

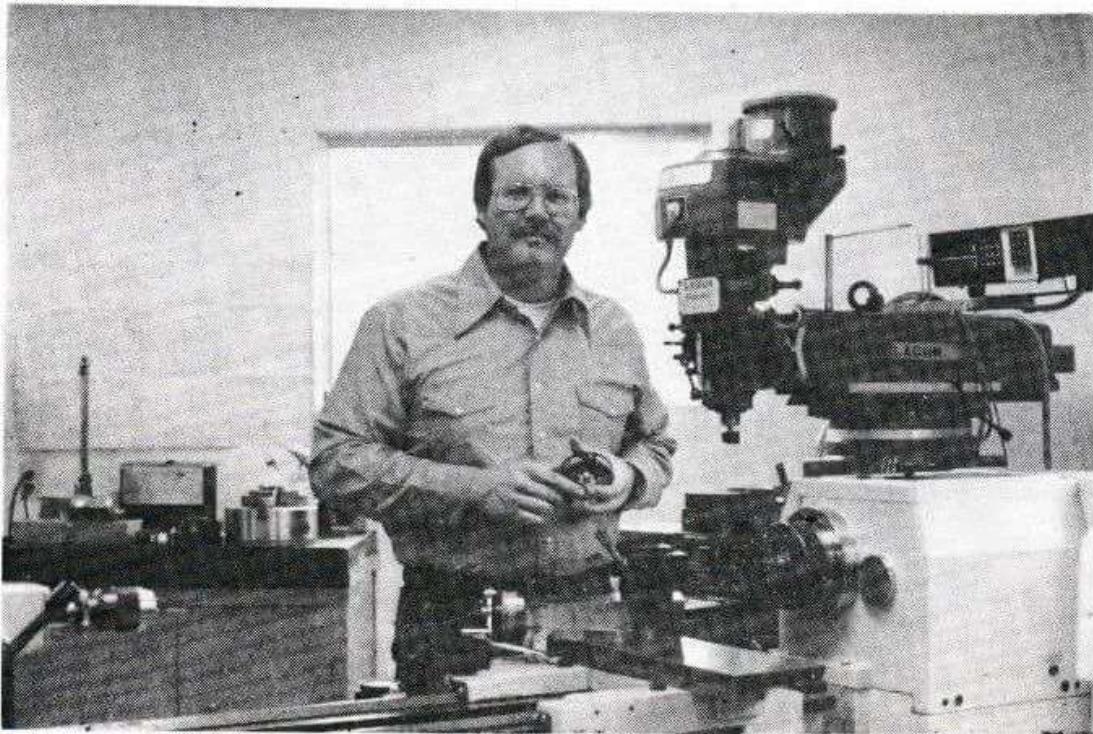
THE ROSS REELS

By ROSS P. HAUCK

(In response to Mort Hunter's authoritative article on fly reels in the last issue of PISCATOR we received this article on the Ross reel which is unusual in that, unlike most fly reels which are either cast or assembled from stamped components, it is machined from the solid.—Associate Editor.)

THE high-pitched whine of automated drill presses, lathes and screw machines cuts through the quiet morning on our cattle ranch and apple orchard. The noise seems out of place and yet, somehow, it seems appropriate that all that racket results in a fishing reel.

We manufacture the Ross Reel and we—and just about everyone who has fished with it—consider it the finest fly reel made. Our ranch and reel manufacturing plant are on the outskirts of the far Northern Californian village of Etna. We're just about 50 miles south of the Oregon border and we have a quarter section; 160 acres. Our home was built in the late 1800s. Nearby rivers include the Scott and famed Klamath. Two feeder streams that intersect at a corner of our property lines are spawning grounds for both salmon and steelhead (sea-run rainbow trout).



