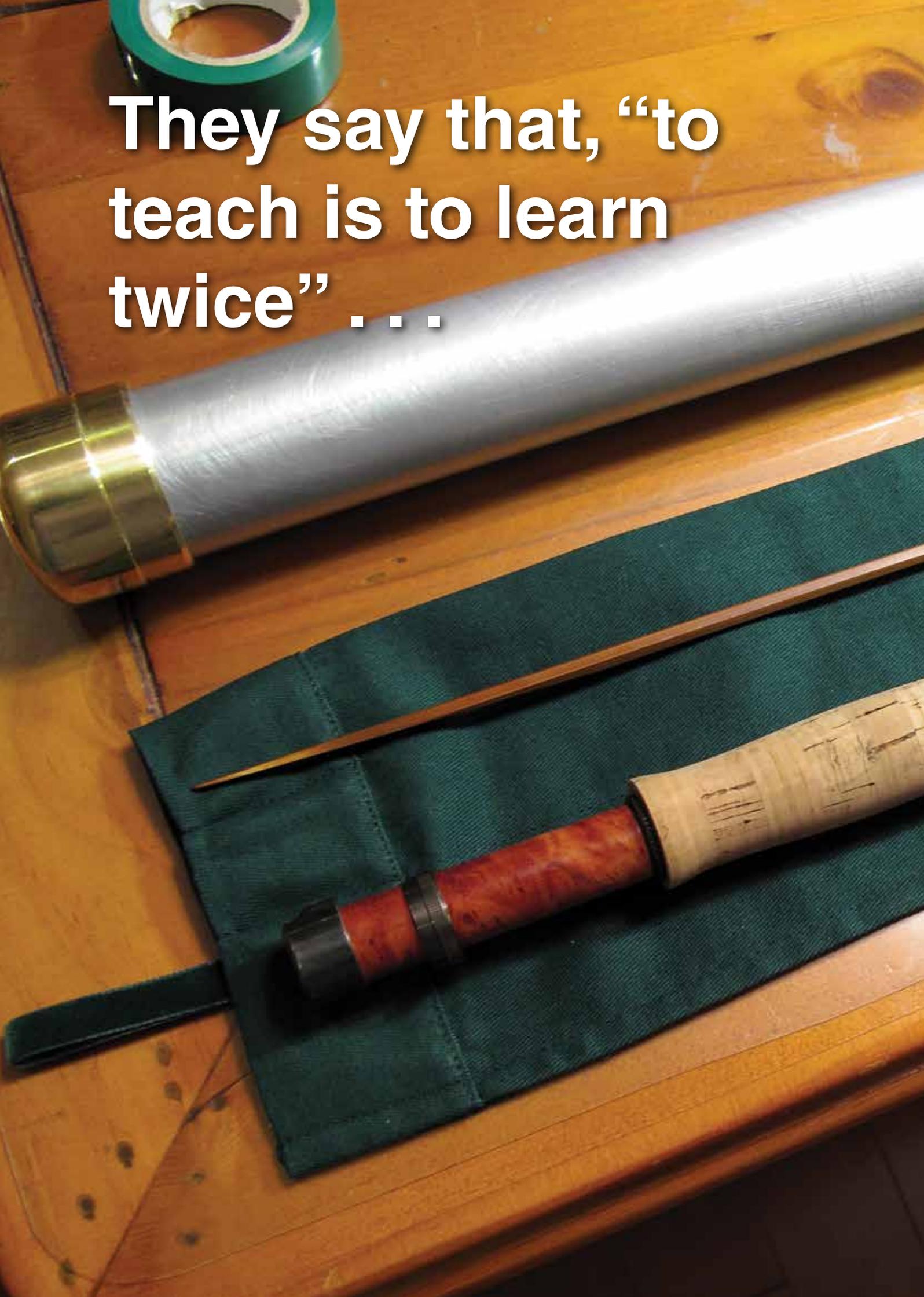


**They say that, “to
teach is to learn
twice” . . .**





CANE CLASS

By *NICK TARANSKY & KEL MACNAB*, with photos by *MIRI ROBINSON*

CANE CLASS

I've had the pleasure of taking four people through the process of making a bamboo rod over the years, and I can genuinely say that I've got a lot out of each experience. The latest came about when my close mate Troy's sixteen year old son Kel, expressed an interest in making a rod for his High School end of year week-long work experience (internship).

