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# THE ROD RACK

conducted by **Dick Finlay**

## New Life for Old Bamboo-I



DAVE ENGERBRETSON

I WISH I HAD A DOLLAR FOR EVERY bent old bamboo fly rod that lies forgotten and gathering dust in the dark corners of hundreds of attics across the country. I'd even be happy with a dollar for every time someone has come to me with Grandpa's old rod to see if it could be reconditioned, "just for old time's sake."

Though warped, scratched, missing a few guides, and possibly with a broken tip, most of these rods can be quite easily put back into nearly original condition. It may not pay to have the job done by a professional, but almost any fisherman is capable of doing the work himself in a few hours.

The first step is to examine the rod to determine what work is required and which parts need replacing.

Begin by flexing each rod section along each of its sides to see if the

bamboo is split or separated. Then, join the sections to check the fit of the ferrules. A clicking sound or a feeling of looseness when the rod is swung back and forth in a casting arc indicates either that the ferrule itself is worn out or that the glue has dried out and the ferrule is no longer fastened tightly to the bamboo. Close inspection of the ferrule will reveal which of these is the cause of the problem. If the parts are worn, they should be replaced. If the glue has merely dried out, the original ferrule can be refitted.

A visual check of the cork grip and reel seat will show their condition, and a quick sighting down the length of the rod will indicate whether there are any sets that will require straightening.

All of the old line guides should be replaced as a routine practice, since

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worn guides can quickly ruin an expensive fly line.

The last step in the preliminary check is to inspect the rod finish for cracks, chips, and peeling, and decide whether a complete refinishing job is required or if a slight touch-up will do the trick.

#### Stripping Down the Rod

Prior to removing the guides, measure and record their locations so the new ones can be accurately placed, then remove them by carefully cutting their thread windings with a razor blade. The tip-top is removed by very carefully rotating it over a source of heat which will soften the glue and allow the top to be pulled off. Care must be taken to avoid excessive heat which will char and weaken the bamboo.

If the ferrules and reel seat are to be removed, they can be heated and pulled free as was done with the tip-top. Again, excessive heat must be avoided. The ferrules of many early



Heating old ferrule before removal. Photos by Dave Engerbretson.

rods were secured with fine wire pins in addition to cement, and, if such pins are found on your rod, they must be carefully driven out with a small punch.

The cork grip and reel seat plug can simply be cut away with a sharp knife.

If the rod is to be completely refinished, the old varnish must be scraped off with a single-edge razor blade, the edge of a piece of broken

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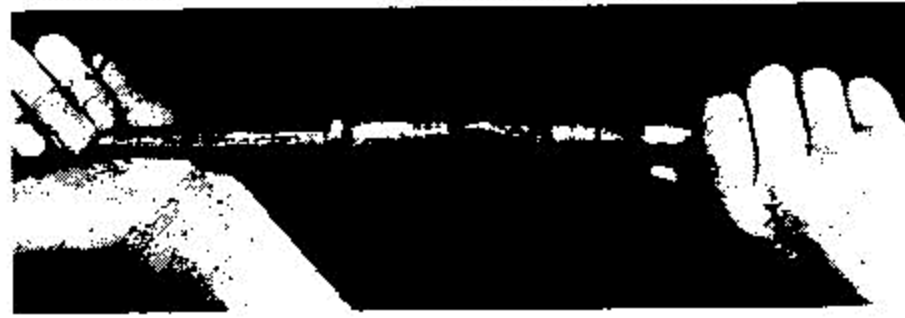
## Rod Rack. . .

remains after the rod has cooled, apply a little more heat and pressure until the rod remains straight. As with all rod work, the key is "easy does it." Work carefully and gently, and you'll get the job done.

### Replacing the Grip and Reel Seat

If both the cork grip and the reel seat are to be replaced, the reel seat should be done first after the old fittings have been removed from the rod.

To install the reel seat, first drill or file the hole in the filler plug to produce a tight fit on the rod butt, and glue it in place with waterproof glue or epoxy. When the plug is dry, glue




Sliding reel seat over glue-coated filler used to take up space between blank and reel seat.

the seat in place making certain that the reel position will be in line with the side of the rod on which the guides will be wound. Be careful that the reel seat does not

shift out of line when the assembly is set aside to dry.

Any of three methods can be used to replace the cork grip. Pre-shaped grips can be purchased which need only be reamed to fit the rod butt and glued in place. Loose cork rings can be glued to the rod and sanded to shape. Pre-glued cork rings can be purchased in any length you require and glued in place and shaped. The cork can be glued with a waterproof glue such as Weldwood powdered resin or a five-minute epoxy.

Shaping of the grip can be done with a rasp and coarse sandpaper followed by successively finer grades of paper as the desired shape is approached. A final sanding with 400 or 600 grade paper will produce a satin-smooth finish.

[See Bill Schwenker's "Rod Rack" article on building rod grips in our 1975 Winter issue for more details. The second half of Dave Engerbretson's article will appear in our January Pre-Season issue, in which he'll be covering guide-wrapping and rod-finishing in addition to providing readers with a list of sources for rod-making materials. The Editors] 

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