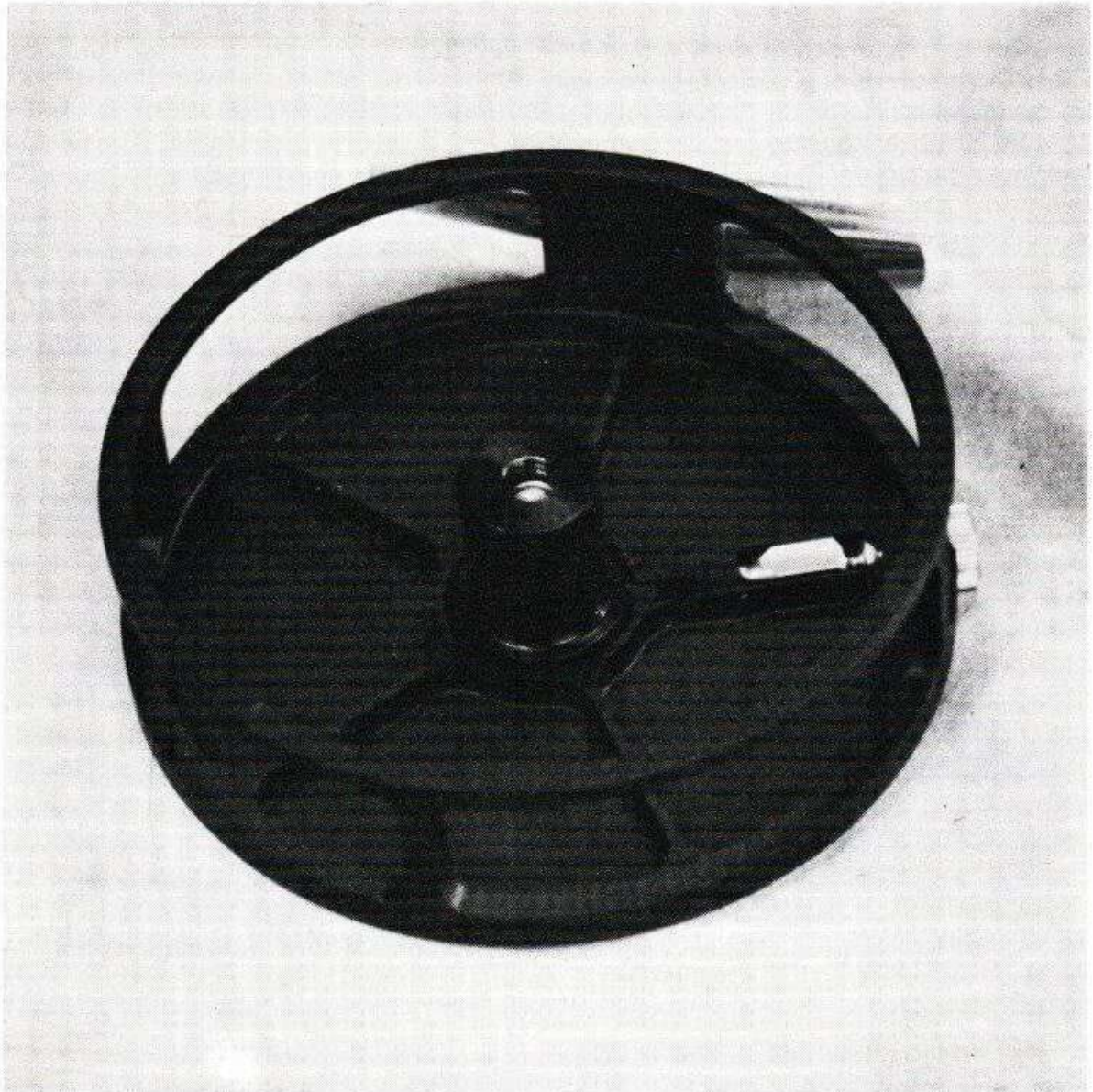
Ross P. Hauck in his machine shop in Etna, California. Notice computer program components attached to drill press.

Photograph by Vanguard Photo, per Ed. Herbst.

Following college and a stint in the army in South-east Asia as an interpreter, I began using my skills as a machinist in a die-making firm. It wasn't long before I was behind a desk, and frustrated. So, in 1973, we started our own highly-specialized machine shop in Pasadena, a suburb of Los Angeles. Our aim was to produce sophisticated parts for the local aerospace industry; and we did, in fact, manufacture a number of items

for various manned and unmanned space projects. However, when we started, we were going through one of our periodic "recessions" and I—for want of work—began fooling around with my real passion in life, fly-fishing. I was determined to produce the best reel—one with a drag that really worked, not just some pawls and springs—and one that would stand up to the scuffing of a fisherman.

