

## JANUARY 2014 DEMONSTRATION

### *MUSHROOMS MY WAY BY MIKE MALECKI*

The demonstration by **Mike Malecki** was fast paced and quickly focused on the creative process of making small mushrooms for decorations from tree stems or limbs. He started with 2" to 4" in diameter tree stems that were 4" to 6" in length using either dry or green wood. He suggested cutting one end of the stem segment at a slight angle and using this end as the base of the mushroom – giving the finished piece a slightly leaning design. The stem piece was held in a scroll chuck by the end that he wanted to be the finished base of the mushroom. Mike noted that when the base retains some bark it gives the finished piece a rustic and natural-looking design. The tailstock was not used at all when turning the mushroom piece.

The stem was put in the scroll chuck so that it was parallel to the lathe bed and turned evenly about  $\frac{3}{4}$ " away from the tool rest. First he shaped

the top or cap end of the mushroom including undercutting the top to an umbrella-like shape that he liked.

Then he turned one-third of the length of what would become the stem of the mushroom. Mike set his lathe speed at 1,500 rpm and used a bowl gouge for most of his turning

and a scraper to undercut the top of the mushroom. He did a general sanding of the areas turned at this stage.

Next Mike loosened the chuck so he could pull the top of the mushroom to within about  $\frac{1}{4}$ " of the tool rest – that means it was offset about  $\frac{1}{2}$ " if he kept the tool rest in the same place as step one above. The piece now wobbled while turning and Mike's cuts were slow and finely done as he watched the "shadow image" created by the wobbling motion of the

spinning piece. He mentioned to be careful of wobbling motion and your fingers. He turned the second one third of the stem and then carefully sanded at a slower speed and by hand.

In the third step he rotated the piece until it was close to the tool rest (tool rest does not move at all during the whole process) and hold the piece while he loosened the chuck. He pushed the piece directly away from the tool rest about  $1\frac{1}{4}$ " and retighten the chuck. Mike described that the idea was to create 180 degree opposing offsets in the chuck of about  $\frac{1}{2}$ " off the original center. Then he carefully turned off the last one third of the stem and rounded it into the base part held in the chuck. Mike left the piece firmly in the chuck and carefully sanded by hand (and with a small power sander) the entire piece and smoothed the transitions between the three different turning steps. He removed the piece from the





chuck and described how he then finishes with oil and bees wax and finally buffs the piece for a natural look.

Mike encouraged creativity in design by using spalted wood, limbs with knots, leaving bark on the base, different species of tree and shrub, and green wood that would likely split and add some character to the piece. He also suggested trying different shapes, sizes, and amount and direction of offset to achieve different stem shapes.



Submitted by **Chad Dawson**  
Photos by **Andy Loconte**

### JANUARY 2014 WORKSHOP

Seven people joined **Mike Malecki** at the 8 Acres barn for a workshop on making mushrooms. Lots of mentoring occurred for both turning the mushroom and sharpening tools.

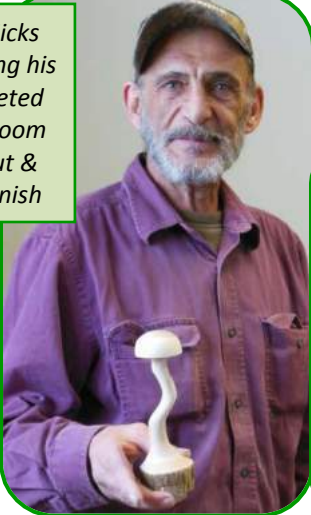


**Dick Gorman, Paul Hicks, Ed Rantanen, & Larry Prunotto (l-r)**

**Everyone gathered for instruction by Mike**



**Paul Hicks showing his completed mushroom without & with finish**



**Mark Baumes, Greg Potter, Jim Ackerman, & Mike Malecki (l-r)**

