



*The "Inlet" logo of Fritz Schreck.*

In the meantime, another rod builder had made a name for himself in Austria. Walter Brunner began his career in 1963, and, soon, his "Brunner – Austria – Fliegenruten" ("Fliegenruten" translates as fly rods) became highly touted along the streams. In his catalog he writes of earlier days:

"One day in 1949, I arrived at my favorite spot on the Enns, and observed a man fishing in a very peculiar way. He had no bobber on his line and no worm on the hook. Attached to his leader was a little, black, artificial fly, and he was catching grayling with it. That fascinated me, but because he was obviously a gentleman, I had to build up enough courage to talk to him. He had come from England and was visiting a count in the vicinity of Enns. He was very friendly and explained to me that his rod was a split-bamboo fly rod. It was the first time I had heard of this, but my decision was made. I would build something like that for myself. I obtained a copy of an old book, *Borne Flies*, which offered a picture of the cross-section of a split-cane fishing rod, and stated that only Tonkin cane was suitable for such a rod. Beginning at once, I began to experiment, working half-through the nights – in addition to my job as a cabinetmaker. Over the years, I was able to produce some usable fly rods and I only fished with dry flies. In those years, however, fly-fishing was unknown in our area... My greatest wish was to have plenty of time for my rods, not just at night, but throughout the day. Consequently, I decided in 1963 to quit my profession as cabinetmaker. 'Brunner – Austria – Fliegenruten' was born."

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Since that time, Walter Brunner's rods have always been considered among the finest in Europe. His cooperation with Hans Gebetsroither, with whom he didn't always agree in the matter of rod-action, influenced many of his earlier rod designs, while later models were influenced by Charles Ritz and other master fly-fishermen in the 1960s and '70s.

Sadly, Walter Brunner passed away in January of 2007, but throughout his career he always built rods using methods he developed himself – splitting the bamboo with hammer and knife, straightening the nodes perfectly, and then machining the strips with equipment of his own design.

Brunner is owed a huge debt of gratitude for helping the split-bamboo rod survive an era when society seemed to be jumping on everything new and innovative. Despite the new and "better" materials, Brunner continued to build his rods in the traditional way and remained true to bamboo. For this, his many customers throughout the world remain thankful. When I first began as a maker, I owned a "Brunner" and admired its fabulous quality. Soon, and without his knowing it, he became my rod-making mentor in all matters of craftsmanship.