Five days seems to be the optimum time for an introduction to rodmaking. There's enough time to go over the techniques and let the "apprentice" practice a little as well as work on their actual rod. The schedule goes something like this . . .

Day 1: Workshop Safety and Overview, Culm selection, flaming, splitting strips

Day 2: Straightening Strips, Sanding Enamel, Rough Planing

Day 3: Final Planing, Glue Corks for grip

Day 4: Glue up blank, grind guides, turn grip and reel seat timber

Day 5: Glue removal from blank, glue on Components, Finishing Techniques

This leaves the final finishing to be done by the new rodmaker in their own time (varnishing guide wraps and the rod, with several coats, and drying times make it impractical to squeeze into a week).

Bamboo rodmakers have the reputation of being as crusty and cynical as, well, bamboo rodmakers. So for me, each time I've taught it has been reinvigorating to see the excitement of each new rodmaker as a raw culm of bamboo has been transformed into a sweet bamboo rod, with them doing the bulk of the hands-on work. This was even more so with Kel, with youth on his side (as the other guys I've taught were already cynical adult fly fishermen).

The week was a lot of fun (for me at least, not having kids of my own, I had a small taste of step-fatherhood, with Kel staying here for the whole week). Kel informed me that beatings are pretty much out nowadays when it comes to "education and discipline," which was news to me, but I did my best to respect that. He must have had an OK time too. Aside from leaving here with a "fully sick" bamboo rod (a good thing apparently), Troy tells me Kel is still saying things like "my REAL dad would buy me that," or "my REAL dad would let me do that!"

Seriously, Kel was a great apprentice and he made a sensational rod, but rather than me describe it further through my squinted, half blind cynical rodmaker's perspective, I'll let him relate his experience through some Q and A . . .





Photos, clockwise from top left:-

Rough Planing the sixty degree angles on the strips

Sharpening, sharpening, sharpening . . .

Starting to look like a rod

Final Planing

Preparing the splines for glue up

By the end of Kel's first experience of a hard day's work he was struggling to keep up with me . . .



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Was making a rod how you expected it to be?

Yes and no! Yes, because I knew you had to split, plane and glue the rod. No, because it was a more difficult and drawn out task. Finishing the rod blank also takes a lot of time.

What was the hardest thing about making a rod?

I would say that the hardest part was thinning down the triangular bamboo strips to such fine tolerances.

What did you enjoy most in making it?

I enjoyed the whole process of making the rod, especially the grip and reel seat. I also enjoyed spending time with Nick and Miri. Nick is a practical joker who made me laugh a lot. I also gained insight into a specialised craft and the skill level required to make a bamboo rod.

What was the least fun?

I would have to say that the least fun would have been the planing of the strips, as this was quite a tedious process. It was still enjoyable though.

What taper did you make?

7' [Leonard 38H](#), 2 piece, #4. I use a #5 weight line on it.

What were the other details of the build?

Reel seat: Blued Down-locking Cap and Ring with Bull Mallee (Red) Burl Spacer

Grip: 6 inch Western

Guides: [Pac Bay TiCH](#)

Guide Wraps: Rust coloured [YLI Japanese Silk](#)

Finish: Hand rubbed [Danish Oil](#)

Name: "The Real Trout Pistol". I called it this to hassle my Dad. His favourite custom rod from Nick is a quick, accurate six and a half foot rod made for targeting big fish. I 'made up' the name "Trout Pistol" for his rod, so that is what is inscribed on the butt. Now mine has "The Real Trout Pistol" written on the butt. Sucked in Dad!

Can you describe how the rod casts?

Even though it is a full loading taper, it responds smoothly to a quick stoke. It is effortless to make tight loops and cast all day. I use a five weight Rio Gold on this rod. I love the way this combination works.

What Reel(s) do you use on it?

I use a [Hatch 3 Plus](#) in silver and red. This is a sick reel!

