

Mark St. Leger Class

Rock-A-Bye Box

Eight members of Carolina Mountain Woodturners signed up for Mark St. Leger's class on making the Rock-a-bye Box. This box is either 3 cornered or 6 cornered depending on one's desire or accuracy. We were provided with a list of tools required, materials required, and a sense of humor required. If you don't have all the required tools, you could borrow them from others in the class; don't worry about the materials, the instructor will provide them; if you don't have a sense of humor, stay home.

We began by making "special tools" for the project. To create an eccentric chuck, we took a 1.5 by 2.5" square piece of maple, marked the center, then a second center .125" offset. We mounted the block in a chuck, rounded it, then cut a tenon in it. We then remounted it on the .125" offset, and cut a second tenon. The collet chuck was made with a 2.5" by .5" square with a table saw cut in one side, just short of the center. The piece was mounted in the chuck, it was rounded and a tenon was cut. A jam chuck was made with any piece of wood. It is mounted in the chuck, made round, and a tenon was cut.

We then took a 2.375" cube. We took the point out of our live centers; this was not so easy as resin had glued many of them in place. We then mounted the cube between the spindle and live center. At the live center side we made concave cuts, staying .375" from the 3 points. If 6 points are desired, the cut could be convex. Switching to the bottom, we cut spherical cuts to create the round rocking bottom. We work our way up to meet the 3 points. A few of us went too far, then we also had a 6 point box, like it or not. We then cut a tenon on the bottom side so we could mount the piece in our chuck. After mounting the piece in a chuck, we drilled a .625" hole, then hollowed the piece out. Some of us showed too much hollowing could create very attractive windows in the sides of their boxes!

We took the jam chuck we previously made, flipped the piece over and finished the bottom. The majority of the body is hand sanded; the importance of clean cuts is obvious, especially if you are as lazy as I am.

The lid is made in the standard manner; however, our homemade collet chuck is used to finish the top of the lid. Cutting a .625" hole into the "collet chuck", we tightened it on the bottom of the cap, finished the top, and drilled a .125" hole for the finial.

We created a "golf club" finial with our homemade eccentric chuck. We drilled a hole in our chuck, jammed a .625" square by 2.5" and mounted it on our Talon chuck in the .125" offset position and cut the handle of the club.

We then remounted the finial in the centered tenon, and cut the head of the club. Finally, we left a .125" tip to glue it into the lid.

The class had now created one of those "how did you do that" pieces. Of equal importance, we learned the importance of tool control, clean cuts, and making your own tools. Mark St. Leger is one those instructors who is able to motivate the young, the middle aged, and, like me, the elderly. He realizes young people like to think of themselves as old, and old people believe they are still young. I guess only the middle aged are correct.

Greg Schramek