

Penturner's Corner

By Don Ward

Roughing In

Well, I do hope that the readers of this column have been trying some of the ideas being offered. I posted a picture of last month's pen on one of the internet penturning forums. Several versions of it were done and posted within a couple of days and I liked them all. Many improvements were made and even a totally different approach was done with this pen. It's fun to take an idea and improve upon it. Congrats to those who tried this new pen.

I would like to remind the readers that several internet penturning forums are available. All three have libraries and archives filled with basic penturning tips and techniques and quite innovative penturning information as well. Here is a list of the penturning sites on the world wide web: <http://www.penmakersguild.com> (PMG), [http://www.groups.yahoo.com/group/penturners\(Y!PT\)](http://www.groups.yahoo.com/group/penturners(Y!PT)), [http://www.penturners.org\(IAP\)](http://www.penturners.org(IAP)), and <http://www.thepenshop.net> (TPS). Check them out and browse the photo galleries for some inspiring pens and great ideas for future pens. Several video demos are available for various turning techniques on some of these forums. **Happy Birthday IAP and TPS!**

Last month I ended with a promise for the smell of new rich leather in this month's article. The leather smell won't be that of fine Corinthian leather. But rather, the smell will be of scraps I was given from a local saddle shop, shoe shop, and one bag of leather I purchased at Hobby Lobby. I've even found assorted leather scraps in the crafts sections of the larger WalMart SuperCenters. I will be using the design of last month's pen and making the blank for this month's pen using leather disks punched out with a hollow leather punch. Bloodwood will also be used on either end. The technique for making these blanks can be used to make blanks for any pen kit. I used thick leather pieces similar to what is used to make soles for shoes and split leather pieces that were dyed red, black, and brown. A standard slimline kit was used. The pen for this month's article will be a copy of the pen in **Figure 1**.



Figure 1

Special Tools Needed

The only special tool needed is the hollow punch for cutting the leather disks and punching the holes in the center of each one. Hollow punches are sold as sets and individually. Some have one main tool with interchangeable cutter heads. I suppose a set of gasket cutters, available at auto parts stores, could be used for leather. I used two punches. The disks were cut with a $\frac{3}{4}$ inch cutter and the holes were cut with a $\frac{7}{32}$ inch cutter. Purchasing an entire set of hollow punches would allow making blanks for most of the kit pens we make.

The kit used for this pen is a standard slimline kit but a longer 7mm tube is needed in place of one of the tubes supplied with the kit. Several suppliers sell long 7mm tubes as well as other diameters. Also, I used an 8 mm tube which I purchased separately. I purchase 10 inch lengths of as many different sizes tubes as possible. Having several sizes of tubes in longer lengths allows customization of almost any kit.

I used 30 minute two part epoxy glue for gluing these blanks. The 30 minute epoxy glue allows ample time for building these blanks. Some type of clamp, such as a pistol grip

clamp that will open to 6 inches or so, will be needed to clamp and squeeze the leather disks together.

Turning the leather is easier than what one would think. I turned this pen with a skew, making both planning and scraping cuts, a round nose scraper, and a $\frac{3}{4}$ inch roughing gouge. All three cut equally well. I think I preferred the skew and scraper. Care must be taken to lighten up when moving from the wood onto the leather. Several passes over the leather may be needed to keep the leather at the same height as the wood. Sanding and finishing is done with your favorite finish. I did wipe on a very light coat of boiled linseed oil which enhanced the wood and darkened the leather a little. I use a coat of thin CA, and finished with medium CA and boiled linseed oil. Medium CA with boiled linseed oil has become my favorite finish, and I have not used any other finish on these leather pens. I would like to know how other finishes work if anyone makes this pen and uses a finish other than CA. I see no reason why friction polish or lacquer would not work.

Making the Blank

The nib end: Making the blank will be much like the blank from last month. Three pieces of wood will be needed. The piece for the nib end will be identical to the pen from last month. The nib end uses a 1.5 inch piece of wood. For this pen I used a piece of African blackwood. Use the blank squaring method of your choice and square both ends of the wood piece before gluing in the tube. It is important that all wood ends be squared, or perpendicular to the hole drilled for the tube. The tube will glue into the wood flush on one end and some of the tube exposed on the other end.

The upper barrel: The upper barrel is built on a 7mm tube 3.05 inches long. There is nothing magical about this length. It just worked out for this pen. The upper barrel has wooden pieces on each end with leather disks between them. The finial end wood piece starts at 1 inch long. This is actually done exactly like last month's pen. Drilling this section will be a little tricky, so be careful. Place this piece of wood in the drill vice and drill a centered 7mm hole. Do not move the wood or the vice. This is very important. Replace the bit with an 11/32 bit or a Letter S bit. Drill with this larger bit using the same center line as the 7mm bit. Drill just a little over $\frac{1}{4}$ of the way through.. This section will work out later. You may want to practice this part with some scrap blanks first. Use your squaring method of choice and square both ends (tube not glued in---use it loose). Refer to last month's article for correct placement of the brass tube in relation to the larger hole. Use a disk sander (or something similar) and sand the finial end to about 15 degrees and shorten it to about .86 inches on the long dimension. Also, cut the notch for the clip which will be recessed into the 11/32 hole. The notch will allow the clip to rest on top of the brass tube. This can be done after turning and before sanding. See **Figure 2** for a close-up of the finial end.



