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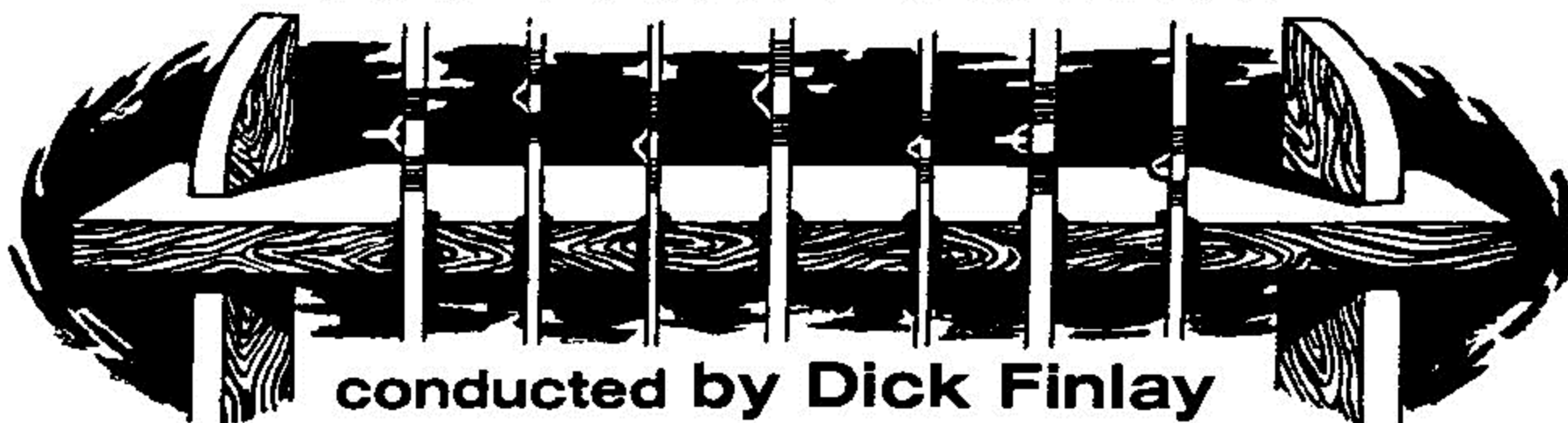


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THE ROD RACK



conducted by Dick Finlay

NEW LIFE FOR OLD BAMBOO—II

DAVE ENGERBRETSON
FFM Rocky Mountain Field Editor

[In the preceding issue, Dave covered the replacement and repair of worn rod fittings and the removal of sets from bamboo rods. The final steps are rod wrapping and finishing, which are the basis for this second half of his series. THE EDITORS.]

