

OUR FEBRUARY DEMONSTRATION LIDDED BOXES WITH JOHN MELOLING

The February 2016 demonstration was on turning lidded boxes. Our demonstrator, **John Meloling**, started by talking about using hardwoods – even scraps – that are very dry to make lidded boxes. He believes you should use dry hardwood because it is more dimensionally stable, thus it should maintain its size and shape so that lid will keep its fit on the body of the box once turned. While some love to be given exact measurements, John noted that he was not highly interested in measuring all aspects of the box as long as the lid was about 1/3 and the body about 2/3 the length of the overall box.



The woodturning tools John used in the demo and workshop were: 3/8" spindle gouge, 1/2" scraper, 1/8" parting tool, a 1/2" bedan, and a 1/2" skew. He first put the 2" by 2" by 6" piece of cherry hardwood between centers, turned it round, and added a 1/4" to 3/8" tenon on both ends. Each tenon was about 2" in diameter so they would fit securely into the #2 jaws on the chuck. He then secured one end of the wood into the chuck jaws using the tenon and supported the other end with the tail stock.

Lidded Box

John marked the piece for the body section (towards the tailstock) and the lid with some additional waste wood marked off towards the jaws. The joint between the lid and body was then parted about 1/2" wide and down to a depth of 3/16 to 1/4" depending on the thickness of the box walls for the design. Then the tailstock was removed and the bottom was parted off from the top leaving about 1/16" of the *central parting tenon* on the lid. This small remaining central parting tenon on the lid then gives you the diameter of the matching bottom and is the mark for the inside diameter of the lid. This *no measure* approach allows you to get an exact match without needing to repeatedly measure with a calipers as you turn the inside diameter.



With the lid still in the chuck, John pulled the tailstock out of the way. He then hollowed out the lid to the diameter indicated by the wood remaining from when he parted off the body. The technique for hollowing inside the lid could either be domed or square depending on your design for the top of the lid. John carefully hollowed out the inside diameter and checked to see if the central parting tenon would fit inside the lid as he proceeded. He also kept the angle of the hollowing about 1/2 degree tapered inward to make sure the lid fit snugly on the body. After the body fit snugly inside the top, John sanded inside the lid and parted the lid off from the waste wood in the chuck.



Moving on to the box bottom, John put the body bottom tenon into the chuck. He retested the lid's fit making sure it is slightly tight but not so tight as to crack the lid when pushed onto the body. The body was then hollowed out with either a rounded or squared inside design. John put a very slight chamfer on the edge of the central parting tenon so the lid would go on evenly and cleanly.



Inside of the body was final sanded. The top was pushed firmly into place and the top of the lid was finished with very light cuts so that the lid stayed in place with just the friction fit. Some edging at the joint between the lid and body was added for decoration. John noted that any final sanding and finishing work to the joined lid and body should be completed at this stage.

Finally, the lid was removed and the body was parted off from the waste block tenon at the chuck. A jam chuck with a tenon was made from some waste wood to hold the body by



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jamming the body opening over the waste block tenon. Alternately, the body could have been put over chuck jaws that fit inside the body to finish the bottom of the body. When the bottom of the piece was made slightly concave and final sanded, then the body was taken off the lathe.

John mentioned that almost any type of finish could be used on the outside of the lid and body. He said that he does not finish the inside of his boxes. The lid should have a slight pop as it is opened, due to the snug fit. Even if you rotate the lid around the body, he said it should fit well in all positions.

Ring Box

A box with a finial lid can be used as a ring holder on the finial and inside the box. John explained that the general directions used for making the standard lidded box also apply to the ring box but with a few important differences. One difference is that the top of a ring box is usually longer than the body according to the woodturner's desired design.

He proceeded to make one, pointing out the other differences. The piece of cherry was held with the body tenon in the chuck and the top of the lid held by the tailstock (this is reversed from the standard box). The finial on the lid was turned while the piece was whole and the tailstock was not removed



until the finial was complete at the top. The finial was sanded and finished. Then the lid



was marked and a central tenon cut followed by parting off the lid as in the standard box described above.

The lid was turned around and held by a deep set of jaws to be able to hollow out the inside of the lid. John used the mark left by the central tenon to get the inside diameter correct to fit the body. He used the body to keep checking the fit with the lid. Then he explained it was time to sand inside of the lid when the fit was correct.

The body was still in the #2 jaws and put back on the lathe without the tailstock. John shaped the outside of the body and the base

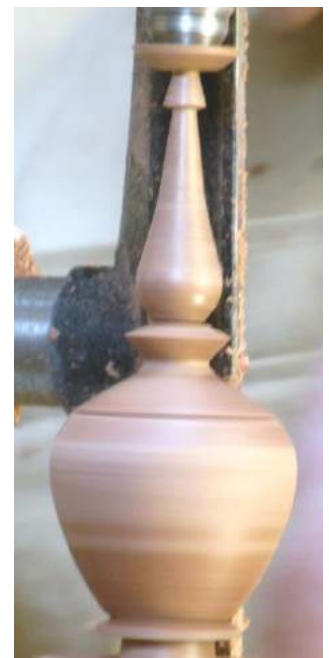
design before hollowing out the body. He showed examples of his ring boxes and noted that he usually turns

a more complex shape for the body of the ring box than



the standard lidded box. He warned that it requires more time when hollowing the body to make sure the hollowing depth and shape conforms with the outside body and base

shape. At this point, he did his final sanding of both the inside and outside of the body. He carefully rechecked that the lid fit on the body snugly and made a few last adjustments. John parted off the base so that the foot was slightly concave and then hand sanded the bottom of the foot.



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