

## History

# The “Other” Way to Wrap A Rod!

Many years ago I had the good fortune to meet Jim Cumby, a fishing tackle representative working out of Winston-Salem, NC. Jim repped for old line companies including Fenwick and Shakespeare and later opened the very successful Aquarius Sporting Goods in Winston-Salem. Later, he returned to a sole business as a tackle representative and in his travels and among the people he met he often acquired antique and unusual tackle.

During that time he once showed me a very unique and certainly unusual rod wrapping machine which he had acquired from the estate of one of the R.J. Reynolds heirs. The gentleman that had owned the unit was a fisherman with the time and monetary means to travel to exotic fishing destinations. Later, he dabbled in making his own rods and also had the means to have one-off machines made to help him in these endeavors. This particular wrapping machine was something he had either made, or more likely, had made, for wrapping guides on his custom made fishing rods.

It was different from anything I'd seen before in that the rod remained stationary while the thread spool was carried around the rod. Unlike the machines I was familiar with and which rotated the rod and pulled thread from a stationary spool, on this unit the rod passed through an opening in a small revolving plate holding a thread spool and which was then rotated by means of a geared hand crank. At the time, I had just purchased

a Renzetti Master Rod Lathe and found this little rod wrapping device novel, but certainly not viable for any serious work. Looking back, I wish I'd bought it simply for its role in rod building history. I'll never be sure and to some extent I doubt that it was the first of its type, but it was certainly the first one like it that I'd ever seen and would remain so for a couple more decades.

Enter JW Fly Fishing. Some years back JW decided to provide a unit similar to that used by Len Stoner at R. L. Winston for wrapping bamboo rods. If you've ever tried to turn a segmented rod on a round rod support

roller wheel, well... you know the difficulty in that sort of thing. So, a machine that winds the thread around and onto the rod, while the rod remains stationary, is a fantastic tool for the task at hand. JW mentions that many bamboo builders using his machine don't even tie off their wraps - they just wrap a guide, slide the rod down, spiral the thread up to the next guide and

wrap that one, so on and so forth. After the first coat of varnish is applied, the builder simply goes back and snips the thread at the end of each guide wrap and peels the spiraled portion off the rod.

JW's machine has been in limited production and is somewhat hard to obtain at this point in time, but he plans to produce a new batch sometime next year.

There you have it - an unusual and somewhat rare yet time tested alternative to what most of us think of when we envision “rod wrapping machines.” 

