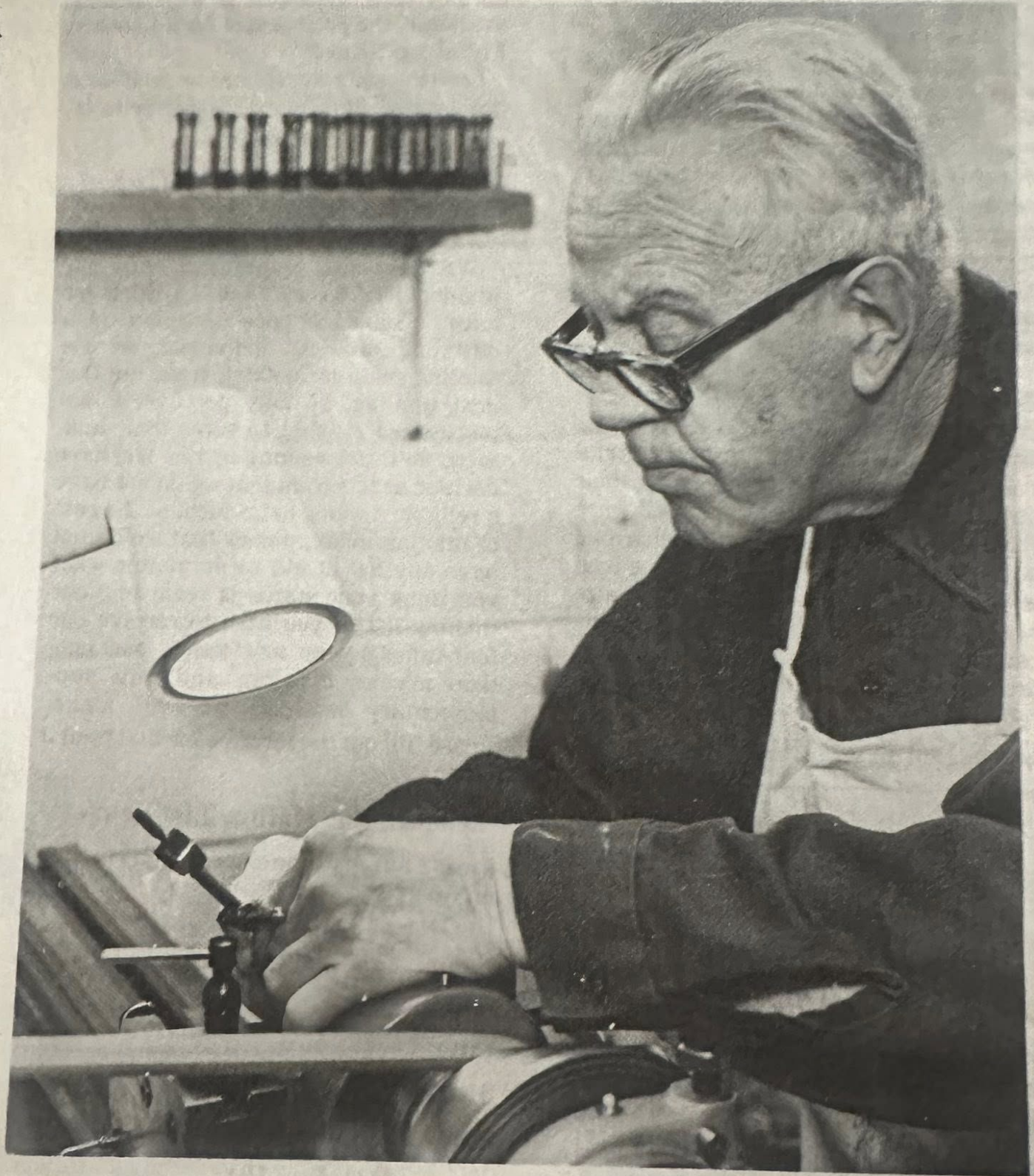


Master Craftsman Supreme



TOM BAILEY— *Master Craftsman Supreme*, 78 years old, never misses a day at his work at Leonard Rod Co. — See page 2.



TOM BAILEY -

Master Craftsman

We are fortunate at Leonard to have working for us Tom Bailey, who, at 78 years of age, never misses a day at his bench at the Leonard shop. Tom, with over 20 years at Leonard, plus over 20 years working with Jim Payne, is a walking, talking history book about split cane fly rods and the master craftsmen who have built them in the last 50 years. Tom's memory is amazing, with seemingly over 100 percent recall. We would like to share a little history with you. The following are excerpts of an interview with Tom Bailey, conducted by Ron Kusse.

Tom was born in 1900 at Twin Oaks in the Town of Woodbury, New York.

Ron: Tom, what did you do before you worked in a rod shop?

Tom: Well, I carried water when I was 15 years old when they built the Seven Lakes Drive from Bear Mountain to Wildcat. I drove a team of mules that carted cordwood out of the woods.

Ron: When did you first get involved in rod building?

Tom: In nineteen hundred and twenty-three, in April.

Ron: What shop was that?

Tom: The old Leonard shop that burned down.

Ron: How long did you work there?

Tom: I worked there 'til nineteen forty-two, and then they layed me off on account of the war.

Ron: And then what did you do, Tom?

Tom: I worked at a naval ammunition depot.

Ron: When did you go back to making rods?

Tom: 1945, I went back with Leonard. I stayed with them 'til nineteen forty-eight, and then I went up with Payne in Highland Mills.

Ron: How long were you up there with Jim Payne?

Tom: 'Til 1968.

Ron: Tom, you've been in rod-building a long time. You must have known many of the famous rod-builders.

Tom: When I worked at Leonard, George Reynolds was there. And I worked with Jim Payne for over twenty years. Wes Jordan used to

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stop in and see us a couple of times a year. I think he was a great rod-builder. Hell, I knew George Halstead. He was born right down here on Smith Clove Road.

Ron: It seems as though you knew all of the great rod-builders. Did you ever meet Pinky Gillum?

Tom: Sure, him and Jim Payne were good friends. He used to stop in and we used to talk for hours.

Ron: How many people worked at the Payne shop when you were there?

Tom: It was just Jim and me and my sister Bessie, who done the winding.

Ron: What did you do at Payne?

Tom: I done everything. I made the mountings, made the ferrules, helped Jim with the strips out there, and mounted the rods. I done everything but the beveling and varnishing. If he didn't die that summer he was gonna teach me to operate that beveling machine up there.

Ron: Has there been many changes in Leonard since you were first there in 1923?

Tom: Sure there's been changes. Way

back then the beveler was a big secret. George Reynolds used to go in there and lock the door, and if you wanted to talk to him you had to knock on the door and then talk through a peekaboo hole he'd raise up. And we used to send our rods down to the Mills store every week on the train that used to run through here.

Ron: How about more recently, Tom? Has there been any changes in Leonard in the last few years?

Tom: Well, the rods were sometimes better than at other times, depending upon the people working at the shop. But I think we're on the right track now.

Ron: What do you mean by that last statement, Tom?

Tom: Years ago, I seen the nice rods that came out of Leonard. Then sometimes they tried to make them too fast. But now they have the right man at the right time in Tom Maxwell and those nice rods are coming out again.