



4 th Corner Fly Fishers

President's Message

Greetings,

I suspect I know what you are all wondering....when are we going to raise club dues? We have not raised dues since well before COVID and our club seems to now be back on solid ground and thriving.

For background, I can share with you that dues currently cover slightly less than half of our yearly expenses. The club's share from our bi-yearly auction (*not dedicated to our conservation efforts*) covers the majority of the rest and we spread this over several years for safety and to have a reserve, which served us well during COVID. The unpredictability of auction revenue warrants that we should keep dues relevant to our expenses. We've tried to keep many of our activities close to budget neutral, but the cost of maintaining a website, liability insurance, storage, software upgrades, along with supporting solid programs, education opportunities, and outings continues to rise.



The Board did vote to raise dues next year (2027), but we will wait until the fall to decide the amount of the raise. If you have input on raising dues or the amount, please share your input with me or any Board member. Thank you.

Also:

- *We are still searching for a 2027 Auction Chair and would like to have this person in place by this March. I am going to start reaching out soon.*
- *When purchasing meals at the Holiday Inn during our regular meetings, please only use one plate, even when going for seconds. We are charged by the number of plates used.*
- *If you have any suggestions for updating our club Policies and Procedures or would like to be part of the process, please let me know.*
- *If you are at all interested in leading fly fishing class for youth, please let me or Mark Munn know. We know there is interest and we have a model, but just need a lead.*

-Mike Riber

4CFF Calendar of Events

February 3 - Board Meeting 6:30 PM

Trinity Lutheran Church 119 Texas St. All club members welcome.

February 10 - Fly Tying Class (pre-registration on Zeffy required.) - 5:30 PM

Mike Riber and Ralph Lloyd will each present two flies. Contact Mark Munn if you need a vice or supplies.

Holiday Inn Suites 4260 Mitchell Way

February 21 - Social Fly Tying at Bob Jorgenson's (pre-registration on Zeffy required) 11:00-3:00

237 Chuckanut Point Road, Bellingham

February 24 - Lone Lake Outing, South Whidbey Island- Coffee and Scones at 8:00 AM . Fly Box Drawing at Breakfast, Hosts Jeff Taylor and Bob Jorgenson

February 25 (Wednesday) - General Meeting 5:30. Whatcom Land Trust

Holiday Inn Suites 4260 Mitchell Way

March 3 - Board Meeting 6:30 PM

Trinity Lutheran Church 119 Texas St. All club members welcome.

flyfishingshow.com/bellevue-wa/



JUST 2 WEEKS AWAY!



2026 Outings Schedule

On Saturday, January 17 we had our 2026 outings committee meeting and it was well attended. We had good discussions with everyone contributing great information. Included is the list we came up with so you can put it down on your calendar. If you have any questions you can contact me or the host for the outing. - Angus

Location	Date	Host
Lone Lake	Feb 24	Bob Jorgenson, Jeff Taylor
Pass Lake	March 17	Steve Wimer
Chopaka Lake/Big Twin	April 25-30	Mike Riber, Bob Jorgenson
Roche Lake/Tunkwa	May 20-24	Bob Jorgenson
Island Lake (Big Okay)	June 5-8	Angus MacArthur
Methow Classic	June 25-28	Angus MacArthur
Upper Skagit	July 21-22	Bob Jorgenson
Bearpaw Lake Hike In	July 28	Jeff Taylor
Idaho Creek Fishing	September 21-25	Chris Thomas
Fall Chopaka Lake	October 2-4	Mike Riber
Fall BC Lake (TBD)	October 24-29	Steve Wimer
Sea Run Cutthroat (TBD)	TBD	Mark Munn, Frank Koterba
Fall Salmon / Bull Trout	TBD	John Sanders
Small Streams	TBD	Hugh Lewis, Steve Kopp



Susan enjoys some peace on Big Twin



Lin working Clearwater Creek

4CFF 2026 Speakers *last updated 2/2/2026 by John Sanders*

Date	Status	Speaker	Topic	Category
1/22	Confirmed	Bruce Richards	Fly Lines and Casting	Equipment
2/25 (Wed)	Confirmed	Rachel Vasak	Whatcom Land Trust	Local Conservation
3/26	Confirmed	Phil Rowley	Attractors for Stillwater	Fishing & Fly Tying
4/22	Confirmed	Leaf Seaburg	Methow River & Tributaries, Area Lakes	Fishing
5/28	Confirmed	Rick Hafele	Deschutes River Alliance, Impact to Fishery	Regional Conservation
6/25	Confirmed	Steve Hiller & Bruce Aigner	Fishing Patagonia	Fishing & Travel
6/25-28	Confirmed	Angus MacArthur	Methow Classic	Fishing and Socializing
8/27	Pending	Pending Location Availability	Annual Picnic	Socializing
9/24	Confirmed	Bruce Richards	History and Development of Modern Fly Lines	Equipment
10/22	Confirmed	Internal Sharing Meeting	Open to all topics	Fishing & Fly Tying and Equipment
11/19	Pending	TBD	Fly Tying & Fly Fishing	Fly Tying & Fly Fishing
12/12	Confirmed	All Members	Holiday Meeting/Celebration	Socializing



Lahontan Time



Red Lake Monster



Camp Talk

December 20 Holiday Celebration *by Bob*

The Holiday Celebration was held at the Holiday Inn Venue and was certainly well attended with 35 in attendance. John Sanders did a full year in review slide show that was met with great enthusiasm and more than a few comments from members. It was really surprising to see the many activities that our club offered last year. The menu was varied and guests were able to chose one of two offerings.

After the meal, John and "Elf" Steve drew 4 gifts for members who had participated in the monthly meeting drawings and saved their tickets. Every attendee also received a ticket upon arrival at the dinner, which was then used for a second drawing featuring a Dryft wading jacket, a Simms Insulated Hoodie, a Simms Wading Pack, and several other highly useful items. In total, 17 gifts curated by John Sanders were given away, with each prize going to a different individual.



Guests were given the opportunity to purchase raffle tickets for a chance to win a \$550 gift certificate to Confluence Fly Shop. Last year, the winner was Jeff Taylor, who happened to be sitting to my left. This year, Bob Carney was seated on my left—and he took home the prize. Notably, Bob texted me at 10:00 p.m., shortly after getting home, to say he had already ordered a new Sage Rod online. I'm sure the fish will be lining up for the opportunity to be hooked by that rod.



Many thanks to John Sanders for organizing such a thoughtful celebration and for working closely with the Holiday Inn staff to ensure that all dietary needs and meal selections were accommodated.

