



Battalion photo by David Keahey

Tom Buckner has a rather unique hobby to occupy his time when he isn't studying. Tom builds custom fishing rods from small trout stream size to giant deep sea rigs. The senior zoology major has been building rods

since he was 14 years old. When asked about the quality of his products, Buckner simply replied, "The best in the west... east, north and south."

Self-taught craftsman builds custom fishing rods as hobby

By LINDA NORMAN

When Tom Buckner's father broke his 11-year-old son's fishing rod, he did not realize he was launching an interest in a hobby that could also be a lucrative business.

Buckner has been building custom fishing rods ever since he repaired his own rod 10 years ago. The senior zoology major said he is mainly a self-taught craftsman, although his father, an amateur rod builder, taught him enough to get him started.

Buckner begins his rod building process with a blank he gets from a wholesale supplier. The blank is the main shaft of the rod, lacking a handle, guides and any design.

Then the artwork starts. Each guide is attached to the blank by hand wrapping thread around the rod, forming intricate patterns from the colored spools.

"It takes years of practice before you get them (designs) down," Buckner said. "It's a talent you have

to acquire — or maybe you're just born with it."

Buckner caters mainly to the serious fisherman, who can really appreciate the quality of his work.

His wares vary from 42-inch, ultra-light rods to heavy 14 and a half foot salt water fishing rods. Prices range from \$30 to \$125, and customers have a choice of either fiber glass or more expensive graphite rods.

"I usually know what a person wants before he orders a rod, even if he doesn't know," Buckner said. He custom fits the rod by adjusting the length of the guides or the position of the handles for lighter action and maximum leverage.

Buckner makes rod building his full time job during the summer, but cuts the production down while he's in school. He might make as many as 50 rods a year, he said, and the majority are bass rods.

Word-of-mouth advertising is mainly what Buckner depends on to

sell his rods. "It's really a small number of people who keep coming back," he said. About 50 percent of his business is from 10 steady customers.

There is a big chance for advancement in the field, Buckner said, even though it is hard to get started. "If you get in the right channels, you can make a lot of money."

There is a possibility he might

make his hobby a full-time career, although he is also considering going to pharmacy or dentistry school.

The income from his craft is used to keep him and his wife Cary "into fishing." They try to go surf fishing about twice a month. "She usually outfishes me," Buckner admitted.

He said he has thought of teaching classes, and may be lining up seminars for next spring.

Alpha Phi Omega to host regional conference

Texas A&M's chapter of Alpha Phi Omega will host the Region VII conference of the national service fraternity Nov. 18-20.

About 300 delegates and national officials are expected for the affair. Sessions, seminars and workshops are planned at the Ramada Inn and Rudder Tower.

Xi Delta Chapter guests will be Roger Sherwood, APO national executive director, and Lorin Jurvis, national vice president. Jurvis works for the U. S. Information Agency in Washington, D.C., as director for Southeast Asia.

Conference Chairman Richard Scruggs said delegates will come from chapters in Texas and Louisiana, at Lubbock, New Orleans, Baton Rouge and Edinburg among others. Sam Houston State at Huntsville has indicated it will send the largest delegation, of 40.

Seminars on development and improvement of the individual are planned for the visiting collegians. Decision-making and assertiveness will be discussed by Bonnie Smith,

with the Counseling and Guidance Center at S. F. Austin University at Nacogdoches.

Goal-setting and motivation discussions will be led by Ronnie Smith of Houston. A 1969 A&M graduate, he is active in personal development in the Houston Junior Chamber of Commerce. He works for Spaw-Glass Inc.

A&M's Xi Delta chapter hosted a sectional conference in 1975. Hank Baker presides this semester. The chapter has 40 actives, a 20-member pledge class and 15 "Little Sisters."

Inspector rates Corps high

The Air Force ROTC detachment at Texas A&M received an unusually high rating on inspection this week.

An Inspector General inspection team from Headquarters, Air University, at Maxwell AFB, Ala., completed its examination Thursday.

Members of Detachment 805, headed by Col. Kenneth W. Durham, were informed by inspecting officials the detachment could be considered among the top two or three percent nationally.

