

Classic Cane Rods

THE HIGH ROLLERS Auction—of Tackle To Die For, at the Marlborough (MA) collectors' show every February—is always memorable. This year's high-water mark was a group of seven Thomas & Thomas commemorative rods plus T&T's raised-pillar Kosmic-tribute trout reel. The set went for \$32,450, which blew past the previous single-lot price record (the Haskell Minnow, July '88) by a mere \$10,450. Considering that the individual items sold new for about \$2,000 each, and none were more than about 10 years old, the seller made a reasonable investment. (A sound, conservative financial instrument could have returned the same profit—but it wouldn't have looked as fine on the wall in the study.)

T&T's limited-edition rods are the work of company co-founder Tom Dorsey, a brilliant designer and craftsman. This remarkable photo shows seven of his specials. The auction lot included five of these models; two of the rods shown, however, were never issued.

Clockwise, beginning with the cased rod: T&T's 10th Anniversary rod, 1979—a series of 10 eight-foot, five-weight rods, with Spanish mahogany spliced into the bamboo segments to form the swelled butt • The 1983 Fountainhead, with its distinctive spike ferrules and extra-long wooden grip and reel seat, commemorates the first American split-cane craftsmen, Phillippe, Mitchell, Murphy and Greene; it too has Spanish mahogany spliced into the swelled butt • A “one of one” unissued 7½-foot, three-piece, nodeless rod, for four-weight lines, built in 1982; the nodes were cut out of the cane and the rod segments were spliced together in long, overlapping “darts” • One of 15 Catskill Legend rods, a series of three-piece eight-footers made to help the Catskill Fly Fishing Center raise funds; the names of 13 Catskills anglers, from Theodore Gordon to Art Flick, are engraved on the nickel-silver reel seat • Leaning against its leather tube is a 1985 Amabilis rod, from an edition of 20, which pays homage to the bamboo—*Arundinaria amabilis*—from which these rods came • The rod with the Ivoroid reel seat and the red intermediate wraps is the Kosmic Commemorative, issued in '84; the original rod had a celluloid reel seat, not ivory, and this one is actually micarta, as celluloid is now a controlled substance • Another “one of one” unissued rod, built in 1980, with a rosewood swelled-splice butt and alternating bands of cork and rosewood in the grip (note that wood and cane are both visible below the reel seat hood). The reel is a Kosmic Commemorative. □