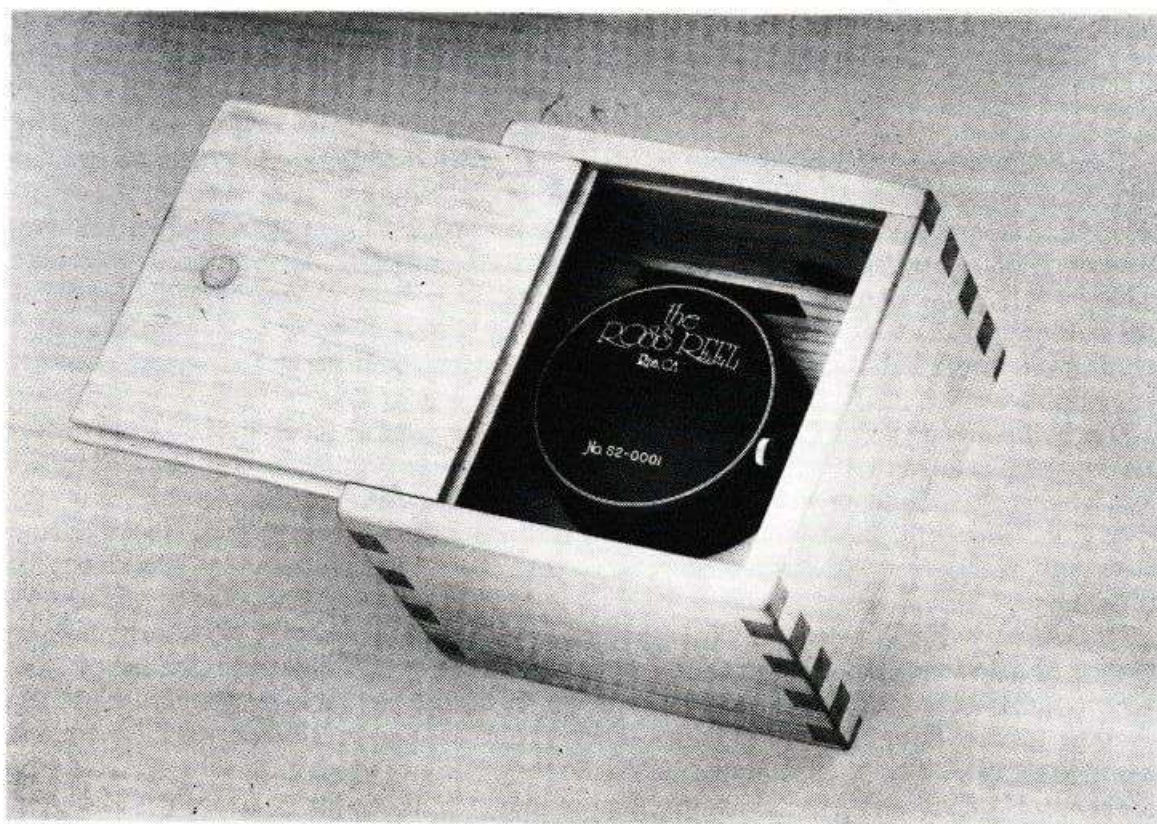
My reel at that time was an old Medallist. I had used it for years, but it was heavy. Sturdy, but heavy. And so I began a design that would incorporate the versatility and sturdiness of the Medallist with the lightness of the Hardy or CFO. It immediately became obvious that any die-cast article—that is, a mold is made and then hot metal injected into the mold—is, by its very nature, brittle. And, simply by the process involved, can't have very close tolerances. The strength of a die-cast product is 23 000 to 24 000 pounds per square inch tensile strength. On the Ross the tensile strength is 86 000! After nearly 10 years of on-again, off-again design and testing we developed what is now the Ross Reel.



No springs, pawls or ratchets to wear out in the Ross Reel. The Delrin button is pressed against the drum by a convenient thumbscrew, giving the angler infinite control.

Photograph by Vanguard Photo. per Ed. Herbst.

Ross Reels are machined, literally carved out of a solid block of prime aircraft aluminum alloy that has been rolled under tremendous pressure. We purchase the aluminum in 12-foot long bars, 4 or 4½ inches in diameter. We then cut them with a special saw and are left with a 3-pound piece of aluminum alloy. Lathes and drill presses that are computer programmed then make cuts in the raw aluminum. Since they are absolutely precise, each reel is identical—and so are the extra spools. Our computer-programmed lathes and drill presses are wonders to behold. As the program is “punched in” to the computer the machine springs into action: selecting the right cutting tool, positioning the block of alloy, and making the cuts. First the frame is roughed, then the spool. On another machine the foot is cut and finished while the bearing housing takes form on another machine.



Each saltwater reel comes in its own hand-made wooden box. Reel features single action, outside rim control and the Delrin drag.

Photograph by Vanguard Photo. per Ed. Herbst.

There have been other machined reels, of course, but none with our unique Delrin drag system. Delrin is a space age polymer of plastic very similar to Teflon. The Delrin drag “button” is forced against the drum by a linear, spring-loaded screw. It is almost infinitely adjustable and, thanks to modern science, just about wear-proof. In bench tests we ran one at 4 250 RPM for 24 hours—more than 6 000 000 revolutions—with the drag screwed full tight and lost just .003 of an inch off the Delrin. Based on the half-inch length of the Delrin button, we’ve got about 33 *times* the 6 000 000 revolutions before the drag is shot. As the manufacturing process ends, we bead blast the reels and anodize them with our distinctive charcoal black color. Bead blasting is a process that fires microscopic glass beads at the surface of the reel at a very high velocity. It hardens the surface and further refines it. All reels are then fitted with the drag and bearings by hand and individually inspected. Reel bags are made by my wife, Susie; shipping and other parts of the business are handled by her and our children.

The success of the Ross Reels has been astounding. We introduced the product last

February and the orders began pouring in. We currently manufacture three freshwater sizes and will have three saltwater models that will feature outside rim control in addition to the Delrin drag. One saltwater model is available now, the other two early in 1983. Saltwater reels have been tested against tarpon in Costa Rica, big amberjack and skipjack in Mexico and just about every other sea fish that will take a fly.

As this is being written, our apples are coming ripe and the streams are starting to show early salmon ready for spawning. With the salmon will come the steelhead; then the fall rains and another year in nature's cycle as life comes to the redds.

If you would like more information about our Ross Reels, or if you are planning a trip to the States and we can be of help in getting you on prime waters, please write: The Ross Reel, 6325 Miners Creek Rd., Etna, CA 96027, U.S.A. Phone (916) 467-5551.