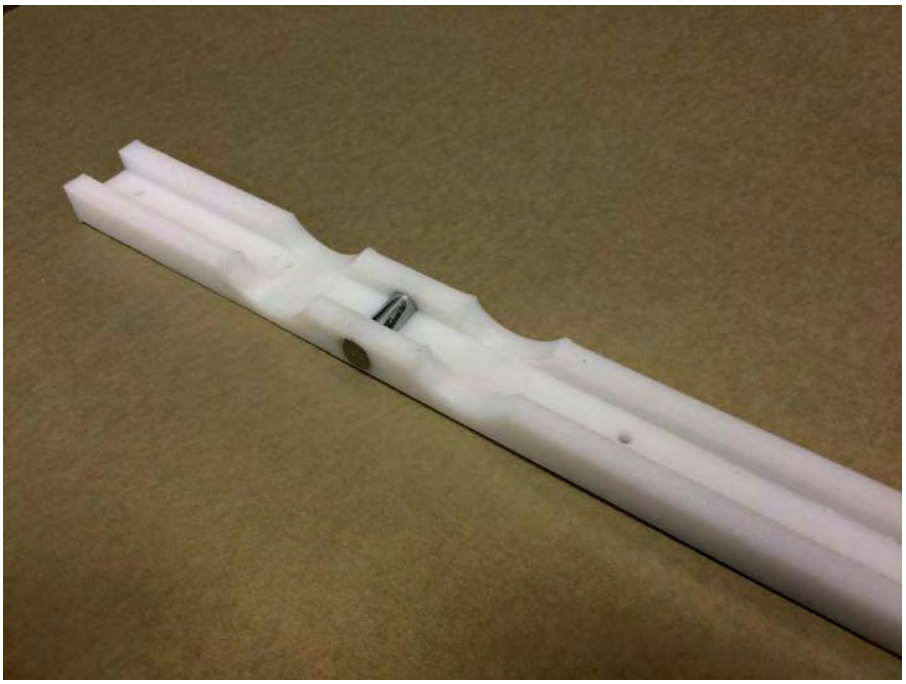
As the name implies, this new design featured the ability to do a number of operations with same cutter by simply changing to a new fixture with a different track.



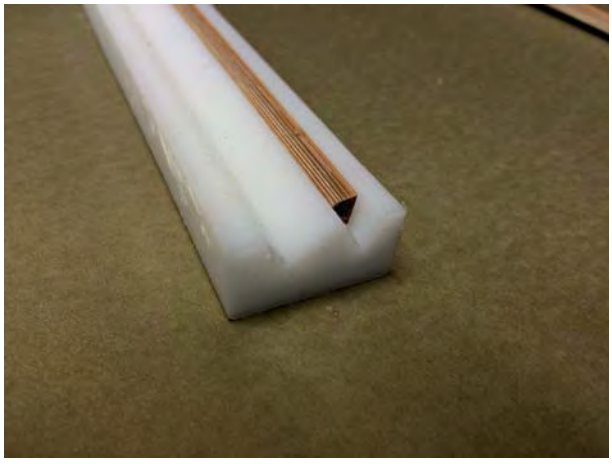
These fixtures are precisely located on the beveller platform on steel pins. They are held in place by downward pressure from hold-down rollers. They are made of polyethylene and can be changed in a few seconds.



Fixture #1 has single track and used to cut away the pith and produce a strip of even thickness. There is a "speed bump" in the track directly under the cutter. It cuts a relief behind the node. This relief provides space for displacing the node when it is heated and pressed.



Fixture #1a is used next to produce an edge with a good 90 deg angle. Since splitting normally produces strips of varying width, processing strips on edge thru this fixture makes subsequent steps thru the beveller easier. Some users report that it reduces the need for much of the heat straightening that they used to do.



After nodes are pressed and strips are straightened, fixture #2 is installed in the beveller to produce the 60 deg angles. This fixture has two tracks. The outside track is a 90 deg groove inclined at 30 deg. This produces a strip with one 60 deg edge. The inside track is a 60 deg groove. Placing the newly formed 60 deg edge in this groove forms the second 60 deg edge. Now we have good un-tapered strips with an equilateral profile ready for heat treating.

