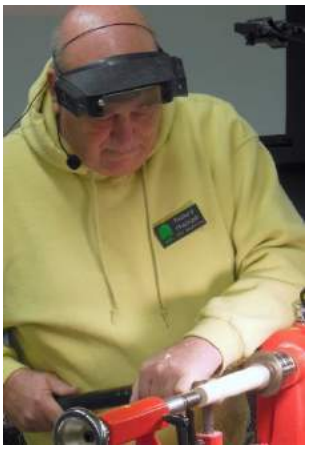
Our January Demonstration
Finials with Dick Hoblitzell

Dick Hoblitzell's special interest is lidded boxes with finials on the top. He prefers finials that are less than 3" in length and not pointed so that they do not pose a

danger of injuries to hands and fingers. Dick practices his finial shaping techniques and demonstrated using 2" by 2" scrap pieces of pine and fir from 2" by 4" construction studs he cuts up. He turns the pieces between centers or until he has a tenon on one end to put in the spigot chuck which holds the stock during turning. Eventually, he removes the tailstock to complete the upper end of the finial.

At the beginning of the demonstration, Dick talked about various professional turners, their techniques and approaches to tool orientation, and their body position. He recommends looking at woodturning videos and clips on www.youtube.com by ***Mark Silay***, ***Richard Raffan***, and ***Cindy Drozda***. Among the professionals, the emphasis was on finial designs that were about ¼ top, ½ body , and ¼ base in any of the classic shapes such as the *onion*. He noted that tool techniques focus on light touch, slicing cuts, and cutting *downhill* on the grain as the best to minimize sanding and keep elements of the finial sharp. He discouraged the use of scraping tool techniques for many reasons. Dick uses a magnifying headgear, strong light sources, and very sharp tools to do his best work.

Unlike some turners, the method of turning finials on lidded boxes Dick uses is to drill a hole in the top end of the wood piece that will be made into the cover and main body of the box. First he turns between centers a small piece of decorative hardwood that will be used for the



finial so that it has a tenon on one end. Then he drills a ¼" to 3/8" hole to match the tenon and inserts that rough finial piece into the hole in the top of the box using epoxy (he never uses CA glue for this process).

Once the rough finial is glued into the top of the entire cover/body piece, he then turns the finial between centers. As the finial develops to a point he removes the tailstock and completes the finial including shaping the finial into the top of the box. Then he parts the top of the box off from the body. He sets the top and finial aside, completes turning the body and parts it off.

Before Dick can rechuck the top to hollow it out, he makes a plastic ring to hold the top in his deep chuck jaws without marking the piece and, yet, making it very secure. The ring is turned on the lathe from a plastic or polypropylene cutting board. Then he can put the top into his jaws with the finial inside so that he can hollow the inside of the cover. After the top is hollowed, he can use the same plastic ring to turn the top around and work on the finial, if he has not made the finial when it was attached to the body in an earlier step.

Dick sands each element of the finial (starts with 220 grit and works up from there) as he works from top to base so that it is all done and not retouched when the base is completed. Friction polish like EEE paste compound or Behlems Woodturner's Finish are his preferred finishes.

Submitted by ***Chad Dawson*** with photos by ***Heather Muckley*** & ***Greg Potter***