January 22 Meeting Report *by John Sanders*

This monthly dinner meeting was held at the Holiday Inn and was attended by 21 people in person, with another 5 attending by Zoom. John Sanders and Angus MacArthur shared the 2026 outings planned by members during the outings planning meeting held on January 17. It will be a full year of outings providing plenty of opportunities for all members to participate.

The speaker was Bruce Richards, who was Scientific Angler's fly line designer for decades. Since retiring from SA, Bruce has been very involved in casting instruction with FFI. Bruce presented a very informative and insightful presentation on how fly casting works. He touched on some of the physics involved, but mostly on the practical aspects of how all of us can improve our casting under various circumstances. He took quite a bit of time to answer many questions from both in person and online attendees. This meeting was recorded (and will be posted in the members area of our website). John noted that it will undoubtedly be watched many times by members as we process this very helpful information! Bruce will be returning for our September meeting to talk about the history and development of modern fly lines, for which he is uniquely qualified to share.

Bruce Richards was recently interviewed by Dave Stewart, host of *Wet Fly Swing Podcast*. Here is a link to that interview [Bruce Richards Casting Tips](#). Also included on the site are videos to demonstrate the concepts he discussed.

(link used with permission from Dave Stewart, Wet Fly Swing)



Social Tying at Lin's Sat. Jan 24 *by Bob*

Lin Nelson generously opened his home for a Social Tying Event. More than ever, fly tying has been the theme this winter, with three sessions at the Holiday Inn reaching full capacity. It was time for an event that allowed experienced members to tie their favorite patterns, while giving beginners a chance to meet fellow club tyers and learn from their experience. The day was filled with laughter, stories of fish caught and fish lost, and a generous sharing of help, advice, and materials.

Chef Lin surprised everyone with a hearty stew and fresh sourdough bread—an unexpected and much-appreciated lunch. Anyone who has camped with Lin can attest to his culinary skills. Members contributed drinks and snacks, and together it made for a truly great afternoon.



THE TESTAMENT OF A FISHERMAN

Robert Traver 1964, (Judge John Voelker 1909-93)

I fish because I love to;

Because I love the environs where trout are found, which are invariably beautiful, and hate the environs where crowds of people are found, which are invariably ugly;

Because of all the television commercials, cocktail parties, and assorted social posturing I thus escape;

Because, in a world where most men seem to spend their lives doing things they hate, my fishing is at once an endless source of delight and an act of small rebellion;

Because trout do not lie or cheat and cannot be bought or bribed or impressed by power, but respond only to quietude and humility and endless patience;

Because I suspect that men are going along this way for the last time, and I for one don't want to waste the trip; because mercifully there are no telephones on trout waters;

Because only in the woods can I find solitude without loneliness;

Because bourbon out of an old tin cup always tastes better out there;

Because maybe one day I will catch a mermaid;

And, finally, not because I regard fishing as being so terribly important but because I suspect that so many of the other concerns of men are equally unimportant - and not nearly so much fun.

January 13 Fly Tying Course *By Mark Munn*

We had another great fly tying session at the Holiday Inn this January. Steve Wimer was up first tying Bobs Chironomid (black on blue steel), which is one of his favorite flies. We all know that Steve can catch fish, too many in my mind, but this fly is one that he commonly uses in Canadian lakes and is a proven winner. The Bobs fly was his most productive chironomid in 2025 and is most effective when fished 1-2 ft off of the bottom. The second fly Steve demonstrated was the Jigged Micro Leach. Steve likes to fish this fly under a strike indicator and it can be fished from 3-20+ feet deep. Second up was Rick Lingbloom demonstrating the Wyoming Renegade, which is a bushy fly that resembles a humpy and therefore floats well. Regardless of whether you use it on lakes or streams, Rick recommends you only let it sit for a short period, seconds to a minute, then cast again.

Angus and I thank both Steve and Rick for demonstrating these flies. These sessions are well attended and have become popular. While it is always fun to learn a new fly, it is a great way for us to get together to tell stories. The recipes for these flies follow below.



Angus and Mark demonstrating different fishing techniques.....the "Euro-nymph sit" and the "wading fly swing"....



Jigged Micro Leach

By Steve Wimer

Recipe

Hook: Hanak 400 jig hook, size 10-14
Thread: UTC 70d color to match body
Tail: Marabou or rabbit strip
Body: Ice Dub or Semperfli Straggle String
Rib: UTC small wire, color of choice
Bead: 3mm inverting tungsten bead



Tying instructions

1. Place bead on hook. When using inverting beads, the concave side goes towards front of hook.
2. Attach thread.
3. Secure tail material. Can add just a bit of flash by adding crystal flash if desired.
4. Tie in wire rib followed by tying in body material.
5. Wind body material forward in touching turns and tie off just behind the bead.
6. Counterwind rib forward, generally 5-6 turns and secure behind the bead, twist off wire.
7. Whip finish and apply favorite head cement. May add a hotspot of UV thread behind the bead if desired.

Fishing Method

One of the best qualities of this fly is the variety in which it can be tied and fished. My favorite colors are black, brown, olive, and maroon. While this fly is a great small leech imitation it is also a very good damsel nymph imitation when tied in olive or tan. A neon bead can be used if you wish to add some bling. One of the most effective methods of fishing this fly in stillwaters is under a strike indicator. It can be fished anywhere from 3-20+ft deep. When attaching this fly to your tippet use an improved clinch knot rather than a loop knot. Attaching with a clinch knot the fly will ride in a horizontal position just like a balanced leach. This fly is incredibly effective when fished along weed beds and drop offs. Wind drifting this fly under an indicator just adds to the effectiveness of this fly.

Additionally, this fly can be fished on a long leader without an indicator, the "naked" method. Simply cast out, give the fly time to sink to desired depth (count down method highly recommended), and start your retrieve with short strips followed by a pause. Vary the depth and retrieve until you find the depth and retrieve that gets you the fish.