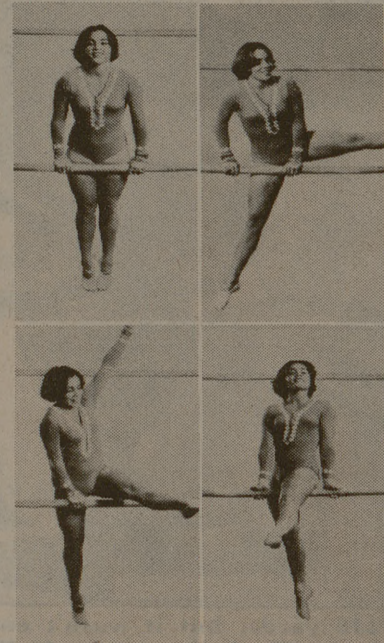
The detachment is responsible to the U.S. Air Force and university

for training and commissioning of Air Force officer candidates. "We keep saying Texas A&M is the best. Now someone from outside has come in and proved it," an officer assigned here said.

Nine management areas were evaluated by the Air University IG team. They rated six outstanding, two excellent and one satisfactory. "You've got the best cadet records

section I've ever seen," one of the inspectors remarked. They also praised the AFOTC detachment's safety and Flight Instruction Program indoctrination procedures, under Capt. Joe McNabb.

Air University inspected 70 detachments in 1976. No outstanding ratings were given. Current results are incomplete, with inspections still in process on other campuses.



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Accounting firm presents \$2000 to A&M fund

Members of the accounting firm of Peat, Marwick, Mitchell & Co. presented \$2,000 Thursday (Nov. 3) to the accounting excellence fund at Texas A&M University.

Albert Coldewey Jr., 1963 Texas

A&M graduate and a member of the firm's San Antonio office, and Matt Landry of the Houston operation presented the Peat, Marwick and Mitchell Foundation Check to Dr. Gary Schugart of Texas A&M's Accounting Department.

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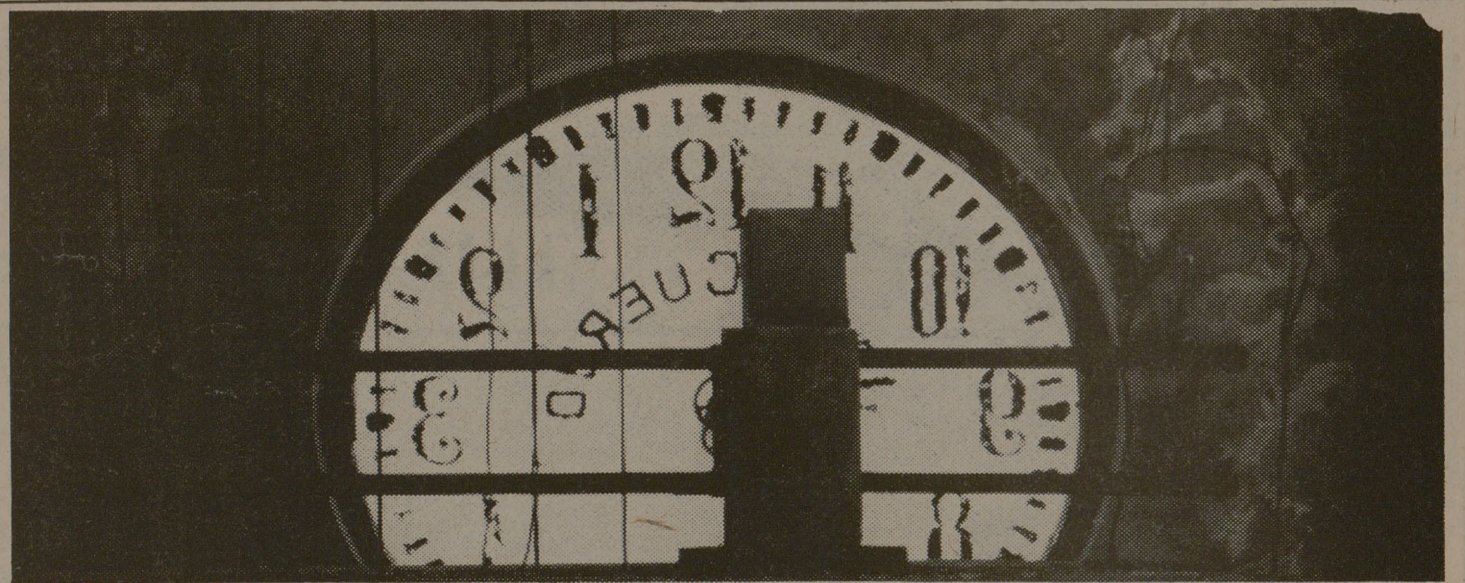
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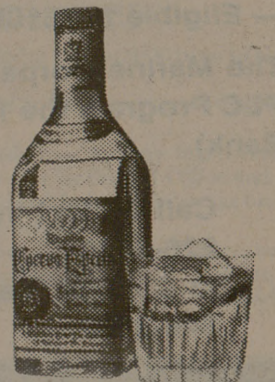
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