

The Penturner's Corner

The Desert Woodturning Roundup is history. I had a great time seeing some pen friends with whom I visit via email on a regular basis. I also enjoyed the demos. I was able to attend demos by Jimmy Clewes, Alan Lacer, Bonnie Klien, Nick Cook, and Dale Nish. I always enjoy seeing others turn and hearing their explanation.

The pen meeting on Friday evening was a huge success. We had over 100 in attendance and lots of nice door prizes were awarded. Anthony Turchetta did a demo with his Legacy Mill showing us how to decorate pens with spirals, flats, and flutes. Mick Vickery did a demonstration on how to conceal the clip on a pen cap. That technique is referred to as hidden clips or recessed clips. And, I did a demonstration on how I use CA and boiled linseed oil as a finish on my pens. I think all of the demos were excellent and everyone I visited with enjoyed them. Thanks to Anthony Turchetta and those who helped him organize the pen meeting. They did a great job and we had a wonderful time. Thanks also the RoundUp bosses for allowing us to have this meeting.

Reminder: The Penturner's Rendezvous is quickly approaching. It will be held on Wednesday evening after the Craft Supplies open house and Super Wednesday sale prior to the Utah Woodturning Symposium. If you are planning to attend the symposium and arriving for the super Wednesday sale then you should also plan on attending the Penturner's Rendezvous. Full details are available at <http://penmakersguild.com/>. Also, there are penturning demos at the symposium and at the Craft Supplies sale on Wednesday. Demos will be by Anthony Turchetta, and Kurt Hertzog and they will also be demonstrating at the Utah Symposium along with Mark and Brian Gisi. Complete details can be found at <http://www.utahwoodturning.com>. The AAW symposium also has a penturning meeting scheduled for the special events night and maybe a penturning demo or two. Check the website at <http://www.woodturner.org/sym/sym2009>.

The International Association of Penturners, aka IAP, at <http://www.penturners.org> has local chapters forming. Check the website for details and location and dates of the chapter meetings. Maybe one will be held close enough for attendance or maybe you would be willing to organize a chapter in your area.

Let's make a pen!

I was browsing the catalogs and came across a "desk pen" from Craft Supplies. You can find this kit on the "Pen Making" in the "ballpoints" section on page 3 of the Craft Supplies website (<http://www.woodturnerscatalog.com>). But why, I asked, should I pay \$6.50 for what is basically a slimline kit and a pen funnel (holder)? I can use one of my slimline kits in chrome (under \$2) and I can make the funnel from a piece of acrylic or wood cutoffs. So, after a couple of hours in the shop the set is finished, photos are taken and I'm back at the computer writing about it. If larger pens are to your liking I am confident the cigar kit could be used to do the same desk set, with a little thought, of course. **See Figure 1** for the completed set. Here are the step by step details of how I made this set. My way is not the only way to make this modification. In fact, several of you may even have a better way and I would like to hear about them.

I choose mesquite for this project. Not only is it one of my favorite woods, I have an unending supply here in North Texas. I also choose mesquite because I found a blank that had already been rough turned round and had a tenon on one end. I suppose it was going to be a box at one time but it suddenly grew up to become the base for a desk pen set. I also found a pen blank about 8 inches long or so. Mesquite it will be. **See figure 2** for the blanks used to make this desk set.

The techniques I used for making the pen have been discussed in several previous articles. The pen bottom is basic slimline pen making and the top part is a closed end barrel made much like the calligraphy dip pen outlined in an article last year. Also, two other articles of mine discussed closed end pens and any of those techniques could be used to hold the upper barrel.



Figure 1



Figure 2

The base: The base is probably the easiest part of this project. I held the blank on the tenon and began to turn. Although the base in the CSUSA desk kit was flat, I decided to make mine rounded on top...just to practice on making the curve. I'm not sure if I like it but sitting on my desk the shape is growing more favorable. Shape the base to whatever shape you like. Sand and finish it and part it off. Hand sand the bottom and finish it or use a jam chuck to hold it for sanding and finishing. I added a couple of beads just above the bottom. **See figure 3** for the finished base just prior to being parted off of the blank.



Figure 3

The pen: The pen is not as simple to make as the base nor is it as simple as making a slimline. Well, half of the pen is simple. The bottom half is basic slimline. I cut the blanks as usual. The bottom is standard length for the slimline kit used. The upper barrel's blank was cut 7 inches long. They were both cut from one blank. I often cut blanks longer than normal just for projects like this. The lower blank was drilled through as would be normally done and so was the upper barrel's blank, except the hole in the upper barrel only went in as far as needed to receive the tube. This type of hole is called a blind hole. The tubes were glued in using two part epoxy which is my glue of choice for tubes.