Bobs Chironomid

(Black on Blue Steel)

by Steve Wimer

Recipe

Hook: Aquatalon Chironomid hook size 14-18
or diachii 1760 size14-18

Thread: UTC 70d black

Bead: 2.3mm black nickel tungsten

Gills: White Uni stretch

Wing Buds: Orange glo-brite #5

Rib: UTC small black wire

Body: Blue steel flashabou #
[6916 Tying instructions](#)



Tying instructions

1. Place bead on hook. I prefer to place bead with large opening facing the eye of the hook because it helps create a smooth Chironomid taper. Tie in a small piece of Uni-Stretch (for gills) facing forward. Tie in a small piece of Glo-Brite (for wing buds) on each side of hook eye, again facing eye of the hook. Use the fewest wraps of thread possible to secure as the bead must slip over the tied in materials. Whip finish right behind the eye.
2. With the white gills and Glo-Brite wing buds tied in facing forward, slip the bead over the tied in materials and restart thread behind the bead. Pull Glo-Brite back over the bead and secure on each side of bead and snip off excess.
3. Starting just behind the area where Glo-Brite is secured, tie in a piece of black wire and secure with thread back to just above the barb on the hook.
4. Return thread to wire tie in point and secure Flashabou in the middle of the Flashabou. Fold Flashabou back and secure with thread to the back of the fly to the point the wire is secured. Return thread to behind hook eye and add a tiny amount of super glue to thread at this point if you wish to create an indestructible Chironomid.
5. Wind the Flashabou forward in touching turns and tie off right behind the bead and snip excess.
6. Counter rib the Flashabou with 6-7 turns of evenly spaced black wire. Secure behind bead and twist off.
7. Whip finish fly right behind the bead and add a layer of super glue or Sally Hansen.

Bobs Chironomid (Cont)

Fishing tips

This was my most productive Chironomid for 2025. It is most effective when fished within 1-2 ft of the bottom. I most commonly fish it under an indicator but it can be very effective when fished "naked" as well. Like all Chironomids fish it very slowly. This pattern will drop some bobbers!

Wyoming Renegade

*The origin and creator of this fly are unknown to me.

By Rick Lingbloom



Photo courtesy of Stone Creek Outfitters (where this fly can be purchased online)

The **Wyoming Renegade** is a bushy fly that floats well. It is skinnier than the Humpy and can be used as an adult midge on still water, much like the Lady McConnell. Because of its heavy hackle it will also ride well in streams.

Wyoming Renegade (Cont)

Recipe

Hook: Standard dry fly hook, size 10, 12, 14, or 16 (can also be tied with a longer hook)
Thread: Black & Red (for the hotspot)
Tail: Elk or deer hair (color can vary)
Hackle: Grizzly (sized to the hook gap or a little longer)
Abdomen: Peacock herl
Shellback: Elk or deer hair (You will use the same bundle as you did for the tail, so using fairly long hair is helpful.)
Tools: Bobbins, scissors, half-hitch or whip finishing tool, hair stacker, Solarez (or other head cement)

Tying Instructions

1. Create hotspot at curve of hook with red thread. You may want to coat it with Solarez or head cement.
2. Prepare a small bundle of hair by clipping it, stacking it, and removing any short fibers and underfur.
3. Using black thread, tie in the tail starting about a quarter of the way back from the eye. You want to leave space to add 6-8 turns of hackle without crowding the eye. Wrap back to the hotspot while lifting the tips up to keep them on top of the hook.
4. Pull the butt ends back over the tail and starting at the hotspot tie them down by wrapping forward to where you bent them, and then back down to the hotspot.
5. Tie in two strands of peacock herl. Wrap them forward loosely to the front end of the body , and then back over themselves to the hotspot. Tie them off by the hotspot.
6. Pull the butt ends of the hair forward over the herl. Wrap them down with the black thread using 3 or 4 turns to create a rib.
7. Trim off any leftover butts and using your thread create a smooth base for the hackle.
8. Tie in the hackle, then wrap your thread forward almost to the eye.
9. Wrap the hackle forward to cover the butts using 6-8 close touching turns.
10. Tie off and trim away the excess hackle.
11. Whip finish. Add whatever head cement you choose.

How to Fish this Fly

Cast fly onto surface of water. Wait a second or a minute, but not longer than an hour. Reel fish in when it eats your fly. Feel free to use your own variations of this technique.

The February 10 Tying session at the Holiday Inn will feature Mike Riber and Ralph Lloyd. Each will demonstrate two flies. The recipes for those flies are shown on the following pages.

Flesh Fly (Tan Leech) By Mike Riber

Origin

I copied this fly from Errol McWhirk, long time 4CFF member. Errol tied this fly after seeing a light colored leech at Lake Chopaka.

Recipe

Hook: 2X or 3X Long Nymph Hook (Tiemco 5262 or 5263, Daiichi 1720), Size 6-10

Thread: Tan Uni-Thread 6/0 or Ultra Thread 140

Body: Light Brown Rabbit Strips (Hareline) over tan yarn to match rabbit.

Hackle: Tan or Golden Saddle



Tying Instructions

1. Place hook in vice. Secure thread and wind thread back to bend of hook.
2. Attach yarn along the entire length of the hook.
3. Separate the fur on the rabbit strip about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch from end of the strip and attach near the bend of the hook (about 5 wraps).
4. Bring thread forward toward the eye of the hook. Leave room for hackle at the eye.
5. Spin yarn and wrap forward in such a manner to appear ribbed. Secure and tie off near the eye. Trim off excess yarn.
6. Pull the rabbit strip forward with some tension. Use bodkin to separate fur where you want to tie it off. Tie off and trim off excess rabbit strip.
7. Tie in hackle. Make 3 or 4 wraps. Tie off and trim away excess hackle. Build up an appropriate head, whip finish and apply head cement or UV resin.

Note: I also tie this same fly in black (*and other colors*), but on the black version I use red or burnt orange hackle.

Comparadun Dry Fly By Mike Riber

Origin This fly was created by Al Caucci for a realistic mayfly silhouette, great floatation, and low riding profile mimicking BWO, PMD, and Green Drakes. CDC can be substituted for deer hair wing and micro fibers can be used for tail. I copied this fly from Ed Ruckey, long time 4CFF member, because I found it easier to tie than a traditional winged/hackle dry fly.

Recipe

Hook: Down eyed, 1X, dry fly hook (Tiemco 100 or Daiichi 1100). Size 12 or 14.

Thread: Black or Iron Grey (Uni-Thread 8/0 or Ultra Thread 70).

Tail & Wing: Deer hair (I prefer lighter color for better visibility on the water).

Body: Dubbing of your choice. I prefer green and gray.



