

## Bamboo Rodmaking Greats

After reading your "Bamboo" article in the March 1988 issue, I felt compelled to write this letter.

All of the individuals in the article do indeed make fine bamboo rods; some finer than others.

You also lightly hit upon such master rod makers as Jim Payne. Granted, it was an article about the "modern" rod makers, but a rod maker who was never mentioned was the H. L. Leonard Rod Company. Yes, they are sadly out of business, but they only closed several years ago (March 1985). One rod maker states in your article that the individual rod makers have more personal involvement and intensity in their rods. Someone else said that the Jim Payne rods were production rods. "Production" just doesn't sound right. Put a Jim Payne rod side by side with rods made by any of the modern individual rod makers and the Payne rod would blow them all away. I see that Payne rods are being made again, but they're not "Jim Payne" rods. As far as I'm concerned, Payne rods died when Jim passed away. Anyone can buy the Payne license.

Of course, when Hiram Leonard died, the modern bamboo fly rod was still around the corner. The Leonard Rod Company over the years had an excellent group of people working for it. But not too long ago, especially in the early 1980s, Leonard had such master craftsmen as Tom Baily, Tom Maxwell, Bob Taylor, Walt Carpenter, Ron Taylor, Mark Murphy, and Virginia Luhrs (the best varnisher since Jim Payne) all working under the same roof. During my many visits at Leonard, I watched these folks treat every rod like it was their very own. All rods received that personal involvement and superb workmanship and never was a "half baked" rod sent out to a customer. The last seven years of the H. L. Leonard Rod Company produced some of the finest bamboo rods ever made.

I just felt that information like this should have been included in the article to give the readers a little background on bamboo rods that had no equal.

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