EQUIPMENT (Cont.)

5. Paper toweling and spare container--for saving the 'scum' of comp. that tends to build in the bottom of the rolling bowl. Store the toweling with the scum on it in the spare container. Toweling contaminated with comp. should be disposed of accordingly.

6. Star sizers--these are some type of containers with progressive sized holes in the bottom to act as a screen to sort the sizes of star as they gain in size. It is necessary to frequently sort the larger stars out of the batch and let the smaller stars catch up in size. You want to strive to keep the stars close to the same size throughout the rolling process. When I started out, I made my own sorters out of half gallon plastic ice-cream containers. It entails drilling HUNDREDS of holes in the bottoms, in 1/8" increments, from 3/16" on up--depending on the largest stars you plan to roll. The only place I know that makes a commercial set is Woody's Pyro Tools. Beautiful setup, but very expensive!

7. Star drying screens--These are just a suitable wood frame with 1/8" (or any fine screen) hardware cloth attached to it. The damp stars are spread out on them for drying in the shade.

STAR COMPOSITIONS AND DAMPENING SOLVENT

1. Mix the appropriate amount of the desired star and prime compositions needed for your stars. I normally start out with 500 gms. of comp. (There is a set of color and some good Glitter-type compositions that are some of the more forgiving formulas for rolling stars, given later in this hand out.)

2. A mix of 50% water and 50% alcohol. This is the solvent most often used to dampen the star cores during the rolling process. NOTE: There are many other solvents and combination ratios, But we will only be using the 50/50 alcohol/water mix. I used to use denatured alcohol, available at all the big 'box' stores. But it got to be too expensive--plus it has the undesired denaturing additives. I buy the 32 oz. 70% Isopropyl Rubbing Alcohol at Walmart. I dilute it one part water to two parts rubbing alcohol. This is not EXACTLY 50/50, but it's close enough for what we want it for!

CORES FOR STARTING THE STARS ON

We need something to start coating with the star comp. and begin to grow them in size. There are several various media used. Everyone seems to have their preference.

1.) Acini De Pepe--This is a small bead-like pasta, available at most large grocery stores. I've used it and it works. But the drawback I had with some comps., was that it can swell a bit during drying and crack the comp. on the cores.

2.) Millet Seed--This is a natural grain seed, sold in the health food section of some of the larger food stores. I've used it and it works. Millet seed is fairly small and very light in weight. This makes it much more difficult to get the star cores started.

3.) "Molecular Sieves"--These are small round beads used as a drying agent. I have never used them, but I hear they work fairly well. You can find them on the Internet. Just google "Molecular Sieves".

4.) Lead shot--This is what Dave Bleser (the guy who first came up with the pan-rolling method for the beginner) recommends for the beginner, because of it's weight. They don't clump together when first starting to add comp. They're very forgiving. But they are a major environmental hazard, and fallout hazard from the burst shell. I used them for my very first batch of rolling stars. That was the last time!

5.) Yellow Mustard Seed--This is what I use, and has become the preferred starter media for most star rollers. It isn't real expensive, and has just enough size and weight to make starting the cores a bit easier. You can find them in some stores in the spice and pickling section. However, it is cheaper to by them in bulk off the Internet. Five pounds will pretty much last you a life time!

GENERAL RULES TO FOLLOW DURING THE ROLLING PROCESS

Getting the stars started is the most tedious and difficult part of the process. Once they gain enough weight and size it gets much easier. The larger the stars get, the less trouble you have with them sticking together.

1.) Keep the area as clean as possible .

2.) Start with about a plastic film canister full of media. This amount will result in a fairly large batch of stars. Once they gain enough weight and size, and are not tending to clump together, the batch can be split into a smaller quantity to save on comp. You can then continue enlarging these extra cores at a later time to make more stars. I will be using yellow mustard seeds. I think that they are the easiest to learn with. The larger the starting quantity, the easier it is to get them going. Start the uncoated cores in the smallest pan. Add the seeds to the small cereal-size bowl and spray lightly with the 50/50 Alcohol/Water mixture, using the small atomizer. The seeds should all be wet with the mixture. Now sprinkle in some comp. from the condiment shaker. Stir the seeds around with the fork. They with tend to stick together. Add comp. until you notice there is an excess. Lightly spritz again and add more comp. Stir with the fork and try to get the core moving by agitating them. 'Pat' them with the fork and/or spoon and stir the cores to break up any clumped cores. This is the hardest part to learn of the whole process! You need to repeat this process until the cores start to build in size slightly. You will also notice excess comp. and some light scum start to build on the bottom of the bowl. Shake the cores to one side of the bowl and transfer them to a clean bowl. Then clean the scum from the first bowl. I save the 'scum' in another container and add it back into the process once the cores are bigger and heavier. Eventually you'll see the cores starting to basically stay separated.

3.) Now is the time to transfer the cores to a larger rolling pan. You'll still end up with a few clumped cores through out the beginning of the process. Lightly tamp them with your spoon to break up the clumps. Stir and tamp them with the fork. When you start noticing 'peanuts' (two or more cores stuck together), separate them with the butter knife. As they gain weight and size transfer them to a pan where they form a single layer in the bottom of the pan. Follow this procedure through out. You always want a basically a single layer. This is the reason for having a set of rolling pans that increase in size.

Cont.