Tying Instructions

1. Place hook in vice. Secure thread and wrap back to the bend of the hook.
2. Cut, clean, and stack 10-15 deer hairs. Tie in hair so that tail is about as long as the length of the hook to the bend. Tie in loosely at first so as to not spin the hair. Trim butt ends away and continue to secure tail, with some wraps forward of the butt ends.
3. Bring thread forward to about 1/3 of the way behind the eye. Once you tie in the wing you can move the wing back or forward to your liking.
4. Cut, clean, and stack about a pencil's thickness of deer hair. (*Traditionally these flies seem to be tied fairly bushy, but I like mine a little more sparse.*)
5. Tie the deer hair about 1/3 of the hook length back from the eye with the tips pointing forward. Tie in loosely at first trying not to spin the deer hair too much. The height of the deer hair should be about 1.5 times the length of the hook gap. Make a thread dam in front of the deer hair so the wing stands almost perpendicular to the hook. Adjust the wing position as need, make securing thread wraps and trim off butt ends at an angle.
6. Spin your preferred dubbing color onto the thread and make a tapered body behind and in front of the wing.
7. Build a small head with your thread, whip finish, cut your thread, and secure with head cement or UV resin. Spread or fan out the wing so that it evenly covers the top half the hook.

Damsel Nymph (Female) by Ralph Lloyd

Recipe

Hook: Dry fly hook, #12

Thread: Olive

Body: Olive marabou, about 6 strands



Tying Instructions

1. Wrap thread from eye to the bend, attach marabou above hook point with the tips extending about 3/4 inch, whip finish.
2. Rotate marabou around thread toward the eye of hook, whip finish.
3. Unwrap marabou from thread, move thread to the front and whip finish.
4. Remove thread, trim marabou to 3/16ths inch.

Note: The male damsel nymph is tied the same, but with dark brown marabou. They emerge either in the morning, or the previous day.

Damsel Adult (Male) by Ralph Lloyd

Recipe

Hook: Dry fly hook, #12

Thread: Olive

Body: 1 1/4 inch blue foam body

Hackle: Blue dun hackle

Tying Instructions

1. Attach foam body above eye of the hook - extended 1/8th inch in front of the hook eye, whip finish.
2. Move thread 1/8 inch down the hook, bind the foam down, whip finish.
3. Repeat this procedure to the end of the foam body.
4. Attach thread at the second segment and attach hackle, wrap 5 to 7 times, whip finish.



North Sound Trout Unlimited by Travis Cram

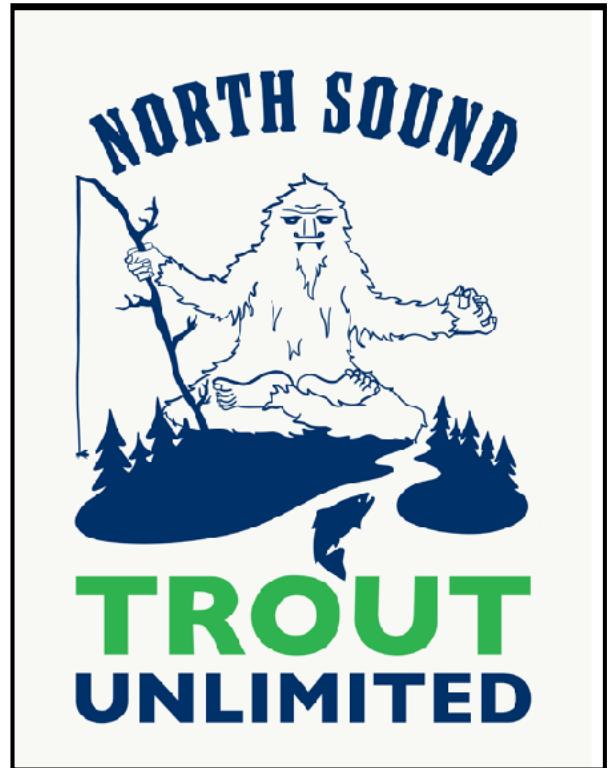
North Sound Trout Unlimited has been active this winter on both conservation and social fronts. Throughout December and January, we continued our initiative to secure permanent funding for the Quicksilver Portfolio for salmon and steelhead conservation. As the reality sinks in that there will be no opportunity to fish for Skagit river steelhead this year, it is important everyone continues to contact their legislators and advocate for our fish! If you've missed out on the details of Quicksilver, we recommend you check out [this detailed breakdown](#) and [the North Sound TU website](#). Several NSTU board members also pitched in to help the flood recovery in the Skagit Valley. Bridget Moran (Advocacy), Jon Luthanen (Treasurer), Tate Wilcox (Secretary), and Charles Ganske (Strategic Planning), along with Skagit guide Raymond Paraiso all threw in to help muck out houses and run dump hauls in the Lyman area. With Skagit and Whatcom counties reeling from a historic flood season, we encourage everyone to look for opportunities to help out their neighbors who were impacted.

Our social scene has been busy during the dark season. We hosted our annual "Iron Fly" fly-tying competition at Larrabee Lager Co in Bellingham on December 11th. Whether you are a seasoned pro at the vice or just figuring out the whip finisher, join us sometime for the most fun you can legally have tying flies. It was good to see several of you all [Sunday night in Mount Vernon](#) for the Fly Fishing Film Tour's annual stop. If you were one of the lucky raffle winners, here's hoping you can get out on the water with your new toys!

As we move towards spring, put a few dates on your calendar. Our Women's Initiative leaders are rolling out their second annual [Galentine's Day fly tying event at Structures Brewing on February 18 in Bellingham](#). We also have the date for our annual festival at Howard Miller, [Speyapalooza, on May 2](#). Registration for casting classes is now open and they tend to fill up quickly.

If you'd like to hear more about TU events or become a member, check out our website at [northsoundtu.org](#) and subscribe to newsletters. We can also be followed on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

Here is a link if you are interested in joining [North Sound Trout Unlimited](#)



Bamboo in Bellingham (Part 3)

Editor's Note: This third and final installment on bamboo rod making in Bellingham profiles three prominent rodmakers including 4CFF's own Hugh Lewis.

by Hugh Eric Eames

Eric Eames

Eric L. Eames [1961 -], is a former member of the 4th Corner Fly Fishers who works for the Whatcom County Department of Administrative Services, maintaining all the HVAC equipment in County buildings. He had previously worked as a millwright at the Intalco aluminum smelting plant at Cherry Point, where he acquired a large store of mechanical knowledge and useful math. That knowledge would play a large role in Eric's approach to making bamboo fly rods.

Eric had fished with an old Montague bamboo rod when he was a youngster and had liked the feel of the rod. His father owned an Orvis bamboo rod that Eric occasionally was permitted to fish, and he liked that, too. It was slow, but deliberate and predictable. Eric eventually bought a 4-piece 9-foot graphite rod for trout fishing, rated for a 5-weight line. Eric's early background of fishing with bamboo made this graphite rod a disappointing experience. The rod seemed overly stiff, and cast better for him with a 7-weight line. He found himself yearning for another bamboo rod.

