

## JULY 2015 DEMONSTRATION

### TURNING TOPS WITH MEL, LARRY & BOB

The July 2015 demonstration was a triple session on turning tops. Why triple? Three of our seasoned tops makers – **Mel Taber**, **Larry Prunotto**, and **Bob Ireland** – each presented their method for creating tops.

Mel started our session. He makes tops from scraps and a 3/8" or 1/2" dowel rod. When he cuts corners from bowl blanks, he cuts pieces large enough for tops. He'll then pick a day to drill the pieces and insert a dowel at least 3 1/2" long into the drilled hole using thinned Titebond glue. (A good place to buy quality dowels is Casey's Wood Products – [www.caseyswood.com](http://www.caseyswood.com))



Once the glue sets, Mel inserts the dowel end into his pin chuck which doesn't mark up the dowel. In the point of the tailstock, Mel puts a nylon tip on the tailstock point to cut down on chatter and allow a



more aggressive cut. Using a 5/8" bowl gouge he shapes the top, then moves to the detail gouge to shape the point after removing the tailstock.



Mel then pulls the top out of the chuck so 1" of the dowel is showing. He brings the tailstock up to the point, protecting the point with a nylon sink washer. Using his Easy Wood parting tool, Mel reduced the size of the dowel and used the point of the tool to make some decorative grooves in the top. With his skew he then parted off the top.



Up next, Larry. Larry makes a top using what he called the *old fashioned way*, using a solid piece of wood. He also uses a glove while turning to protect his left hand.

Larry begins by putting a tenon on the end of a 2" x 2" block of wood. He then inserted the tenon into a chuck, brought the tailstock up for support, and trued up the block. He then proceeded to form the top on the block using his spindle gouge. He left the tailstock up until he was ready to finalize the point of the top.



After getting the bottom done, Larry turned down the *handle* of the top and parted it off. Prior to parting off,

Larry could have used markers to decorate the top, use a tool to add decorative lines, or use a texturing tool to create some interesting decoration.

Bob noted it would be *hard to top that* as he stepped to the lathe. Bob recommended using no longer than a 6" piece of wood – one from which just 2 tops can be created. He recommended tight grained wood, with growth rings balanced. Since finding that wood can be tough, Bob glued up scrap pieces, making sure to have a solid center.



Using his 1/4" bowl gouge with the Ellsworth grind, Bob smoothed and made the block round. Rather than turn of the lathe constantly, Bob used the tool to tell if he achieved round. How? As you carefully lay the tool on the top of the block, if it bounces, it is not round. While you can do this with the lathe on, please don't adjust the tool rest with the lathe on.



Once round, Bob formed the tip at approximately 45 degrees but not into a sharp point. Bob like fairly flat tops. He then formed the handle, refining it with his spindle

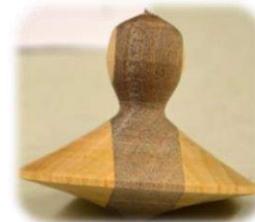


## Turning Tops, page 2



gouge. While forming the handle, Bob was careful since the end of the first handle transitions to the point of the second. He then formed the second top, reminding everyone to watch

their fingers around the chuck. Bob noted the stem is approximately  $1/7^{\text{th}}$  the width of the body.



Written by **Barbara Raymond-LaPrease**  
Photos by **Andy Loconte**

## TOPS TURN-A-THON – JULY 2015

A group of 10 members gathered on Saturday, July 25<sup>th</sup> for the first ever **Tops Turn-a-Thon**. The three (3) new club Rikon lathes arrived the same day so initially the group helped assemble the stands and empty the boxes. Over the course of the day, the group turned 131 tops. Here are some photos from the day which included lunch. Thanks to all who participated: **Mark Anastas, Mark Baumes, Rod Castle, Chad Dawson, Charlie LaPrease, Robert Love, Doug North, Greg Potter, Larry Prunotto, and Ed Siegel.**