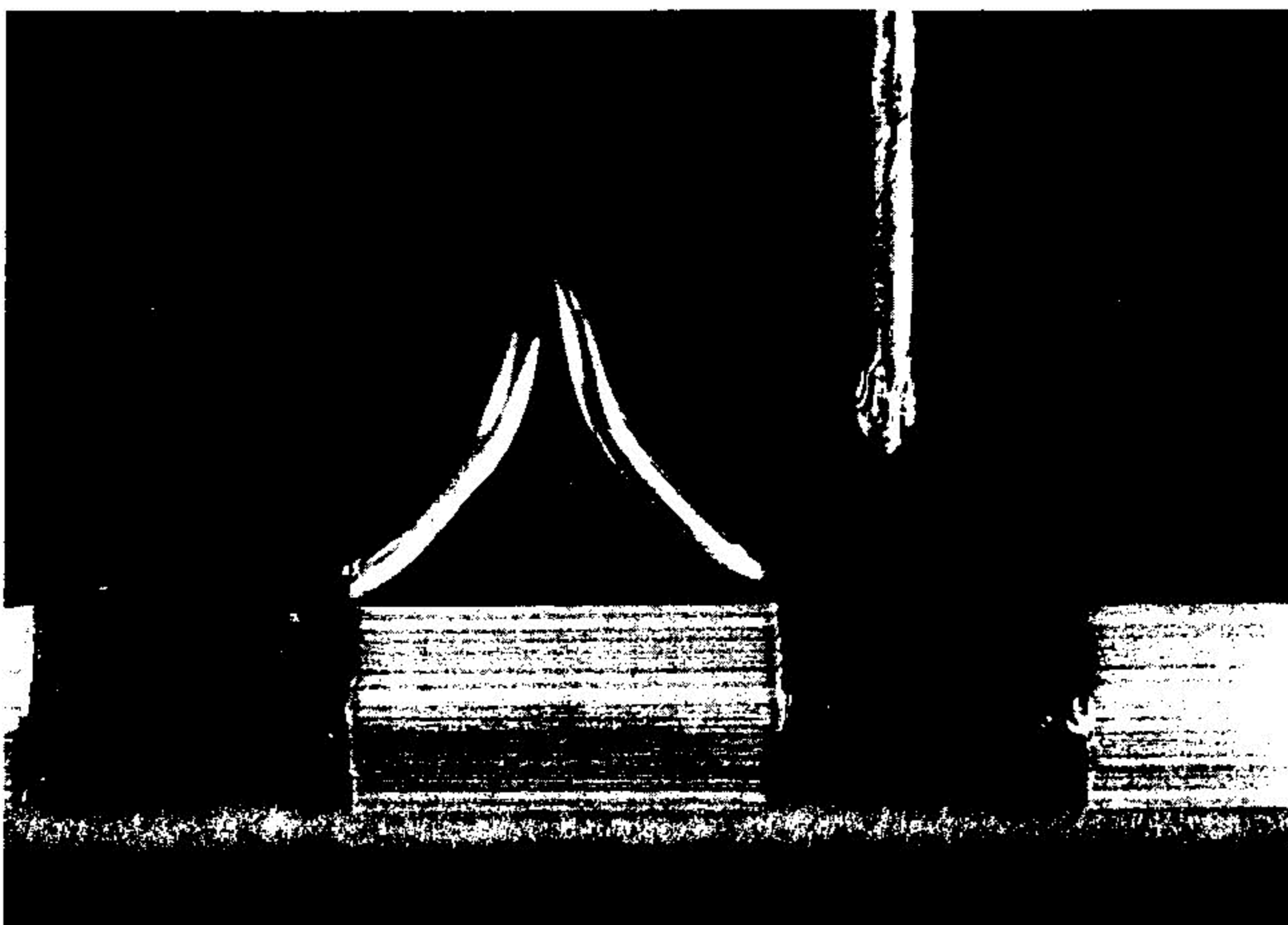
NOW THAT YOU'VE STRAIGHTENED your old rod, fixed or replaced the reel seat and grip, and have removed the old finish, you're ready for varnishing and guide wrapping.

The final finishing should be done in a dust-free area such as the bathroom of your house. The air should

be dry, though, so have your family skip their showers the night you plan to do the work.

A variety of finishes can be applied to the rod. Marine spar varnish can be applied in three or four thin coats and is a standard bamboo-rod finish. The can of varnish should be warmed in a pan of hot water because warm varnish is less viscous and will flow more smoothly onto the rod. The varnish can be applied with a soft brush, but I prefer to use my fingers. Place a large drop of warm varnish on the tip of your finger, and simply rub it into

The varnishing of guide wrappings is usually the last step in the reconditioning of an old cane rod. Instead of using his finger to apply the varnish, Dave prefers a fly-tier's bodkin for a neater job. Photos by Dave Engerbretson.



the bamboo with long smooth strokes, adding more varnish as necessary. When the section is completely covered, make a final wipe of your finger down the entire length of each side to smooth everything out.

While I have had only limited experience with it, I have had excellent results with a single coat of Gudebrod's new Hard 'n Fast epoxy finish. The material is applied with a brush, and after it is thoroughly dry, I rub it down with 600-grade paper used wet. This can be followed by a rubbing with rottenstone and water. The finish is extremely hard and should be very durable.

The finish I usually prefer is Birchwood Casey True-Oil gunstock finish applied with my fingers. It dries very quickly, which helps to avoid dust, and it is ready to rub down in about two hours. I apply four coats of the True-Oil, following each with a light rubbing with a very fine rubbing compound and water, which results in a semi-gloss finish. I use a rubbing compound made for model planes, but the automotive type should work as well if it is extra fine. Care must be taken to rub very gently and use plenty of water in order not to remove the finish from the edges of the rod. Be certain that the rod is thoroughly washed and dried following each rubbing so all of the compound is removed. If a high gloss is desired, omit the rubbing after the final coat.