At some point in the mid-2000s, Eric visited Sid Strong's bamboo workshop in Sudden Valley. With characteristic enthusiasm, Sid showed Eric some of his rods, and the equipment that he was using to make them. Eric found that experience demystifying; he knew that he had it in his nature to make bamboo rods of his own. Trying to learn as much as he could, Eric bought two books: *Fundamentals of Building a Bamboo Fly-rod*, by George Maurer and Bernard Elser: [Fundamentals of building a bamboo fly-rod by George E. Maurer | Open Library](#), and *Handcrafting Bamboo Fly Rods*, by Wayne Cattanach: [Handcrafting Bamboo Fly Rods by Wayne Cattanach | Open Library](#). He then read Everett Garrison's *A Master's Guide to Building a Bamboo Fly Rod* [see link in the section on Hugh Brown, in the installment of this series], which included a detailed description of how to make adjustable metal planing forms and other useful tools. He also spent some time on the Internet searching for additional materials, and then got to work.

Eric's first direct steps toward rod-making were unique among all the hobby builders in Bellingham. He started by making his own adjustable metal planing forms. To my knowledge, no other Bellingham rod-maker ever attempted such a thing, before or since. To do so, he acquired two heavy bars of cold-rolled steel, clamped them together, drilled and tapped them for push-pull screws, and then carefully sculpted 60-degree grooves into both sides of the forms with a triangular file. A shallow 60-degree groove was cut precisely down the middle of one side of the form for planing tip strips, increasing in depth at the rate of 0.001" per inch. A deeper groove, with the same increasing depth of cut rate, was carved down the middle of the other side of the form for creating butt strips. He also designed and built a router-based rough beveler, and built a 4-string cord-binder from plans he found on the Internet. He made his own reel seat hardware and experimented with different types of glue and varnish.

Bamboo Cont.

After making three rods, Eric attended the Corbett Rodmakers Gathering in 2008. Of course, there were things he learned from others at the Gathering, but he was in the unique position of being able to describe to the other attendees how he made his own planing forms.

Eric has completed 9 rods, and has one still in progress. Of the completed rods, three have gone to 4CFF members: Brian Duim, Ed Ruckey, and Rick Todd. Eric's wife Karla has another, and Eric has five that he uses personally for different types of fishing.

A photo of the metal planing forms that Eric made for his shop appears below – note the expandable groove down its middle, cut most carefully with a 60-degree file:

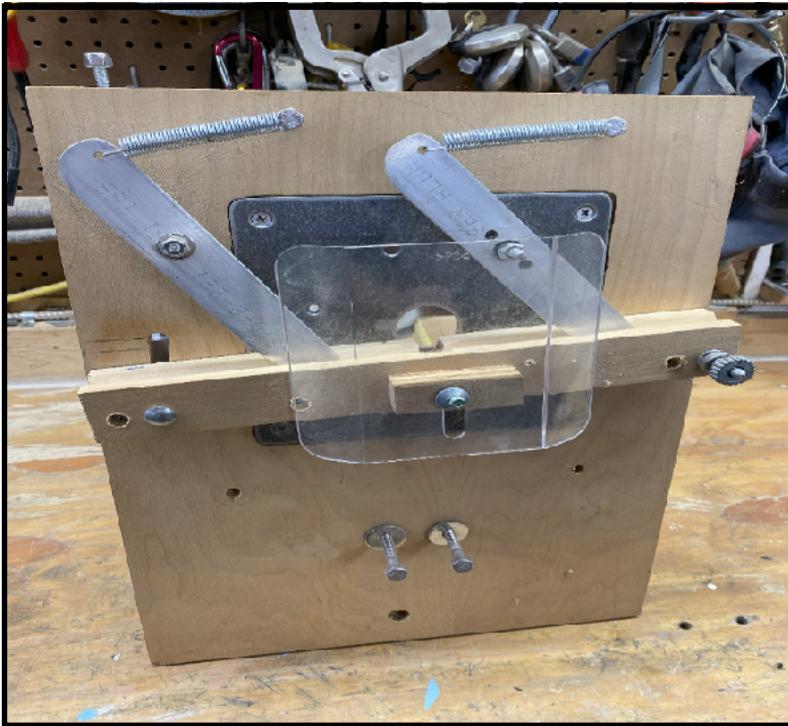


Detail of pull bolt adjusters on Eric's metal planing forms appears below – push bolts are installed on the other side, to permit full adjustability:



Bamboo Cont.

A photo of Eric's home-made rough beveler, that puts an initial 60-degree bevel on bamboo strips destined for final planing in his planing forms, appears below:



Details of two of Eric's rods appear below – the upper rod with red silk windings is patterned after a Paul Young “Martha Marie” 7' 6” for a 5-weight line; the lower rod is patterned after a Payne 101, also 7' 6” for 5-weight. Eric hand-formed the metal rings for both reel seats.