I decided not to use the kits center band so I could make the pen a little fatter than normal. Actually, I'm not the best at turning small diameter spindles so I make these desk pens with a larger diameter. If you are good at turning small diameter spindles the I say use the center band (or not) and make the pen small. They look really nice that way. **Caution: Be aware of where the tube ends in the upper barrel and do not start the small diameter spindle turning until you are far enough away from the end to be past the tube.** Turning into the tube will require starting the pen over again...well, at least the upper barrel portion. Ask me how I know. I have experience though. Experience is that which you get just after

you need it! I've turned into the brass tube or into a blind hole on more than one occasion. Some very pleasing shapes can be done by those good at smaller diameter spindle turning.

Square the ends of the lower section. Place it on the mandrel and turn as normal. Leave the end opposite the nib end larger than you really want it to be. We will place both barrels on the mandrel later and finish sizing the pen, especially at the junction of the two barrels. This will insure they are both spot on the same diameter. We will also save sanding and finishing until later.

We are now ready to turn the upper barrel. The blank is cut to 7 inches in length. The finished length on the upper barrel of the pen for this project was 5.75 inches long. It could be made longer if desired. I used a closed end pen mandrel for 7mm pens. These are available from Arizona Silhouette at http://arizonasilhouette.com/Closed_End_Pen_Mandrel.htm. They are really nice if one makes several closed end pens. One drawback is that each closed end pen mandrel is tube size specific. So, to make closed end pens using several different size tubes one would need a mandrel for each size. There are several ways to hold the blank for making closed end pens. Earlier articles in The Penturner's Corner have addressed this. Closed end pen articles are available on my website at <http://www.RedRiverPens.com/articles> if earlier copies of More Woodturning have been misplaced.

The upper barrel's end is squared and the blank was secured on the mandrel. **Figure 4** shows the two blanks and the closed end pen mandrel. I now turned the upper barrel to the desired shape using the tail stock for support. Once the final length is determined and the basic shape of the upper barrel is set the end of the blank is parted off. The upper barrel of this desk pen came in at 5.75 inches. I also left the end that will meet the lower barrel at the center a little larger than what it will finally be. **Figure 5** shows the two barrels at this stage of the project.



Figure 4



Figure 5

The next step is to place the two blanks on a standard mandrel for final turning and shaping. Place a slimline bushing on the mandrel followed by the lower barrel. Slip on the upper barrel and adjust the mandrel. Bring up the tail stock and gently tighten the tailstock just enough to hold the blanks for turning. Too much tail stock pressure will bow the pen, especially the upper barrel. Turn them to the shape you want. Now the junction where the center band would be can be made and both barrels will be exactly the same diameter for a perfect fit. Notice the little doodad on the end of the pen's upper barrel. I also do a little magic. Later you will see that it has disappeared! Sand and finish the pen. I used Shellawax friction polish on this pen. **Figure 6** shows both blanks on the same mandrel before and after the turning and finishing was done.

Remove them from the mandrel and place the upper barrel back on the mandrel. Use blue painter's tape and secure the barrel to the mandrel. Remove the waste from the end of the pen. Be very careful or you will develop your magician's skill also. **Figure 7** shows the barrel taped to the mandrel just before I removed the waste and did my magic trick to make the doodad disappear. Once the waste is removed the end of the pen can be lightly sanded and the finish can be applied to the end. The pen is now ready to be assembled.



Figure 6



Figure 7

Now where did I put those pen funnels? I know I have some somewhere. Amazing...I found them. They are all gold...no chrome ones. I thought I had some chrome ones? The solution for me was to turn a funnel. I used a short piece of black acrylic and turned it round. I made a ½ inch in diameter to hold with my Beall collet chuck. The tenon is about ¾ inches long. I used a small detail gouge to make the hole. I checked the size and shape of the hole often using a pen to make sure it was the diameter and depth required. After the funnel was shaped it was sanded and polished. **Figure 8** shows a before and after picture of the funnel. Placement of the funnel on the base was determined and a hole was drilled using the drill press. The funnel was glued into place with a small amount of CA glue. The pen was assembled and the project was finished.

Figure 8



I made the desk pen for \$1.70 since the wood was free. This is a great and inexpensive project for a buck seventy!

Email questions and comments to me at don@RedRiverPens.com I look forward to hearing from anyone who tries the techniques presented in these articles. Maybe I will meet some of the readers of this column at the AAW in Albuquerque. I will be at the pen meeting on the night of the special interests meetings.

Do a good turn daily!
Don