

BAMBOO ROD MAKING

By Chris Spurrell

Be one with the Bamboo . . .



**What is a Fishhead?
Sam Surre, TroutBum**

Every year, as I have for the last six years, I make the pilgrimage. To Michigan. To the Au Sable; the river of sand. To partake of the festival of mayhem and mayflies, antics and angling, that is the Trout Bum Barbeque. TBBQ is the spawn of Steve Southard (owner of the Fly Factory), Victor Edwards (local guide, wit, and raconteur), and Wayne Cattanch (Jack Pine Rodmaker). TBBQ comprises several days and nights of fishing and fellowship, culminating in a grand BBQ and auction under the marquee on the banks of the holy water.

This event and its sedate sibling, the Rodmakers at GrayRock, raises large amounts of money for stream restoration projects and environmental causes in the Grayling area. A highlight of the BBQ is always the exhibition of bamboo put on by the Rodmakers under the marquee by the holy water.

I always cast these wands in wonder, wondering what it would take, to make one myself. Finally, after years of procrastination, guilt and poverty, I enrolled in the rodmaking class, under the master rodmaker, Wayne Cattanch.

By now the alert reader may have discerned that this was a more than the mere study of a craft. This was a voyage of self discovery. A reframing of the boundaries of a life. A life hitherto bound by office and bank, insurance company and computer. A life that was opened to the possibilities of the parabola. Unbound by the bamboo . . .



**Harold Demarest,
Importer of Tonkin
Cane, celebrating
his birthday with
the Rodmakers at
Grayrock.**

This page is a photo essay depicting my experience of the workshop. The transformation of culm into wand, and rat-racer into rodmaker.

The process begins by selecting a culm of bamboo, filing the nodes, and splitting into two sections.



The culms are flamed to give the rod a golden brown color. This is also supposed to create a faster action.

Mallet and Froh. All you need to split bamboo . . .



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. . . . Into twenty four pieces; enough for a butt, two tips and a few mistakes!

Sections are heat treated in order to straighten them . . .



. . . . Prior to rough planning into 60 degree section strips . . .



. . . On a hard maple planning form.

The strips are taped together . . .



Then bound in a Garrison binder. This device, invented by Everett Garrison, applies pressure evenly along the length of the rod section, holding the strips firmly in place. The bound section is heat treated at 375 degrees in an oven to drive out moisture and to relax the lignin fibers that make up the bamboo. This helps straighten the rod section.



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The 60 degree straightened, heat treated strips are ready for final planing. Milled steel forms are used to obtain precise dimensions. Strips are planed with a 9-1/2 Stanley block plane and finished off with a scraper. Tolerances are one thousandth of an inch. The sections are then glued, bound together again, and hung to dry.

While the strips are drying, the reel seat, ferrules and other hardware are prepared . . .



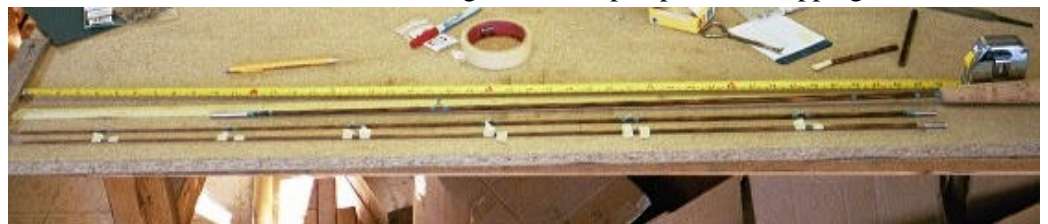
And the snake guide feet are ground down to make winding smoother.



After Heat treating and straightening, the hardware and handle are fitted.



Then the guides are taped prior to wrapping the rod



**Wayne Cattanach, Rodmaker,
Teacher, Bamboo Master.
With completed rod.**



**The moment that makes it all worthwhile!
Outside the Fly Factory in Grayling, MI
with a new, hand crafted Bamboo Fly Rod.**

I hope you enjoyed this as much
as I did!

Chris Spurrell,
Apprentice Rodmaker . .