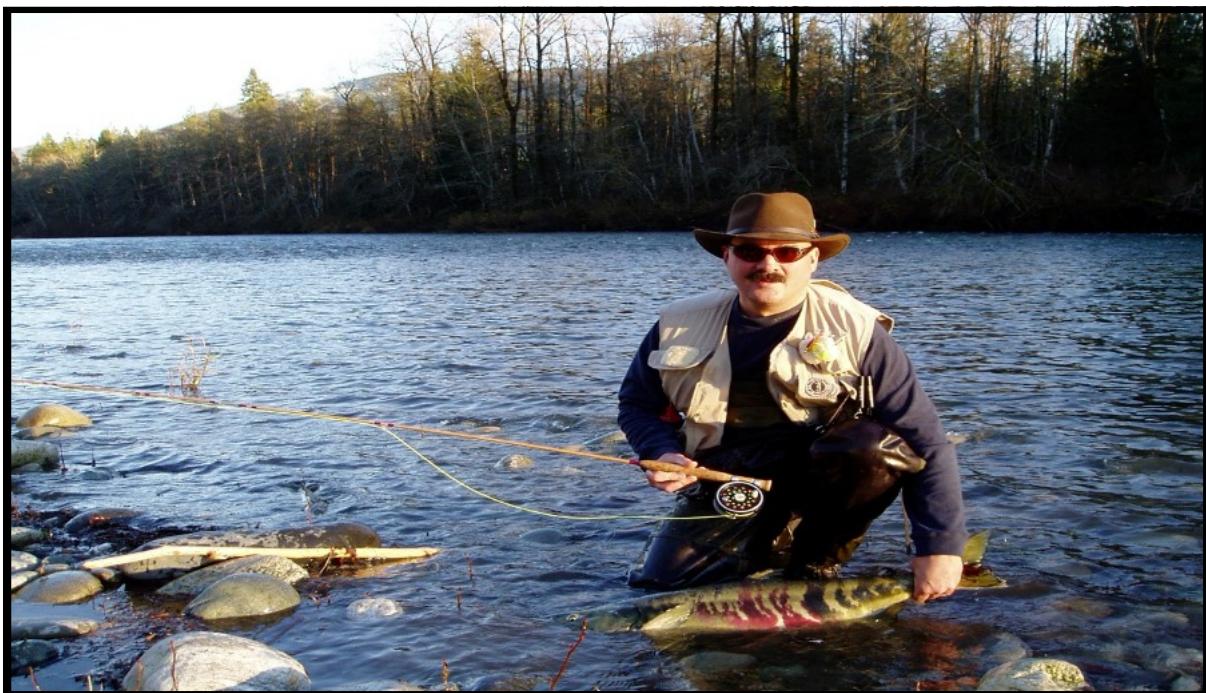


Bamboo Cont.

Two photos of Eric's first rod, patterned after a Payne 97, 7' for a 3-weight line, with home-made reel seat hardware, appear below:



And, putting it all together on the water, a photo of Eric with a fresh Nooksack Chum and his Martha Marie 7' 6" 5-weight bamboo rod that caught it, appears below [and they say bamboo is wimpy...]:



Bamboo Cont.**Hugh Lewis**

Hugh H. Lewis [1948 -] is a retired attorney living in Bellingham. He is a current member of the 4th Corner Fly Fishers; he served a term as its President and also served many terms as a Board member and Secretary. He was also a founder and long-term Board Member of the Wild Fish Conservancy. He is currently a professional writer and editor, and an occasional fisherman.

Hugh joined the 4th Corner Fly Fishers in 1987 and had the good fortune to acquire a somewhat beat-up old bamboo fly rod at the Club's 1988 Conservation Auction. It was a 3-piece 9-foot 8 weight Heddon rod made in 1948, donated to the auction by Fred Miller, who had just attended the initial Corbett Lake Bamboo Rodmakers Gathering with Lyle Hand and Hugh Brown.

Lewis had no previous woodworking experience, but he learned how to repair and refinish the old Heddon rod. Curious, he decided to attend the 1990 Corbett Lake Gathering. That experience was inspirational. He subsequently learned to use, tune and modify some antique Stanley block planes given to him by his father-in-law, and caught his first steelhead in the Kispiox river with that old 8 weight Heddon rod. Further inspired, he purchased a metal lathe and learned to use it, along with the planing forms and other equipment he acquired from the estates of Hugh Brown and Fred Miller.

Work and family obligations, and a newly-acquired passion/obsession with collecting and restoring antique hand planes got in the way. But in year 2000 Hugh built his first rod; it was patterned after the last rod made by his mentor Hugh Brown, a 7' 6" 2-piece 4 weight with an Everett Garrison model 206 taper. Lyle Hand, who was still making rods at that time, provided advice along the way, along with the use of his homemade heat-tempering oven.

Lewis continued to attend the biennial Corbett Rodmakers Gatherings over the years, and with his wife Lynn chaired the Gathering in 2012 and 2014. He wrote articles on the use and modification of hand planes for rod-making, and helped teach the Beginners' Workshop for several recent Gatherings.

Lewis has made seven rods of his own, favoring short, light ones that function well in small stream environments. He currently has three more rod projects in the works. He also has restored several dozen rods from various manufacturers, and currently has four tip-replacement projects under way for some vintage rods worthy of a new lease on life.

His shop now contains his metal lathe, a set of Bellinger steel planing forms, Joe Kelly's Morgan Hand Mill, a Bellinger cord-binder for gluing and heat treating, a homemade router-based rough-planing beveler, a homemade heat-tempering oven, a homemade silk thread wrapper, along with cane splitting tools, node-straightening presses, a dozen high-quality hand planes, a Work Sharp plane-blade sharpening system, several vices, drill-presses, saws, precision measuring calipers and gauges, and a host of other tools and equipment that help move the process along. Lewis has more than enough bamboo to last the rest of his life, and hopes to continue making rods until his ultimate descent into terminal decrepitude.

Bamboo Cont.

Photos of Hugh's 7' 2 weight rod, designed and built for small stream fishing, appear below; its tips are a mere 0.054" in diameter, composed of six strips, each only 0.026" thick at their tips:



Rear portions of a recently restored 1937 Goodwin Granger "Victory" model. It's an 8' 6" model for a 4-weight line; it casts very smoothly and doesn't break fine tippets when fighting a fish.



Front sections of the restored Goodwin Granger rod appear below. The fine copper-and-black "jasper" silk thread wraps that hold guides in place are original to the rod. The original varnish finish had melted down and had to be removed and replaced in the restoration process. Some over-wraps of fine, clear silk thread were applied to strengthen two weak spots in the cane.

Bamboo Cont.

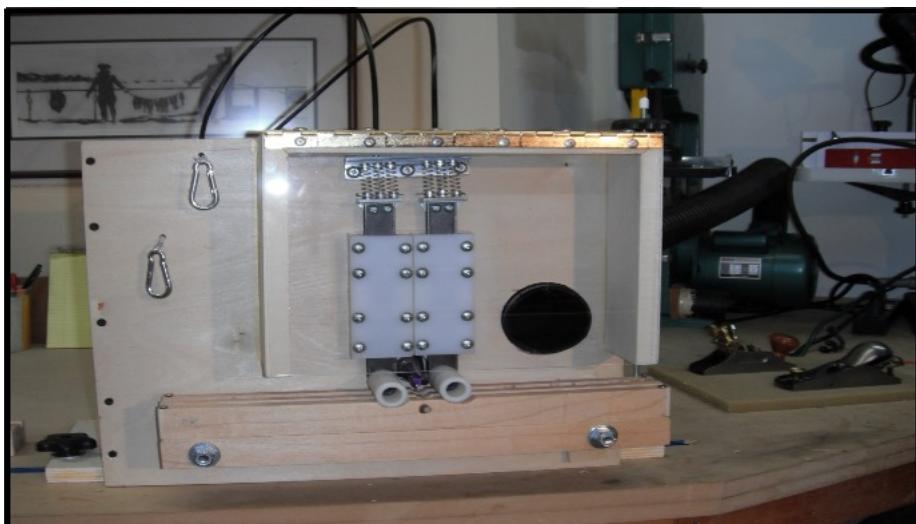
In sunlight, the jasper thread-wraps glow in subtle contrast to the ammonia-treated cane that Granger used in most of its rods.