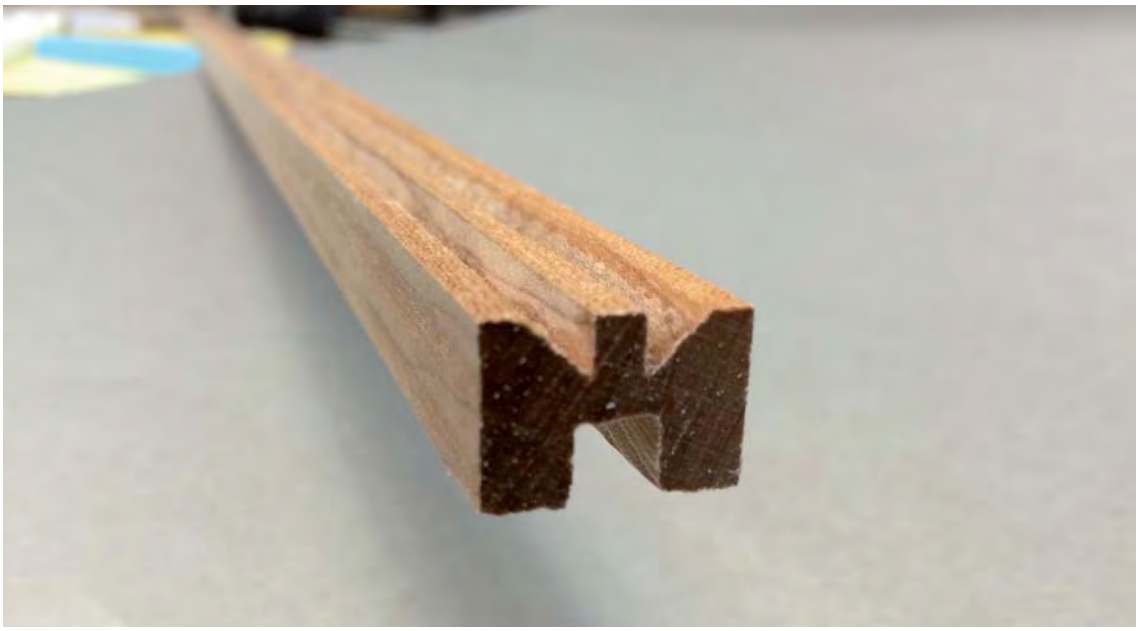
Since the strips are pushed and/or pulled thru the beveller with so little effort, strips for a 3 piece, 2 tip rod can be processed thru the above steps in less than one hour. Also it is safe since this machine uses conventional milling rather than "climb cutting". There is no way that the cutter can grab the strip and launch it like an archer's arrow.

We use a 3 blade cutter which produces 50% more cuts per revolution than a standard 2 blade cutter. Consequently I can run the router at low speed for most operations and significantly reduce the noise level.

After heat treat, the strips are nearly ready for the planning form or the Morgan Hand Mill. However the nodes sometimes expand during heat treating. I correct this situation by taking a light cut on the enamel side that just levels the nodes. Once the node areas are level, I take another .002 to .003 cut on the enamel. The beveller's dial indicator makes it easy to make such a precise incremental adjustment.

The enamel surface of a strip, being a natural surface, is not a continuous level plane. In fact it can be thought of as the surface of cylinder of varying diameter along its length. Also it is oval to some degree and the thickest part of the chordal section may not be on a line bisecting the 60 degree angle at the apex. Therefore it does not continuously contact the surface of a planing form. Consequently the strip will measure undersize in areas where it does not contact the form.

Taking a continuous cut on the enamel insures a good fit in the planing form. Note that we are not removing all of the enamel, in fact a .002 to.003 deep cut only results in a flat that ranges from 25 to 75% of the width of the strip. Very few power fibers are removed.

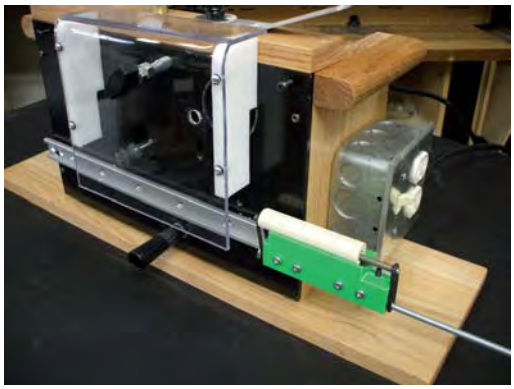


Now we can use fixture #3 to produce a straight line taper thus getting it closer to final dimension and further reducing the number of planing strokes required to finish the strip. This fixture is a 53 inch long maple carrier with two tapered grooves, one deep for butts and one shallower for tips, each with a .0015 inch/inch taper. The one pictured above is for quad butts. Riding the strips on this carrier fixture and under the cutter produces a strip that requires only about .030" of final planning.