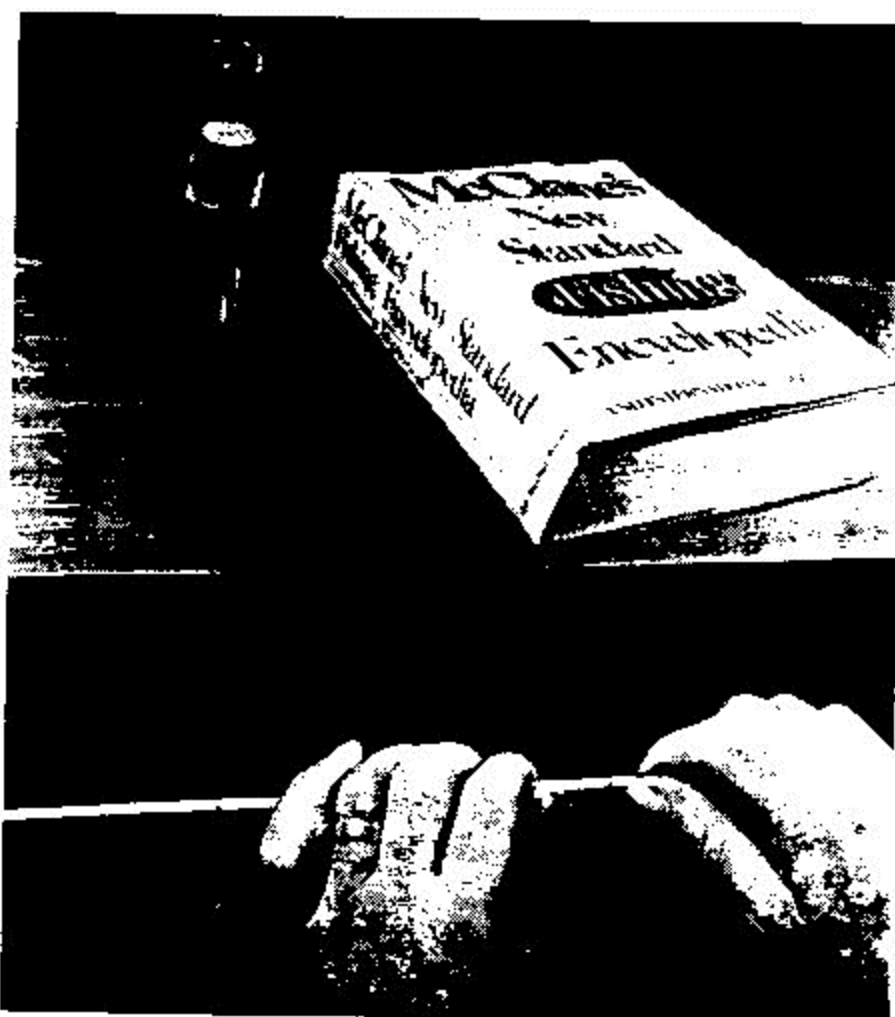
Winding the Guides

Some rod builders prefer to wind on the guides before applying the finish to the rod. They then varnish the rod and the windings at the same time. This is a good method but cannot be used with the True-Oil finish since the substance does not work well with the thread windings. Also, since I like to rub down the finish on

a rod, I do the rod before the guides are wrapped and finish the wraps separately with epoxy.

Nylon thread in size A should be used for rod winding. With a finer thread, it is difficult to avoid leaving slight gaps in the windings, and heavier thread seems to look too coarse on a fine rod.

Before winding the guides, some method of applying tension to the thread must be devised. For those who only occasionally do rod work, the easiest technique is to simply



Running winding thread through a book to provide tension, which can be increased by adding more books.

place the spool in an empty drinking glass, and run the thread toward you through the pages of a book. Tension can be increased by placing a heavy object on the book.

To produce a first-class job, the tops of the guide feet should be smoothly tapered with a fine file or sharpening stone. When they have been prepared, tape a guide into position with masking tape over one of its feet, making certain that the guide is placed on the rod surface which lines up with the reel position on the reel

