

# Perdue continues to discover new talents

## Woodworking, writing, music among Perdue's knacks

By MICHAEL RODGERS  
The Luverne Journal

Just north of Luverne on Highway 331, there sits a house in the midst of a bamboo thicket.

It's the home of Bob Perdue, who has used that bamboo to make arts and crafts for years. "Some people call me Bamboo Bob," he said. "I got into it just by wanting to build something."

Perdue said the bamboo was planted by his uncle Jack and has been there since 1932.

He also said he meets a lot of people because of it since travelers occasionally stop by.

"I've had people to stop, and they say, 'I've been passing by for eight years,' and I say, 'Well, don't wait so long,'" he said.

When he first started crafting things from the bamboo, he started with larger items like rain sticks, which are hollowed-out sections of bamboo filled with pebbles or beans.

Turning a rain stick upside down makes a sound like rain as the beans fall to the bottom.

It wasn't long before his son's mother-in-law suggested that he make some smaller items.

"I can make a little angel, and the wings fold back on it," Perdue said. "It's the neatest little item that I've ever made."

He said that he took some to an event at the Pike Pioneer Museum in Troy and sold 150 of them in a day.

Perdue also makes them as

gifts.

"I've given away more than I've ever sold," he said.

He uses a hand router tool for the big cuts when crafting things from bamboo and finishes the item with a Dremel tool.

"Most of the stuff I've ever built was just a challenge where someone said, 'Make me one of these,'" he said. "And more likely than not, I made it right the first time. I just discovered it like everything else I've done."

Perdue hasn't limited himself to bamboo art, however, and "everything else" also includes music and writing.

He's won two first-place trophies at the National Church of God Senior Adult Talent Competition.

One trophy came for creative writing, and the other was from a harmonica solo.

Perdue said that his mother gave him a harmonica every year for Christmas, and he'd practice on it, put it back in the box, wear it out or tear it up.

"Then I'd get another one next Christmas," he said.

All of the harmonicas were tuned to the key of C.

"I took it somewhere and tried to play with someone singing, and it was just awful because they were playing in another key," he said. "I didn't know they made any other kind."

He said one day at church, one of the members with a guitar came up behind him as he

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Above: Perdue holds a piece of bamboo art in the shape of a helicopter. Below: Two of Perdue's more complex projects are also made of bamboo.



# Raising cane (and weaving it too)

## Shelton keeps traditional chair caning process alive in Rutledge

By MICHAEL RODGERS  
The Luverne Journal

More than 30 years ago, Holly Shelton started learning how to refinish furniture, and that hobby slowly turned into a chair caning business.

Shelton said she lived in Wharton, Texas, which is located about 50 miles south of Houston when she started learning how to refinish furniture.

"There was an old man who ran an antiques store," she said. "He taught me how to refinish furniture."

Shelton said he called her "Jolly" (since "jolly" rhymes with "Holly").

"He'd say, 'Alright Jolly, we've got a lady that brought in an oak rolltop desk,'" she said.

The pieces might be broken, but he taught her to glue to back together, strip it down, sand it and stain it.

"He was a very cool man, and he just took me under his wing," Shelton said.

He also taught her how to do a type of caning called seven-step caning, and she refined her techniques through reading books.

"I just bought books and learned the rest of it like that," she said.

Shelton moved to Rutledge about 15 years ago to help care for her aging father, and she started doing refinishing and chair caning as a side job.

She also went to Douglas MacArthur State Technical College in Opp and learned the art of upholstery.

Now she works full time with the Post Office and does caning work in her spare time.

"If I've got the time, I enjoy chair caning," Shelton said.

Seven-step caning is the



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Above: Holly Shelton stands by a seat she is finishing using the seven-step caning technique. Right: Detail from the chair.

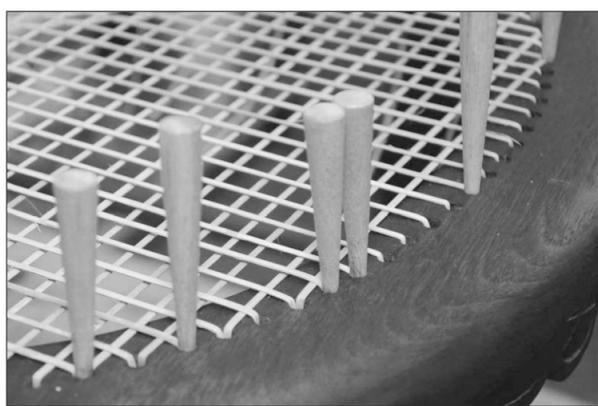
most common pattern of chair caning, and it's used not only for the seat of chairs, but also for the backs of chairs.

Chairs that have woven seats and backs feature holes, through which the cane is woven.

In the first step, the cane is woven from back to front, then side to side in the second step.

Steps three and four duplicate the first two steps, making a double line of cane.

"Then you actually start your weaving," Shelton said. "With those four steps — two this way and two that way —



you go diagonally and start weaving."

After two diagonal weaves, the seventh step is putting the border on, which holds the caning in place.

Shelton said that the cane is soaked in water for around 30 minutes before working with it, which makes it pliable.

"You can get it from a place in Montgomery called JP's Woodworking, but I get mine from a cane and basket supply company in California," she said.

There are also other types of chair caning besides seven-step, such as pressed cane.

When working with pressed cane, the cane is pre-woven and pressed into the groove around the bottom of a chair.

"Splint" is another technique that uses a flatter kind of cane.

"It comes in different colors, and you could make all sorts of patterns with it," Shelton said.

"Rush" is a type of thick paper cord that can be woven into seats.

Shelton said she's never had the time to exhibit her work at arts and crafts shows, and she only advertised her work when she first started doing it.

"I quit advertising because I had more than I could do," she said.

Shelton recently got married, and with that and her full-time job, her time for caning has been cut down.

However, she said that hopefully she'll soon have more time for her hobby.

"When I retire, which I'm planning to do in about five years, I'll go back into it full time doing my chairs and upholstery," she said. "Hopefully mainly just chair caning because that's what I really like."