For the rod maker producing swelled butts or bamboo ferrules we can further reduce the required hand-work by providing a special tapering fixture in addition to fixture #3. It has custom-cut tracks that produce strips with added stock in the area of the swell or the bamboo ferrule.

A set of fixtures for either 4 or 5 strip rods can also be supplied.

Finished strips can be hollowed via the scalloping method by using the strip carriers and a double-cut carbide burr. Strips are secured to the carrier with double-sided tape. Three butt strips or 6 tip strips can be hollowed at a time.



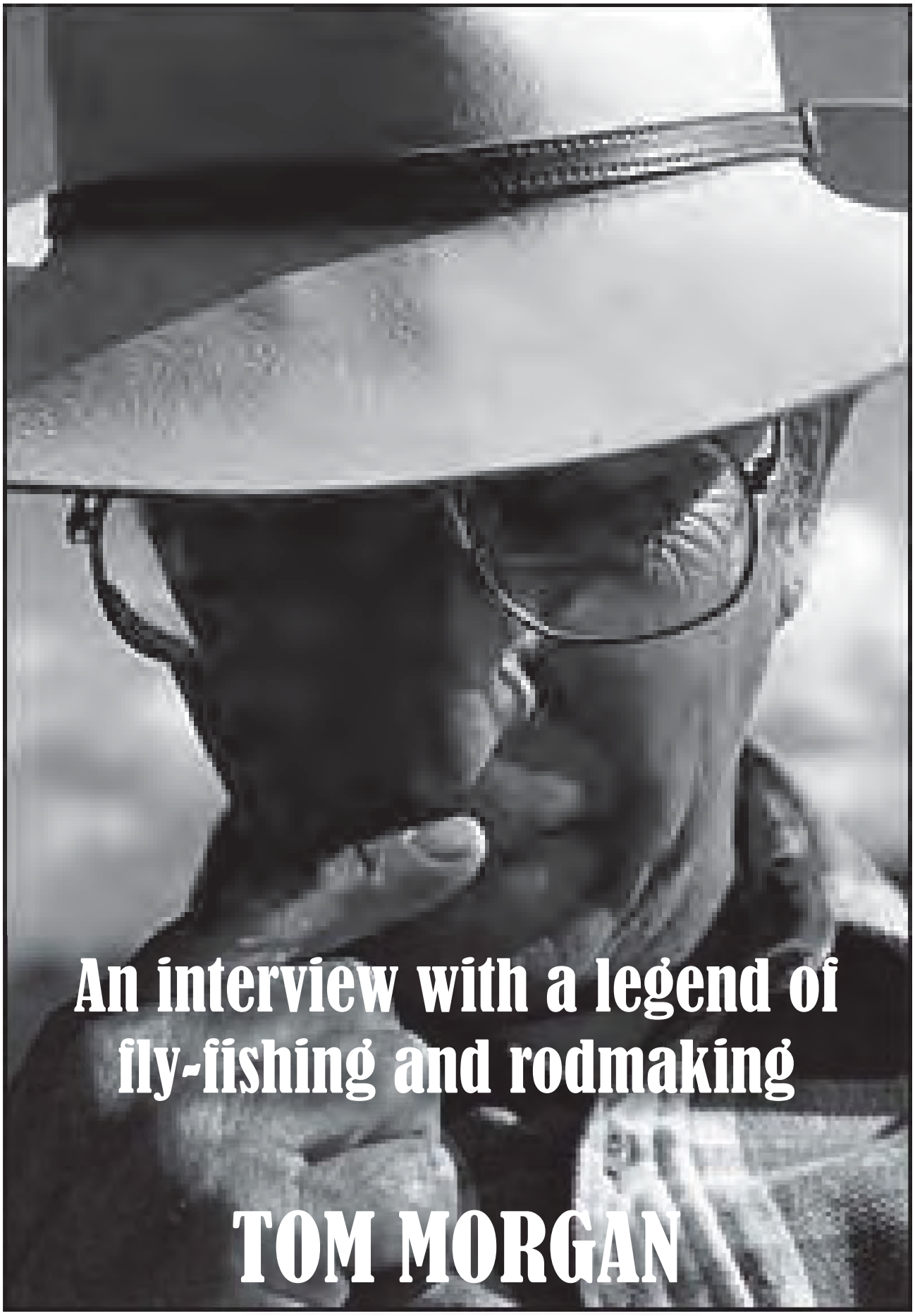
A mortising attachment is available to make reel seat blanks.

