

2nd European Rodmakers' Gathering

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The 2nd European Rodmakers' Gathering took place in Sarnen, Switzerland from Friday, 25 September 2009, to Sunday, 27 September 2009. It was a top-notch celebration of split-cane rod making. The setting was wonderful (it is hard to beat a picturesque town on a lake in the Swiss Alps) and the gathering absolutely outstanding. Participants came from Sweden, Denmark, Germany, France, Great Britain, Italy, the United States, South Africa, Japan, and, of course, Switzerland. The languages heard the most were German, Italian,



The happy participants (photo by Matthias Bissig)

and English. The facilities, including lodging for many of the participants, were on the grounds of the Swiss Rowing Club.

The Swiss cane-rod group (gesplieste.ch) did not just organize the gathering of about 100 participants. They also provided ALL of the hands-on support and pre-gathering planning. For example, they served breakfasts, lunches, and dinners, set up exhibition rooms for rods and reels, arranged for large mowed-grass areas for casting, set up and decorated the dining room, and set up a large tent for rod building and demonstrations. In addition, they planned a most unusual and highly successful program. The heart of that program was the building of a rod to be raffled at the end of the gathering. The rod built was a 3-piece, 8-foot, 5-weight Hardy CC de France reproduction and an original of the rod was on display as a guide. Building meant starting from splitting the culm and ending with final wrapping.

Each stage of the building process was carried out by gathering attendees (the order of the names is random; I hope I do not forget anyone!):

Splitting: Ottavio Bisaz (Switzerland), Nick Hughes (South Africa), Christian Diacon (France)

Straightening: Gabriele Gori (Italy), Gerd-Peter Wieditz (Germany), Rolf Baginski (Germany)

Rough beveling: Philipp Sicher (Switzerland), Herbi Kiser (Switzerland)

Planing (planing form): Larry Tusoni (United States), Robert Stroh (Germany), Moreno Borriero (Italy), Alberto Poratelli (Italy)

Planing (Morgan Hand Mill): Philipp Sicher (Switzerland), Nick Hughes (South Africa), Herbi Kiser (Switzerland)

Gluing: Robert Stroh (Germany)

Binding (Garrison binder): Bjarne Fries (Denmark)

Binding (4-thread binder): Philipp Sicher (Switzerland)

Binding (tube binder): Rolf Baginski (Germany)

Glue removal and blank polishing: Christoffer Eliasson (Sweden), Hans-Jörg Klein (Germany), Hans-Peter Dold (Germany)

Ferrule engraving: Jaroslav Vecko (Switzerland)

Ferrule fitting and mounting: Rolf Baginski (Germany), Walter Rumi (Italy)

Grip and reelseat mounting: Kurt Zumbrunn (Switzerland), Waldemar Nowak (Germany)

Rod signature: Manuela Sicher (Switzerland)

Hand finishing (with Gorilla Glue): Tim Anderson (United States)

Wrapping: Jerry Kustich (United States), Alberto Poratelli (Italy), Markus Rohrbach (Switzerland)

Components specially made for the rod were:

Ferrules: Ferdi Wenzinger (Switzerland)

Snake-guides: Gerd-Peter Wieditz (Germany)

Agate stripping-guide: Claudio Testa (Italy)

Birchbark grip: Kurt Zumbrunn (Switzerland)

Reelseat: Waldemar Nowak (Germany)



Gabriele Gori straightening nodes



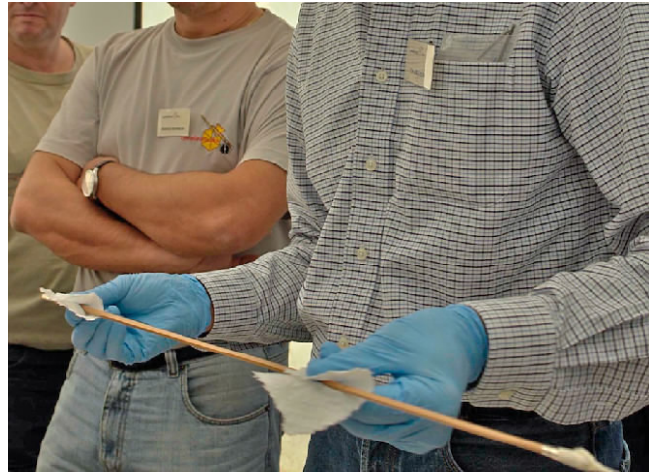
Ottavio Bisaz setting a planing form



Philipp Sicher (l) and Herbi Kisler (r) rough beveling with a Baginski Beveler under the watchful eyes of Hans-Ruedi Hebeisen (in red) and Wilhelm Aigeldinger (in blue)



Robert Stroh planing



Can you believe using Gorilla Glue as a finish?