A photo of a heavily modified 1896 Stanley Model 18 block plane appears below; it's one of several planes that get put to use each time a rod materializes in his shop. Modifications include replacing the original thin carbon steel blade with a heavy modern cryo-treated stainless blade, loading the lever cap with a slurry of lead shot and epoxy for extra heft, drilling and tapping the throat for set screws that prevent lateral movement of the blade, and grinding a 0.002" groove into the sole to prevent the blade from nicking the planing forms when in use:



A photo of Hugh's homemade rough beveler appears below. It uses a variable speed Makita router and is ported for a connection to an industrial dust collection system serving his entire shop. The beveler has two interchangeable beds: one with a rectangular groove and a "speed bump" that produces rough strips of a constant thickness, even at the nodes; the other bed establishes an initial 60-degree bevel down each strip. It's useful for a fella who's starting to get arthritis in his hands:

Bamboo Cont.

Lewis using his homemade silk thread-wrapping jig to wrap guides onto the tip section of a rod:

**Jimmy Watts**

James H. Watts [1977 -] lives in Bellingham, but works as a fire fighter in Seattle Fire Department's Station 6, Ladder Company 3. Before that, he ran triathlons and Iron Man competitions, and later worked as a surf lifeguard. He is an occasional writer and a constant poet; seductive language pours from him effortlessly. Fire and water, traditional enemies, feature constantly in his life to positive effect.

Jimmy has been making bamboo fly rods since 2007. Like many newer rodmakers, his inspiration came from watching the movie *Trout Grass*, a documentary focused on the Chinese bamboo trade and its use in bamboo rod-making, narrated by his friend, author David James Duncan. The movie features Andy Royer, who at that time was importing Tonkin cane into Seattle for use in flooring and fly rods, and master bamboo fly-rod craftsman Glenn Brackett, formerly of R.L. Winston Fly Rods and the founder of Sweetgrass Rods. See: [Trout Grass](#).

Bamboo Cont.

Watching the Trout Grass movie made Jimmy want a bamboo rod of his own, but the cost of quality custom rods at the time was discouraging. He entertained the idea of making a bamboo rod for himself, but didn't know where to start. Fortunately, Andy Royer introduced him to Oregon's then-reigning bamboo fly rod guru, Daryll Whitehead, for a week-long course of instruction. That course provided an introduction to the full manufacturing process involved in making bamboo fly rods.

Jimmy is the only Bellingham rodmaker who maintains a website inviting public exposure to his bamboo rod-making company. See: [Shuksan Rod Co. – handcrafted splitcane fly rods](http://ShuksanRodCo.com). He has made almost 150 rods, more rods than any other Bellingham maker, and he makes custom rods to order.

Jimmy flame-tempers his rods, using a unique approach, all his own, that reflects his constant relationship with fire. While Daryll Whitehead taught him to apply flame from a propane torch to an entire 12-foot culm to uniformly temper it, Jimmy now splits a culm into six smaller strips of cane and then roasts each strip separately outside in an open fire pit on his back porch, stopping the process only when the sweet smell of fully-caramelized lignin tells him that the strip is ready for use. This process scorches the edges of each strip, rendering the cane in those edges unusable. In this fashion, Jimmy tends to consume more bamboo for use in a single rod than other makers do, but the usable portions of those strips are, to his way of thinking, perfect for placing in his rods.

In his own words, regarding fire and rod-making:

"I don't view fire negatively. It doesn't scare me; it doesn't scar me. I respect and understand its potential. I've spent countless hours crawling through it. What I'm doing as a rod maker with fire and bamboo is exactly what a potter is doing with clay and a kiln. And to spend 45 minutes roasting a culm beside a fire, focusing on the flames, is as peaceful and reflective. Once the culm is tempered, the next step is to take the smoking bamboo and dump it into cold water."

Jimmy hand-planes his rods on an adjustable steel planing form using just two Stanley planes, each from a different century and each for a different stage in the process. After gluing the strips together in his cord-binder and cleaning up the resulting rod sections, he carefully wraps guides onto the shaft with silk thread using a home-made tensioner.

He strives for a natural, earthy look in a finished rod, an appearance that he feels most befits its intended use outdoors on open water. He chooses silk thread colors that complement the colors of the cane in the rod and in the wood barrel he lathe-turns for use in the reel seat. Joe Arguello provides him stripping guides with agates of a complementary color. Jimmy finishes his rods by dipping them in McCloskey's Man O' War spar varnish. He predictably obtains the clean, understated appearance he strives to achieve in a finished rod. Understandably, there is a lengthy waiting list for his custom rods.

Bamboo Cont.

Jimmy has become quietly famous. See: [Bamboo Jim - Modern Huntsman](#). That entire article is worth reading, but on his website, he summarizes his current existence in these words:

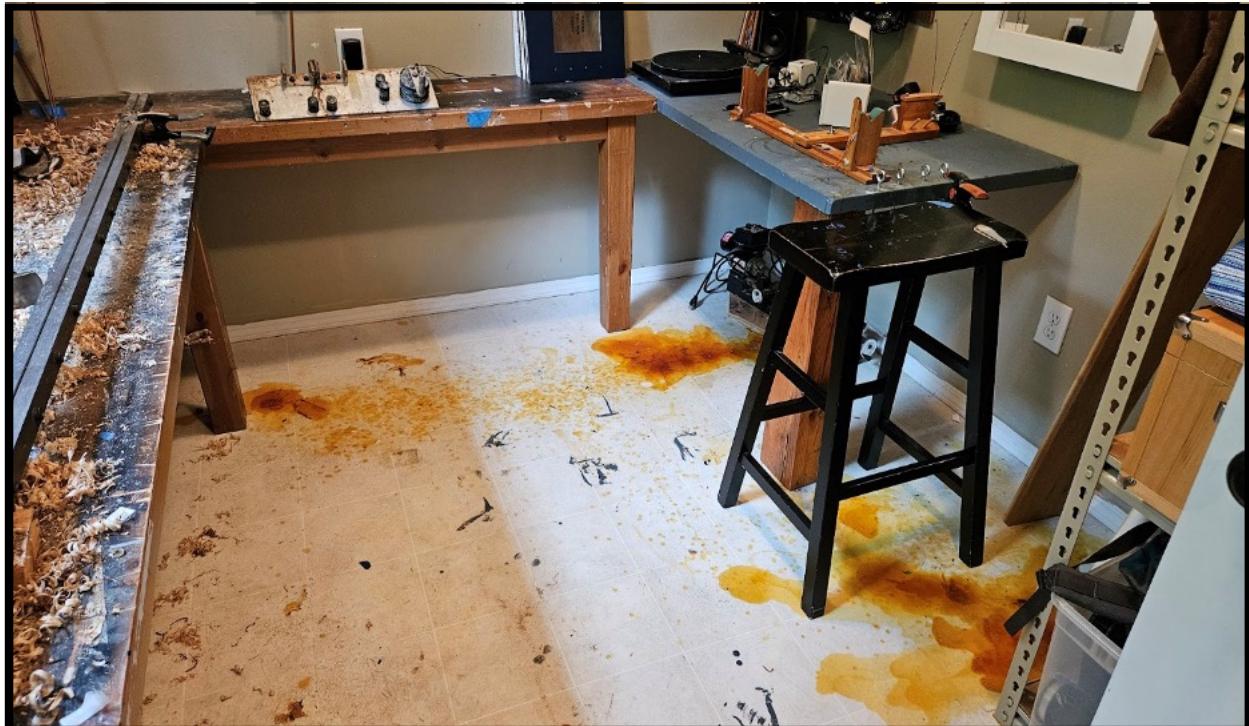
“A blue collar life, I have to shower after work, not before. At the same time, there is an impulse toward art; the attempt to mend ideals, aesthetics and craft into something of value and use; and to make it beautiful.”