For international rodmakers, the Multi-Track Beveller can be supplied ready to accept a locally supplied Bosch router. Alternately the purchaser can take the US version 115 volt, 60Hz router and use a readily available voltage converter with a 3000watt capacity. The soft start feature of the Bosch router limits in-rush current and makes the 3000watt converter large enough for both the router and small vacuum collectors.

This article has provided but a brief outline of the machine's many capabilities. If you would like additional information, check out the 36 page operator manual for the Multi-Track Beveller on my web site – www.quinchat.webs.com.

Other products such as 4 and 2 string binders, finishing stations and a CNC finish mill have been developed over the past few years as well as a soon to be released guide wrapper . . . but these are stories for another day.

Golden trees, Fabriano rough paper 55x37



An interview with a legend of fly-fishing and rodmaking

TOM MORGAN

With great pleasure and honor the Bamboo Journal hosts in this issue an interview with Tom Morgan. I would like to say that I jumped on a flight to Bozeman, in Montana, where he lives in Manhattan, but unfortunately for me it is not like this. I have just been in touch with Mr. Morgan by e-mail to ask him for a contribution to the Bamboo Journal. He proved really extremely plain and helpful, and accepted very kindly. This project started in fact as a sort of a real interview, questions and answers, but it looks now more like a dissertation of the renowned "guru" of fly-fishing and rod-making, since I just suggested a couple of topics, and he was kind enough to elaborate freely on those.

Before getting into Tom's thought, let me briefly introduce him to the readers who do not know this man and his history (very few, I guess).

Tom Morgan was born in Hollywood, California in 1941. In 1946 he moved with his parents and brother to Ennis, Montana, where they opened the El Western, a fishing resort. By the age of 15, the young Tom Morgan was a guide already, and he spent some 14 years wading with his clients and observing how their equipment either helped or hindered them. Sometime around 1969, he made his first fiberglass fly rod. In 1973, Morgan bought R.L. Winston Company, one of the most acclaimed brands in fly rod manufacture at the time. He ran the company in San Francisco for three years, then moved it to Twin Bridges, Montana, in 1976. Morgan made his first mark as a bamboo rodmaker at Winston, creating rods in the tradition of the 19th-century American master H. L. Leonard. Morgan has dedicated his rod-building life to rods aimed at casting accuracy and finesse. He embraced graphite yet created a rod with a bamboo-like, traditional feel. In the mid-1980s, he developed an eight-foot, four-weight rod for Winston – known as the Tom Morgan Favorite – that is what all other rods are measured against. He eventually sold Winston in 1991. "I felt I could make better rods on my own" he said.

In 1992, a neurologist diagnosed him with MS and in 1995 Morgan suffered a five-month period of near total collapse. He lost the ability to walk, then the movement in his arms. Tom Morgan Rodsmiths was started in 1996. Morgan had his recipe for the blanks, which were manufactured under a veil of secrecy at G. Loomis. In 1993 Tom married with Gerri Carlson. In order to make the company work, Morgan had to transmit all his knowledge to Carlson. Tom could still handle quality control, running his experienced eye over the blanks when they came in. But he had to impart to Carlson many other crucial aspects of fly rod-making: the wrapping of the guides, the application of the finish, and the turning of the cork handles. A line of bamboo rods was added in 2003. Bill Blackburn helped them with the bamboo production. Morgan and Carlson make some tens of rods a year, in two to six weights. One fourth of them approximately are bamboo rods. Although Multiple Sclerosis has kept him from holding one of his creations since 1995, Morgan-designed rods are considered masterpieces by those in the fishing community.

Actually I guess Tom Morgan is mostly known among Italian rodmakers for the Hand Mill. This tool really revolutionized the traditional way of tapering the strips by the hand plane and the planing form. The benefits of the Hand Mill are in fact quite substantial. By using replaceable and quite inexpensive carbide inserts it has eliminated the need to learn how to sharpen plane blades (not a trivial task) and to continuously keep blades sharp. Another of the biggest benefits is that the carbide insert holder always keeps the correct angle on the strips when you are cutting and never has to be checked. The learning curve for cutting strips has then been substantially reduced with the Hand Mill because, if the node work has been properly done, you can get a perfect strip the first time. Moreover it's an extremely versatile machine providing several different options for rodmakers.