Wrapping: Markus Rohrbach



Alberto Poratelli



Jerry Kustich

The completed rod was the first prize at the raffle concluding the gathering and was won by Alex Kechagias (Germany). The raffle included numerous other prizes such as fly lines, flies, a book, and a hexagonal rod



Alex Kechagias (l) receiving the rod certificate and rod from Philipp Sicher and celebrating it with a formal photo.



case. In truth, the raffle did not quite conclude the gathering. That honor was held by a final, excellent lunch.

The gathering was not just for building the rod. It also included Terenzio Zandri (Italy) showing his silk lines and demonstrating his unique fly-tying methods, Heinz Suter (Switzerland), an entomologist who showed insect life stages, Christopher Rows (Great Britain) who demonstrated and provided free instruction for cane-rod casting techniques, and Bjarne Fries (Denmark) demonstrating sharpening methods. Claudio Testa showed how to make agate stripping guides and Ferdi Wenzinger demonstrated making nickel



Christopher Rows showing some fine points of casting to (l-r) Larry Tusoni, Andy Royer and Moreno Borriero



Ferdi Wenzinger demonstrating ferrule making to Christian Schmid and Lutz Koch



Bjarne Fries demonstrating sharpening



Some of Terenzio Zandri's flies

silver ferrules with a mini lathe. Theo Matschewski (Germany) explained and demonstrated his 15°-method for determining the right line-weight for a rod and Larry Tusoni compared RodDNA with Hexrod and presented the new version of RodDNA including metric measurements.



Claudio Testa showing details of making agate stripping guides to (l - r) Bo Hermansen, Nick Hughes, and Daniel Hoda



Theo Matschewski applying his 15° method

And then there were the rods. The rods displayed showed a very high level of craftsmanship, great variety and creativity, and astonishingly high qualities of finish. Memorable highlights of the displayed rods are Wilhelm Aigeldinger's almost snake-skin-patterned flaming, Bjarne Fries' bamboo-ferruled "Noodle" rod, Alberto Poratelli's streamlined ferrules, superb finishing by Robert Stroh, Christian Strixner, and Rolf Baginski, Nick Hughes' and my (Philipp Sicher made me put this in!) carbon-fiber spigot ferrules, and Philipp Sicher's set of 13 rods with one taper but varying construction methods.



Waldemar Nowak's reels and reelseats were also on display



Rod inspection!



Casting space for everyone

A number of the displayed rods were available for casting. Casting of those and many other rods continued throughout the entire time of the gathering. There were fast, medium, and slow rods, smooth rods, soft rods, long single and double-handed rods, short rods, and even an extraordinarily fast multi-strip rod with a graphite tip. Tapers varied from classic to new and unique. Almost never is there such an opportunity to try so many different bamboo rods. In addition, seldom does a rod maker have a chance to have such a highly varied “audience” cast and evaluate one or more of his rods.



Regula Sicher trying a rod with careful observation by Christian Strixner



Bjarne Fries (l) and Rolf Baginski (r) in a serious discussion



Jerry Kustich (l) discussing with Bjarne Fries one of Bjarne's rods

This report cannot be complete without expressing gratitude, on behalf of all of the gatherings' participants, to the Swiss team that organized, set up, and sponsored the event. In the "foreground" were Philipp Sicher, Herbi Kiser, Ottavio Bisaz, Beno Gisler, Christian Schmid, and Jaroslav Vecko. In the "background" (probably more important to the smooth functioning of the gathering than the foreground folks) were Regula Sicher, Heidi Kiser, Edith Gisler, Eva Eliasson and Anita Schmid. Special thanks are due Philipp Sicher for the idea of building a rod as the centerpiece of the program and Beno Gisler for his chef duties in preparing the out-



Some Italian Bamboo Rodmakers Association (IBRA) members (l - r), Alberto Poratelli, Andrea Natale, Gabriele Gori, and Moreno Borriero



The beautifully decorated dining room



Katrin Klose and Regula Sicher serving up a great dessert

Chef Beno Gisler (in black) talking to Daniel Hoda with (l - r) Edith Gisler and Heidi Kiser hurrying behind

standing food served.

This is the third such European meeting I have attended (the first was the German Rodmakers' Gathering) and each has been a wonderful and different experience. Another such meeting is planned for next year in Germany and details will be announced later. If you have a chance to attend any future such gatherings, I