

Bamboo in the Basement

How to Make Bamboo Fly Rods by George W. Barnes. Winchester Press, New York, N.Y., 1977; 110 pp., \$10.95.

THE BEST FEATURE of this latest book written for the amateur rodmaker is that it gets right down to business and stays there. The introduction is little more than a page, then the first chapter—"The Planing Block—Key to Rod Build-

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ing" — goes right to the heart of the home rod-building process. Just how to make a planing block (a form on which cane strips are shaped) has been the biggest *stumbling* block, keeping many qualified craftsmen from starting the intriguing job of creating a fine tonkin-cane fly rod from scratch. The language here is simple and straightforward, as are the line diagrams of both steel and wood planing blocks. The mystery is dispelled.

The book is a series of short chapters (17 in all), with the last one the briefest, saying in essence that now you've made it, take it out and try it. "At this point, there is little advice that I can give, except assemble your reel and line and run to the nearest trout stream." The intervening chapters will lead you through the gathering of common hand tools, the creation of special ones, basic fly-rod tapers, and then the rather long series of steps from the first splitting of a pole of tonkin cane to the final touches of varnish.

Author George Barnes comes across as a very practical-minded craftsman. He admits that some of the steps he takes in his rod-building technique could be done differently. This is a most encouraging attitude, because the reader should then feel free to improvise along the way, and not be bound by the dogmatism of a narrowly defined craft. He quotes (not by name) a professional rod builder in England: "Working with a natural material means also that the 'rules' can never be the same. One has to adapt and change methods and find alternative ways to achieve similar results. Therein lies the fascination in rod building from bamboo."

DICK FINLAY