Henry's Fork Gathering

ITALIAN BAMBOO RODMAKERS ASSOCIATION

One of the biggest is having the ability to cut 8-, 7-, 6-, 5-, 4- , or 3-strip rods just by changing cutter heads without the need for different planing forms.

This is how Tom tells the birth of the Hand Mill: "The Hand Mill was not planned and only came about accidentally. In the early 1980s my friend, Per Brandin, was visiting our shop in Twin Bridges and we were talking about how he made his rods using a planing form and hand plane. After his description, it seemed to me like a very difficult way to make rods. That night I thought about how it could be done easier and faster using a plane with carbide inserts running down a track with an adjustable bed for adjusting the taper." Some 400 of these Hand Mills are now spread around the world and they have made bamboo rodmaking much easier for many.

M.: Mr. Morgan, you are deservedly much famous worldwide for your long time involvement in fly-fishing, for the intense period as head of R.L. Winston Company, and above all, for the topmost excellence of Tom Morgan Rodsmiths products. Not to mention the amazing Hand Mill, which has deeply revolutionized the traditional rod-making technique with the plane and the planing form.

In Europe, and specially in Italy bamboo has lived in the past 15 years or so a new youth and a great new boost after a long period of neglect, because of the advent and the predominance of carbon fiber as the most common construction material.

The main reasons that led to the great repeated interest in this material for rod building are certainly in the unique characteristics that are conferred to the product "fishing rod", but also in the special pleasure that the possession of a unique, handmade, if not even self-made, gives to its owner.

A great deal has already been said and written about Tom Morgan's idea of fly casting and rod design.

I would like to ask you today, in 2014, what is your vision of the future of bamboo and bamboo rods, also in the light of the even more recent "return" of another rod building material of the past: the glass fiber.

T.: For many of today's anglers, bamboo rods bring back memories of bygone years, of a time when fishing was simpler, perhaps less demanding. It brings back a time when bamboo was really the only rod material and before modern technology enabled us to create the wide range of rods on the market today. Yet, some anglers, including myself, still think fondly of bamboo rods as wonderful instruments for casting and fishing. My first fishing experiences were with an old Montague bamboo rod, when I fished for cutthroat trout in a small mountain stream in southwestern Montana, when, lacking finesse, my only thoughts were how could I fool a fish by sneaking a grasshopper into the stream without being seen. It was there I met my fly fishing mentor, Howard Sykes, a skillful fly fisher from New Jersey, under whose careful eye my love for fly-fishing blossomed. Howard's favorite rod was a Leonard bamboo. As he taught me to cast and to fly fish, he often let me use it, and I became enamored of its precision and grace in presenting a fly.

In those days, I often showed our motel guests where to fish, and gradually I grew into an early career as a fishing guide. Anglers came from all over the United States to fish the Madison River and nearby streams, and I regularly guided many of them. Naturally, they always brought with them their favorite rods, bamboo rods made by Winston, Orvis, Leonard, Powell, Payne, Phillipson, Paul Young, and others. Many of these rods were the finest examples of bamboo rod making, and, as these anglers let me try their rods, my appreciation for bamboo rods grew, as did my passion for them. As a result of these experiences, I assembled my own collection of bamboo fishing rods including an old Heddon, a Phillipson, an Orvis Battenkill, and several Winstons. I fished almost exclusively with bamboo rods until the early '70s.

Tom at the PC

At the time I had no idea one day I would own one of the famous companies in fly-fishing, the R.L.Winston Rod Company. When I bought Winston in 1973, the company was making fiberglass and bamboo rods. Shortly thereafter, graphite was introduced as a rod-making material, and it quickly replaced fiberglass. Even though the bulk of our rods were made from composite materials during my tenure at Winston, we continued making fine bamboo rods. My early associate and finally a partner, Glenn Brackett, and I greatly valued the tradition of bamboo rods, and we were clear we wanted to continue their heritage in Winston's history and the sport of fly-fishing. We continually refined the rod tapers and production methods to improve the quality necessary for great rods. This work gave me extensive experience working with bamboo, designing rod tapers, and creating rods.