What length leader do you use most often with the rod? (Ed)

I use a 12-foot leader most often. When I use Dave Whitlock's knotless connection [ZAP-A-GAP](#) this turns out to be the



Clockwise from top left:-

Applying the glue

Binding the glued splines into a blank

Straightening the blank as the glue sets

Sanding the excess glue from the blank

"Plan and check; measure twice, cut once"



perfect length. This connection slides in and out of the rod tip when casting or fighting fish. With the properties of bamboo, I can cast just the fly and leader in close, quickly working out a longer line without any problems. At 12 feet, the leader beats drag and keeps the fly line far enough away from most spooky trout. I find this system easily manageable in the wind as well.

Have you caught a fish on it, and if so, how does it feel?
I have christened the rod on some small stream rainbows. It feels really good when fighting a fish. It bends up well and you can feel every bit of the fight.

What plans do you have for the rod—where do you want to fish it, what do you want to catch on it?



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I have big plans for this rod. I plan on using it to catch a nice Monaro Brown in autumn. This is dry fly fishing and the fish commonly run from 3 to 6 pounds. In the future, I would like to take it to New Zealand, were I can hopefully hookup and land a trophy brown.

On a scale from 95 to 100, where 95 is "sick" and 100 is "fully sick", how would you rate the week making a rod?

I would give my week 100, being "fully sick." Except for some Nick Taransky flat jokes.

Clockwise from top left:-

Raw cork and burl, shaped grip and reel seat, with rod blank

Shaping the Cork Grip

"Yes, looks like a grip to me!"

Making the rod bag

Practicing guide wraps ...

To keep a growing lad's energy up, a hearty lunch was provided. "Hey Kel, what do you want on your onion?" (Sorry about the gluten, I didn't know you were allergic)

Really looks like a rod now!





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Time to go fishing!!!

The finished rod

Christened – a fat Snowy Mountains Rainbow for Kel and the “Real Trout Pistol”

A FEW GENERAL FISHING QUESTIONS . . .

How long have you been fly fishing?

I have been out fishing with my dad in a backpack (on his back) since I was a baby/toddler. I started fishing on my own with a fly rod when I was ten or eleven, so about 5 years.

What do you like about it?

I like how Fly Fishing shares the same characteristics as Bow Hunting, another one of my passions. In both you have to visually stalk prey; that's what I love about them both. It is also rewarding when you catch a tricky fish, or whistle up a sly fox.

So why did you decide to make a fly rod rather than a bow for this project (Ed)?

I really wanted a cane rod of my own! My Dad owns top end graphite rods, but continues to use his bamboo rod from Nick, so I figured that it must be an awesome rod. The opportunity of making a bamboo rod with Nick, who is at the top of his game, was hard to pass up. Your question has given me a great idea! I would love to make a bow one day!

What type/style of fishing do you like best

I love Dry Fly Fishing to fish that cruise on slow beats in rivers.

Do you believe cane outperforms carbon fibre in any way here? (Ed)

Cane rods bend up well on larger trout. The rod maintains a consistent bend, which helps keep a solid hook set when fighting a fish. Stiffer graphite rods can 'buck' during the fight, which may cause the hook to bend, or the tippet to break. This is especially true when you are fighting good fish in close quarters, or from undercut banks. Cane makes excellent dry fly fishing rods because you can cast short and medium lines accurately and effortlessly. I love the way you can feel every bit of the fight on the rod. Cane rods provide excellent feel in the cast, super smooth.

Where do you fish?

I fish the Snowy Mountains and Monaro Rivers. Some of my favourite rivers include the Eucumbene River and the Thredbo River. I also fish small creeks up in the Mountains such as 8 Mile Creek. The Monaro is probably my favourite.

Are you a better fisherman than your dad, and if so, why?

Most definitely! I always like to promote a bit of “healthy competition” with my Old Man. In reality, I have loved learning from my Dad and sharing a love of Fly Fishing with him. He has encouraged me to practice casting since I was young. I am grateful for this now, especially when I out-fish him!

What is your ultimate goal in Fly Fishing.

That would have to be fishing New Zealand. My Dad has fished there; he says it is a magnificent place with rivers and streams you can only dream about! He believes New Zealanders are the nicest people you could hope to meet. Dad also reckons New Zealanders have a wicked sense of humour!

