

## THE FFF, BAMBOO AND FRIENDSHIP

Story and photo by Al Beatty

line-to-leader connection was via a very small mono loop tied to his fly line, which gave me some ideas for later. He “tuned” his leaders quite well over the years, and it showed. The old Payne was smooth and accurate, dropping cast upon cast in the center of each rise. That, my friend, was great fly fishing!

I make my line-to-leader connection as follows. First, I make a 45-degree cut at the end of the fly line. Then I simply fold over one-half to three-quarters of an inch of the fly line forming a small loop. Next, using 3/0 nylon tying thread, wrap the end and line as you would the foot of a snake-guide on a rod. No knots are required; I seal the thread with a small drop of super glue, forming an instant chemical bond on both ends of the fly line and thread. Just snip off the excess thread and it's done. I tie the leader onto the loop via an improved clinch knot. This forms a strong, slim connection that passes through guides smoothly and lasts, in some cases, all season. My leader material is medium stiff – just flexible enough to carry the energy of the cast and turn over the fly. (Of course, it helps to balance the size of the fly with the size of the tippet.)

Last, some thoughts on matching rods and lines. I remind all of my students that most modern graphite rods can handle a couple line weights up or down from that recommended by the manufacturer. That being said, I always test students' equipment to check if rod and line do balance. I like to overload graphic rods by one and sometimes two line sizes. And I've watched other instructors do the same. However a few forget an important point. Always test lines on the water, not grass, and, if possible, with a hook-less fly that matches the leader. Some forget about the weight that water adds to a line, not to mention the weight of a big, wet fly. That added weight affects the rod's action, especially lighter ones.

Many more innovative hints and casting aids may be found in the exhaustive (and free) volumes of *The Loop* located on the Federation of Fly Fishers' website: [www.fedflyfishers.org](http://www.fedflyfishers.org). If you have unique, helpful hints that you use in teaching or casting and want to pass them along, please contact me via my website, [www.tomtripi.com](http://www.tomtripi.com). I'll mention you and them in future articles or you can submit them to *The Loop*. 🐾

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The headline may lead the reader to believe that I've become a bamboo rod builder, but that's not the case; I'm still semi-sane. I'm just a fairly competent flytier who has observed our bamboo rod-building friends at conclaves and other fly fishing functions perform their magic on simple-looking pieces of the raw, wild grass. I've not ruled out building bamboo rods but also have to face the reality that my woodworking skills leave a lot to be desired.

I remember well my high school woodshop teacher telling me that I might want to focus on fishing because I sure didn't have “it” regarding his woodshop. I'm kind of glad I took his advice to “focus on fishing,” because I've sure enjoyed fly fishing over the years, sharing the avocation with my wife, Gretchen, and the many friends I've made in the sport and the Federation of Fly Fishers (FFF).

Even though my woodworking skills were never developed, it is interesting how people who had that particular skill have come into my life and used it to express their friendship while I, in turn, shared flies with them. To prove the point, I have many handmade fly boxes, like those pictured here, that I've been given over the years by friends.

It's funny how a discussion about bamboo or wood can evolve into a discussion about friendship and how much the FFF and the people in it have affected our lives. When we look at our fairly large group of friends, we find everyone on the list is associated with the Federation in one way or another.

We never know when guests will appear at the door for a visit that could last a couple of hours or several days. For example in the recent past we got an e-mail from Jon Lyman, former FFF education chair, and a writer for this publication. His message was succinct; he wanted to know if we would be home. I advised him I was here, but Gretchen was gone. Less than an hour later, the doorbell rang and it was Jon. I thought his e-mail had been sent from his home in Alaska, but, as he was standing at my front door, it was really obvious it wasn't.

I invited him in and made a pot of coffee. A conversation with Jon is always interesting, and I prepared for several pleasant hours reviewing a multitude of topics. It wasn't meant to be; he was on his way to a job as a ski instructor. The purpose of his visit was to give us a bamboo fly rod he had built as a token of friendship. I was stunned! I thanked him and he was on his way, having stayed only a few minutes. He had spent many hours building the rod and drove miles out of his way to give us that beautiful bamboo rod, then only visited for a short time.

A simple thank you for such a wonderful token of friendship is far from adequate. That said, it is all I have to offer except for this short column here in *Flyfisher* to recognize the great gift an FFF friend gave us with no expectation of anything in return. On the other hand, that's how true friendships evolve; doing for others with no expectation of a return. For that matter, it seems like a great concept when thinking of membership in the FFF as well, giving with no thought of anything in return. My membership in the FFF has proven to be an important and eventful part of my life. In my opinion a membership in the FFF is a great return on investment.

What is your opinion? If you are thinking of letting your membership lapse, don't do it. You never know when the doorbell could ring. 🐾

*Flyfisher* Editor Al Beatty is a longtime FFF member from Boise, Idaho, who enjoys tying flies, fishing with his wife, Gretchen, and working with her in their family business – BT's Fly Fishing & Photography.



The “friendship gifts” are just too special to take to the water, but who knows what may happen at some future date.