Despite the popularity of fiberglass and graphite as rod-making materials, they haven't entirely replaced bamboo rods, many of which are still highly prized by anglers not only for their collector's value but also for their great fishing attributes. How could this be? Perhaps the greatest reason is bamboo rods have been the foundation of our modern fly fishing heritage since the late 1800s. There have been countless rodmakers pursuing the craft of designing and building rods to match their ideas for the perfect casting and fishing rod. Many of these rods are truly works of art; they represent the attainment of near perfection in the embodiment of form and function.

Bamboo rods have an inherent charm because of their natural material and are often especially beautiful with their jewel like hardware, subtle thread colors, carefully wrapped guides, graceful cork grips, and wood seats. The natural color of bamboo is a light straw color and, with heat-treating, ranges to a dark caramel tone.

Its delicate grain radiates through the typical high gloss varnish finish and the various colored wrapping threads serve to highlight this natural beauty. Bamboo as a natural material is also unparalleled in its strength and resilience. Most rods created decades ago still retain their original casting and fishing capability. Moreover, there is a substantial market for used bamboo rods created by master craftsmen from previous eras, and, happily, many of these rods are still fished. The fine bamboo rods created in the past have continued to increase in value over time because of their intrinsic value and the fact the craftsmen who made them are no longer alive.

And, finally, there is another reason many modern anglers often forget or overlook about bamboo rods. They can be absolutely great fishing rods! Just because they are bamboo doesn't mean they are great rods, but the material certainly has the potential to be made into wonderful rods. As with any rod-making material, proper design is crucial. In my opinion, because of its inherent heavier weight over other materials, bamboo is the most challenging material with which to design rods to achieve wonderful action. However, this relatively small increase in weight, particularly in trout rods, is also one of its advantages, for this additional weight gives these rods an inherent loading characteristic that makes them very smooth casting.

By the ‘70s when I bought Winston many of the famous bamboo rodmakers had died or the major companies who made fly rods had switched to fiberglass rods because they were less expensive to make and sell. They also have some attributes which make them attractive to the average angler in they are relatively inexpensive to purchase, don’t take a set like a natural material like bamboo does, and they are easy to take care of. They also were easier to produce than bamboo lending themselves to mass production more easily. As a result bamboo rods almost disappeared from the market.

Gerry at work

Bamboo rodmaking, up to the '70s, had mostly been done by companies and not individuals. In the late '70s one book, the Garrison and Carmichael book "A Master's Guide to Building a Bamboo Fly Rod", began to change bamboo rodmaking from a company building bamboo rods to showing how individuals could do it and with limited equipment. One of the first companies to offer a planing form was Herter's although it wasn't adjustable but had several grooves for tips and butts. Not too long after the Garrison and Carmichael book was published some individuals started selling adjustable planing forms based on Garrison's design. Since then there have been an increasingly greater number of companies supplying products to help the home builder and small company produce bamboo rods.

Many anglers never lost their love of bamboo rods and with the opportunity to build rods themselves the number doing so has gradually increased worldwide until by now there are lots of anglers building their own rods. There are several reasons for doing so. Perhaps the biggest reason is the opportunity to duplicate great rod designs from the past no longer being made. Another important reason is one can design and make rods based on an individual's thoughts about what makes the perfect rod, something that is virtually impossible with fiberglass or graphite rods. Then there is the pride and satisfaction of building your own rod and fishing with it on your favorite streams. And, for many, the craft of building bamboo rods has generated a community of fellow rodmakers around the world who are willing, and in fact eager, to share their knowledge and passion with others, both on an individual basis or in gatherings.

Why are bamboo rods, and now fiberglass rods which are making a big comeback, regaining their popularity with many anglers worldwide? I think there is a big reason; those materials make great fishing rods.

Graphite, or as it's often called carbon fiber, rods have been designed to be much stiffer or faster in action than traditional bamboo and fiberglass rods. Anglers are finally discovering these designs are great for distance casting but, for fishing in the close to medium distances where most fresh water fish are caught, are much too stiff to be effective. What's interesting to me is graphite rods don't have to be designed this way, as my designs prove, but companies have sold the idea distance casting is more important than presentation and finesse. I can't believe many of today's rod designers are great fishermen.

