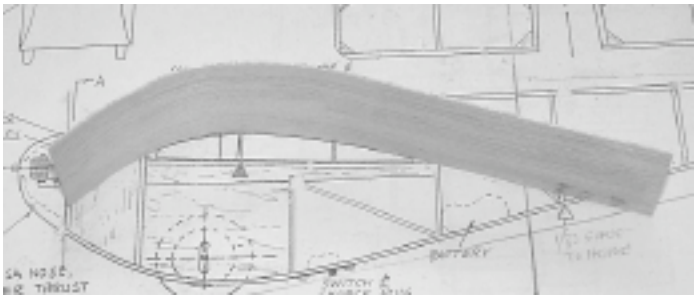
Making Permanent Bends in Balsa (or Bamboo)

Your friendly editor recently received from Lindsey Smith in England a couple of photos with notes on how to put permanent bends in balsa or bamboo. While this technique is probably "old hat" to those highly experienced readers of this exciting newsletter, some of the less knowledgeable among us might get an idea from it.

When Lindsey wants to make sliced ribs or to form balsa for any other purpose, he places a candle inside a metal can which has one end open as shown in the photo to the right. He says you can also make quite complicated double curvature panels if you beat a dome shape into the can. You dampen the underside of a piece of balsa of suitable width and thickness then hold it in contact with the hot can to create the required curve, it will sizzle and when dry it will hold the curve. You can also bend bamboo on the same gadget but the bamboo must be dry. If you are allergic to fire, put a light bulb in the can.