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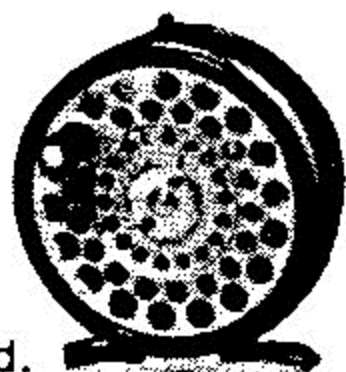
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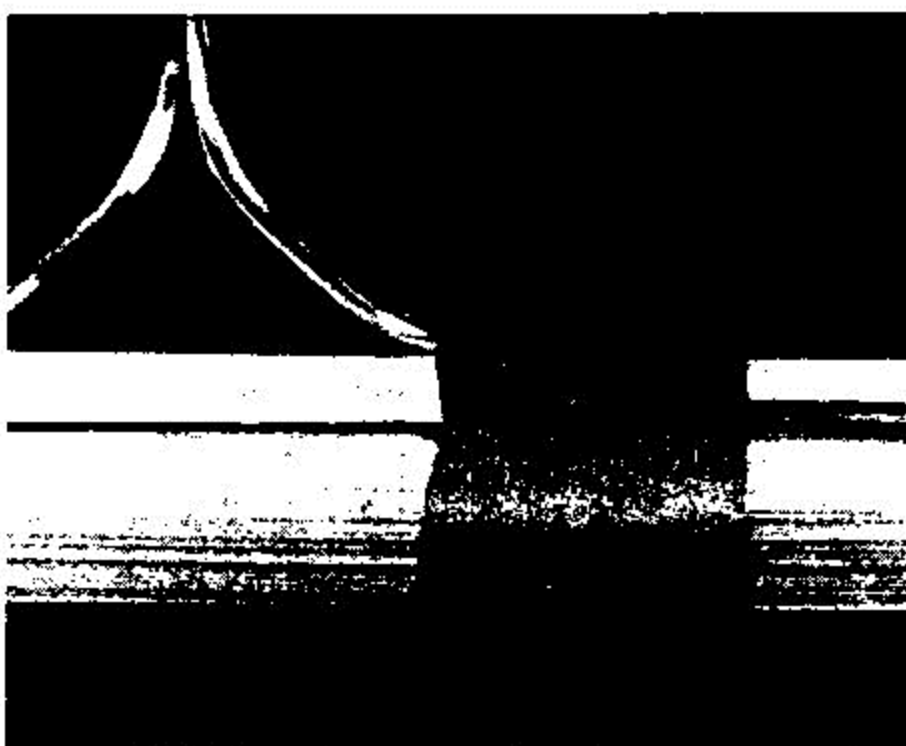
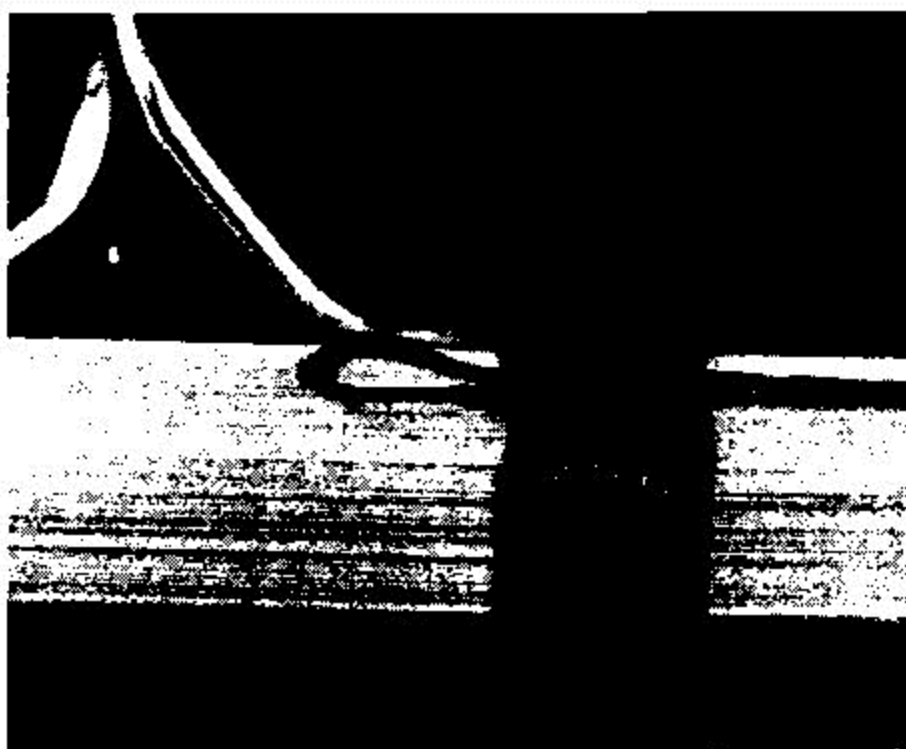
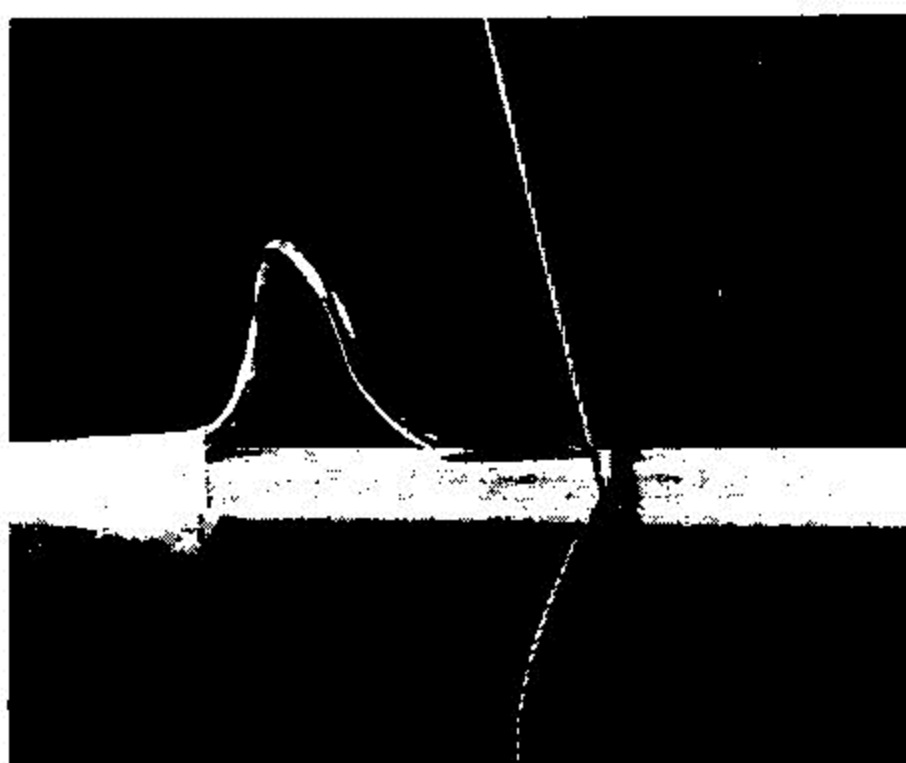
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Old Bamboo . . .