In the middle 1990s, I invented and then completed the design work for the Morgan Bamboo Hand Mill. This revolutionary mill allows a bamboo rodmaker to cut bamboo strips easily and accurately to carry on the long tradition of making bamboo rods without a major investment in a power-milling machine. The Hand Mill works in a similar fashion to a power milling machine only is operated by hand. Most users make rods just for themselves but quite a few also sell some themselves or through shops making bamboo rods readily available to other anglers.

From my perspective I think bamboo rods are becoming increasingly popular with anglers and will continue to do so. They offer anglers a connection to the past, they can be great fishing rods with wonderful action, they are increasingly becoming more available, and there is great pride of ownership. As anglers have known for ages there is much greater satisfaction to fishing than just catching fish; there is the joy derived from owning and using great equipment, there can be wonderful companionship with others, and it's usually done in beautiful surroundings.

M.: The market for bamboo rod production, either craftman-like or semi-industrial, looks quite different if we compare the US and Europe, not to mention the Far East and Japan in particular, which we know somewhat less.


TOM
MORGAN
RODSMITHS
61.5

There is definitely a matter of market "numbers" as well as a slightly different cultural tradition to explain at least part of these differences. Do you see other specific reasons to justify the peculiarities in the production of bamboo rods in the Old and the New World, or you think that these differences – if any – are just clues of minor importance, within a common evolutionary line?

T.: I don't have very complete knowledge of bamboo rodmaking around the world but, based on Hand Mill sales, I have some idea of where it's popular and being done. I have sold Hand Mills to South Africa, England, Germany, Italy, Poland, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Chile, Australia, Japan, Canada, and the United States. I may have forgotten a country or two. The most interest seems to be in Europe, the Scandinavian countries, Canada and the United States with just a small amount taking places in other countries.

I can't say what the cultural differences are in attitude about bamboo rodmaking in the different countries but one thing I have noticed between countries that is surprising. In Europe, Scandinavia, Canada, and the United States sharing of rodmaking information is very common. In fact, the friendships developed and knowledge sharing from bamboo rodmaking and rodmaking gatherings in these countries has greatly impacted the craft. There seems to be very little reservation about sharing the knowledge from tapers through construction techniques.

One country that has greatly surprised me is England. The attitude there seems to be one of great secrecy between bamboo rodmakers. As a result, in a country with such great history of bamboo fishing and company rodmaking, there are very few amateur rodmakers. I hope this changes. With all the rodmakers in Europe and the bamboo gatherings close to England hopefully some will start attending these meetings and develop rodmaking.

I am not completely knowledgeable about rodmaking in Japan so I asked my friend, Tomonori Higashi, who is extremely knowledgeable about the Japanese rodmaking community to comment.
"Traditionally we used whole culm to make fishing rods. Conventional rod makers here use different kinds of bamboo species and different sections of the wood to create the ideal taper for the purpose. Sometimes they use totally different material, such as baleen. It is a labor intensive work and duplicating exact action is tough. Then we have the "western" split and glued method of rod making. Most of the bamboo fly rod makers use this method, with tonkin cane as the main material, but quite a few are experimenting different species and making unique rods (mostly of slow action). Amateurs and semi-pro fly rod makers are numerous. It is partly because of the regular class offered by a pro shop in Tokyo (Tsuruya). I don't know exactly how many people took that class, but I'm sure hundreds."
I appreciate the opportunity to provide an insight into my experiences developing a passion for fishing, then rodmaking, particularly with bamboo. From the beginning of my ownership of Winston, and now with Tom Morgan Rodsmiths, I have always been open to sharing my knowledge of bamboo rodmaking techniques to help others learn and practice such an enjoyable craft.

Tom Morgan

Notes by the author: the few introductory news on Morgan's life are mainly taken from the article published in Forbes Life Magazine in 2008. The web site of Tom Morgan Rodsmiths, at www.trotsrods.com , provides an incredible amount of news and information. I recommend you watch it.

Maurizio Cardamone


Tom in 1993

Misty sunset, Hahnemühle "Leonardo" paper 55x35cm

2014 IBRA COURSE

by Mauro Moretti

"Are we managing?"

.....this was the motto of my participation to the 2014 IBRA course, which was shouted again and again in the laboratory hall set up as a working place to highlight the construc-tive phases of our first bamboo rods!

And in the end, "we managed "!

What can I say? When I signed up for the course, I certainly did not think I would have lived such a positive experience: I was afraid of my lack of disposition for practical things, which kept me away from a world that had always fascinated me.