For an example of his own writing, see the biographical sketch he created describing his friend Jason McGerr; it appears in The Flyfish Journal, Vol. 12, Issue 1, at page 069: [Jason McGerr - The FlyFish Journal](#).

Jimmy's compact but well-appointed workshop, complete with a stout bench, a good stash of Tonkin cane, wall-posters, old photos and an antique firefighter's hat:



Another shot of Jimmy's workshop, with his Bellinger cord-binder against the far wall, his silk thread-wrapper on the table to the right, and years of spilled rod varnish coloring the floor:

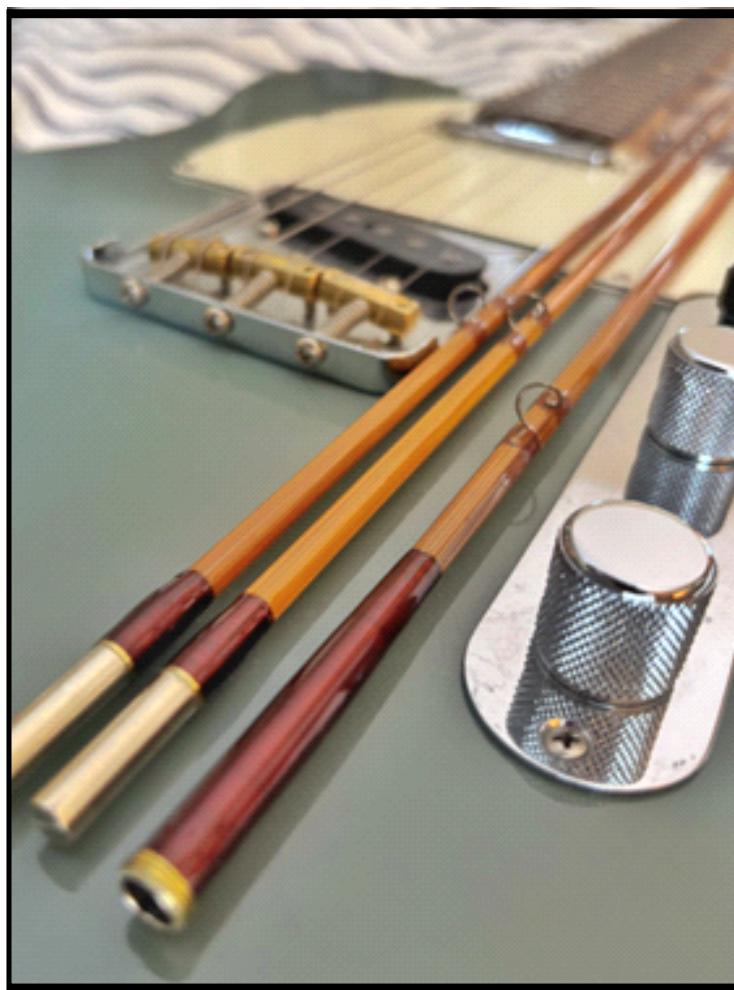


Bamboo cont.

Jimmy's careful approach to hand-wrapping a stripper guide onto a rod with silk thread under tension:



Detail of finished thread wraps on completed rod against electric guitar background:



Bamboo cont.

Detail of reel seat and cork grip:

**Afterwords:**

Bellingham is a unique town in so many respects. I have been fortunate to have lived here for more than forty years, and had the further good fortune to become acquainted with all but the first two of the Bellingham-based bamboo rod makers identified in this article. Knowing them, and finding myself linked with them through this shared activity, has added an incomparable richness to my life.

Through interacting with these fine people, I learned that there is no one way to make a bamboo fly rod. The other rodmakers described in this article are or were unique in their approaches to life, and their approaches to rod-making were as different as their approaches to life. Nevertheless, commonalities outweighed differences, and they all ended up fishing with rods that they had made themselves, individually sharing a uniquely satisfying experience in so doing.

As an attorney years ago, I spent most of my time behind a desk, writing, using computers, or speaking with others on the telephone. While useful, those activities were largely two-dimensional and didn't create opportunities to work with my hands. Making fly rods from bamboo filled that void. I found that I enjoy the process of making rods, and also inventing and building tools for my shop to further that process, and that these activities are as satisfying as creating a rod as a finished product. Using a home-made rod to catch fish is just icing on the cake.

-Hugh January 2026

Further Insight: Tom Rosenbauer interviews Shawn Brillon, the Orvis Bamboo rod craftsman. The interview begins after the show introduction and Shawn talks about the work that goes into making an Orvis Bamboo rod. (link use with permission from Orvis)



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We plan to publish a March Newsletter. Look for more Meeting, Fly Tying, and Outing reports. Next month we will also include Installment 2 of "Knots" from John Sanders and a report on Equipment Repairs and Maintenance preparing for the coming season. If you have an interest in providing content we would certainly appreciate that. Submit your article, photos, and poetry prior to March 1 following the guidelines below.

Submission Guidelines: We encourage you to submit your stories but we spend a disproportionate amount of time working around your formatting. Submit reports on one word document with the title and words only. Submit photos on a separate email, not imbedded in your text. I will likely send formatted work back to you to un-format. John and I hope that you enjoy the newsletter.