seat. Cut off approximately six inches
of the winding thread and set it aside
for future use. The guide is then
wrapped as shown.

After the tops of the guide feet are filed
down, the wrap is started by carefully
winding the thread over itself and in the di-
rection of the guide foot; note the tape
holding the guide in place on one side while
the thread is being started. When the
thread has been wound partially up the
foot, a looped section of thread is inserted in
the wind, which will serve as a whip-fin-
isher when the wrap is completed. In the
third photograph, the wrapping job is fin-
ished; the thread has been put through the
loop, and the ends of the loop are pulled to
bring the wrapping thread back underneath
itself. At exactly the point illustrated in the
final photo, cut the wrapping thread close to
the last wind and pull the loop through
sharply. The end of the thread will become
trapped under the wind and the loop will
pull free.



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At this point, most instructions will tell you to give each winding a couple of coats of color preserver to prevent the varnish from changing the color of the thread. However, I feel that the use of color preserver should generally be avoided. The color preserver works by preventing the varnish from soaking into the thread, and this makes it very difficult to obtain a tightly wrapped guide. I much prefer to let the color darken a bit and have a strongly wrapped guide. Of course, if I am only replacing one or two guides, and trying to match existing wraps, I will use the color preserver if it was used on the remainder of the rod.

Finishing the Windings

As with the rod itself, several materials can be used to finish the guide windings. Marine spar varnish works well, as do several of the new two-part epoxy finishes—such as Gudebrod's Hard 'n Fast and one called Crystal Coat, sold by Dale Clemens.

A soft camel's hair brush can be used to apply the finish to the windings, but unless extreme care is used, a brush tends to create air bubbles in the finish. A better trick, shown to me by one of my students, is to apply the finish with a fly-tier's bodkin or dubbing needle. One can be made by pushing a hat pin through a small cork or by pushing a needle into the end of a wooden match stick. Place a drop of epoxy or varnish on the tip of the needle and spread it evenly on the windings, picking up additional drops as needed. The technique gives accurate control over the finish, it prevents you from slopping over the thread onto the rod, and does not cause air bubbles.

To produce professional results, I suggest adding several thin coats of finish, allowing each to dry, until the last dries with a high gloss and the individual threads can no longer be seen.

The reconditioning job is now completed.

With but a few hours of your time, you can add many years of life to a forgotten old rod, which deserves better than to merely gather dust in some dark corner. And, perhaps best of all, you may feel a touch of the pride of workmanship experienced by the original craftsmen who created these classics in bamboo.

On the following page, we've included a listing of rod-component suppliers as an aid to readers. THE EDITORS.

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