Figure 2

The other piece of the upper barrel needs to be 1.015 inches long. Now, drill a 7mm hole all of the way through. Remove the bit and replace it with an 8mm bit. Do not move the wood piece or drill vise. Drill along the same center with the 8mm bit to a depth of .640 inches. You will now have the 8mm hole .640 inches long and the 7mm hole will be .375 inches long. **Figure 3** shows these two pieces of wood on the 7mm tube next to a finished pen. Notice the 8mm tube which will be cut off later. Now, let's move on to the leather disks.



The disks: I used several colors, thicknesses, and styles of leather to design the leather portion. I assembled several disks in various arrangements until I decided on the arrangement in figure 1. I choose split leather in red and black and light brown leather similar to what would be used for shoe soles. **See figure 4.**



Figure 4

The black and red measured .065 inches thick and the thicker leather measured .147 inches thick. I used 8 black disks, 3 red disks, and 8 of the thicker light brown disks. I've made all leather blanks with no wood at all, but having thin disks of wood on each end of both barrels seems to work best. These wooden ends seem to add support to the leather. I test fitted the disks to be sure I had enough disks after compressing them together. I cut way too many than I would need because I would not have time to cut more before the glue set. The final length of the upper barrel needs to be somewhere close to 3.90 inches. The pen I made for this article had an upper barrel length of 3.758 inches along its longest side. It is important to have more disks than needed to make the length and compress them between the two wood pieces. Compacted leather disks will turn easier. It may take a couple of test tries until the desired results are obtained. The good part is that enough for several pens can be purchased for very little money...or could even be free if some type of leather product industry is in your area.

Glue the upper blank: Glue on the finial end piece of wood. When the glue has set, begin stacking the leather disks and applying liberal amounts of glue between them. Compressing the disks as you go may be necessary. As the last disks are placed on the tube, the other wooden piece will be placed on the tube. This is the piece with both 7mm and 8mm holes. Place the wood piece on the tube and glue in the 8mm tube and use a clamp to press the pieces together until the 7mm tube is at the junction between the 7mm hole and the 8mm hole. Apply glue to the outside of the leather and allow the glue to thoroughly cure. I actually waited about 6 hours. **See figure 5** for the upper blank assembled and glued. When the glue has cured, trim the 8mm tube to the end of the blank.



Figure 5

The two blanks are now ready to mount on the lathe for turning. **See figure 6** for relative placements of the two blanks.



Figure 6

I changed the bloodwood nib piece of wood to a piece of African blackwood. Place the nib end on the mandrel then place the upper barrel on the mandrel with the 8mm tube going on first. The 8mm tube should slide over the protruding 7mm tube from the nib end. This tube may need a little shortening if the two end surfaces don't meet snugly. Take off a very little amount at a time until the desired length is obtained. A long 7mm bushing can be used on the finial end and will slide into the larger hole in the end to add support while turning. Before the final diameter is reached, remove the upper barrel and sand the slant on the end. Cut the notch for the clip. **See figure 2.** Sand and finish as usual. As I mentioned earlier, I use CA and boiled linseed oil and have not used other finishes on these leather disks.

Assemble the pen: Assembly is rather academic. Press in the nib and then the transmission. Be careful not to press in the transmission too far. Check transmission placement with a refill and ease it to its final resting place. Place the finial through the clip hole and press it into place. Slide the upper barrel over the transmission and onto the lower barrel. The pen is now completed. **See figure 7** for the finished made for this article.



Figure 7

The pen's final length is 6.052 inches. Personally, I think I made this pen a little too long. I'll shorten the upper barrel on the next iteration.

Parting Off

I do hope these articles on modifying slimlines are of interest. Several of the ideas I've been presenting can be projected to other kits. I've done several pens with caps using the thicker leather disks with darker disks placed between them. The pens look really classy. If they are left unfinished, then that feel of real leather could be obtained. Other materials can be adapted for use. I'll let your imagination and creativity help you discover other materials for use in pen making.

Be sure to email me with comments, success reports, and failure notices regarding these pens. Questions about penmaking, kit choices, finishing or other penmaking topics are welcomed. Email your Penturner's Corner comments or penturning questions to don@RedRiverPens.com.

There is a penturners chat hosted by members of The PenMakers Guild. It is a biweekly chat and the software used is Ventrilo which can be downloaded from <http://www.ventrilo.com/download.php>. Info for Ventrilo and the chat can be found on the Yahoo Penturners group site. Look in the FAQs for information and watch for a posting of the next chat.

Until next month.

Do a good turn daily!

Don