Once I arrived at Podere Violino, I immediately realized there were all the ingredients to excel. I felt a pleasant mix of seriousness in the great maker instructors and their unparalleled love of life, their competence and their passion. Indeed, passion. Of course, the real en-gine of this ancient discipline that, in contrast to others, allows one to appreciate con-cretely the fruits of a careful, hard work, the result of which is never predictable.

Right from the first theoretical notions, I had the impression that what I had read here and there in specialised magazines or on forums would serve to nothing. In fact, the opinions we gather from these sources are barely pertinent or, sometimes, misleading.

In reality, it is surprising how it can be possible to transform a culm of rough bamboo into an instrument of fishing sublimation by following operational rules, which are feasible if matched with humility and the desire to learn. Then one realizes that a lot of what is said and written on the construction of bamboo rods must be relegated to “frills” and that the quality of a creation depends on application, attention to details, never overlooking anything, following the rules, being available and having the will to share. And, of course, on experience.

My first satisfaction during the course was in the phase of preparing the strips. Being able to create small wooden strips more or less equal gives me a sensation of familiarity with the material that I have rarely experienced. Already at this point, which is only the first small goal of a job that is a constellation of small milestones, one gains confidence and understands how the rules masterfully taught, followed and applied with ease, are the only way to succeed.

After working the nodes, rough cutting the strips and tempering them, we are finally in di-rect contact with his majesty, the planing form. The symbol of the art of rodmaking, cold, shiny in some parts, trusted friend if it is respec-ted, cruel and dogged if it is underesti-mated and handled with conceit or negligence.

The tool that literally allows you to shape the precious wood and the source of the movement represented and produced by the rod in its final configuration, according to the original design.

It is indeed in the development of the relationship with the planing form that we can observe how good and competent the IBRA instructors really are. They start you out in the art of "making shavings" with simplicity and professionalism, always reminding you that any clumsy movement of the planing form produces the same effect on the strip, which can also lead to breakage and the destruction of all the work done up to that point.
A tragedy, if one thinks about it, enough to reduce one's morale to dust. However, an avoidable problem with the use of the other tool, symbol of this art, the plane.
Intriguing, cryptic, fierce, but at the same time, controllable and reliable if appropriately prepared.

What else? A fitting acknowledgement to the characters of this extraordinary adventure.
The unique illustration of sharpening the blade by Giorgio Grondona, tireless and reliable in giving advice and secrets with Roberto Valli, personification of wisdom and the concrete example of the importance of calm in exercising this art.

Then what can I say about Alberto Poratelli, Gabriele Gori, Massimo Giuliani and Moreno Borriero? They certainly proved they deserve the “stripes” of rodmaking masters. But I can assure you they also have true passion and unparalleled helpfulness without reserves and above all, without competition, with humility and the desire to share what they have learnt and experimented in many years of rodmaking and they have spread the tangible spirit of IBRA with all who share its objectives.

And my course mates?
A clear synergy and complicity was created immediately, certainly encouraged by the in-structors and the formula of the course. Alternating the serious moments of work for hours, with fun at the table and the analysis and comparison of one’s subjective habits, created a glue founded on “let’s keep in touch!”

Thus, thanks to Luca, Luciano, Nicola, Marco and Daniele (the order at the workbench, starting from the person in front of me and a big hug to all of them) for putting up with me and sharing this adventure "we managed!!!!!"

..... And long live IBRA.

Autumn at the lake. Fabriano rough paper 75x55cm

Selfportrait, Fabriano coldpressed paper, 37x27cm

The author of the watercolors in this issue is

Bjarne Fries

eclectic Danish rodmaker universally recognized as the inventor of bamboo ferrules and honorary member of IBRA.

IBRA
ITALIAN BAMBOO RODMAKERS ASSOCIATION

SOLO BAMBOO
BAMBOO ONLY

TAILWATER TEVERE

FRIDAY MAY 22 2015

AT THE IBRA EUROPEAN GATHERING WE WILL FISH TOGETHER WITH BAMBOO RODS

A CHANCE TO TRY A BAMBOO ROD EVEN IF YOU DO NOT OWN ONE.

THE IBRA MEMBERS WILL PROVIDE THE RODS THEY MADE SETUP WITH SILK LINES.

THE MEETING PLACE IS IN SANSEPOLCRO (AR) AT "PODERE IL VIOLINO"

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