

IDEAS FROM THE

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APRIL, 2006



A Southeastern Minnesota Chapter of the American Association of Wood Turners

Bottle Stoppers

Reprinted from the ZVW April, 2006 Newsletter

Turning Bottle Stoppers



On March 30th, Dave Dunn showed us how simple it is (for him) to turn bottle stoppers. Harmon Pierce, early on in the presentation, promised to test out how well Dave's stoppers work by donating a bottle of wine for all of us to taste, and then popping in a stopper. Dave came through just fine, but Harmon seemed to forget about his testing commitment. Well, maybe next time.

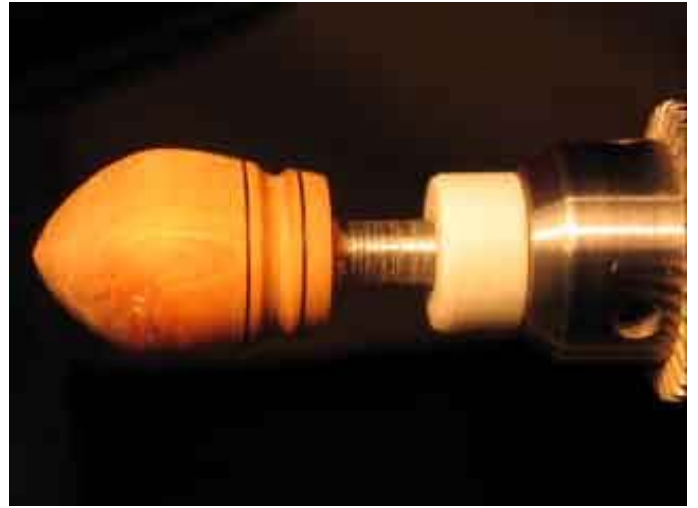
The first step in turning a stopper is in figuring out how to mount a small block of wood on the lathe. Dave has a relatively simple method that allows working with the block of wood without first at-

taching anything to it. He has made a simple fixture: a short piece of 3/8" steel rod with a v shaped wedge ground at one end, the other end secured in a Jacobs chuck on a Morse taper inserted into the headstock. He drills a 3/8" hole in the block of wood using a drill press. He then places a previously turned Corian sizing washer, just a bit larger than the large diameter of the cork he will use, over the rod and then places the block on the rod. The tailstock, with a live center, then forces the block onto the rod so that the v-wedged end can drive it. Later, Dave withdraws the tailstock to access the stopper end to do the final finishing. The rod, at that point, has enough drive, without the tailstock, to finish the job. The Corian washer (white in



the pictures) is free to move on the rod so that Dave can nudge it up to the block to gauge the size as he turns the cork end of the block to the washer's diameter with a gouge. Dave does all of his turning with a gouge and a parting tool. To Dave: "What is a skew?"

After turning to a desired shape, Dave usually burns in a line or two with a steel wire attached to a couple of handles so that he will not burn himself. He then parts off the small amount of waste at the tailstock to rid the stopper block of the point from the live center, cleans up the end, and sands the stopper. He then removes the



block from the steel rod and, using Titebond, glues a 3/8" diameter dowel, longer than the depth of the mounting hole plus the length of a purchased cork, into the block's drilled hole. Dave then uses a simple jig to guide the assembly through the band saw to saw off the dowel to the exact length of the cork.



Next, the assembly is finished by wiping the wood with Waterlox and allowing it to dry with the assembly's dowel inserted into one of several 3/8" holes drilled into a scrap board. The last operation is to glue on a cork with a small amount of Titebond glue. Corks can be purchased for about \$0.60 each or less in larger volumes. With a little time remaining, Dave showed us how he uses a chatter tool and a marking pen to impart a design to the end of a block of wood. A chatter tool works best on the end grain of hard wood. A few members tried their hand at using the chatter tool. It was interesting enough to members that the club decided that its June meeting will be on each of us making are own chatter tool, and the August meeting will be on the use of the chatter tool when making tops.

Related Resources

The "Son of Skew with Alan Lacer" DVD in our library contains a bottle stopper project. Alan's technique of securing the block of wood in the lathe is to drill the 3/8" hole in the block, glue in the dowel, and then, using a 3/8" collet chuck on the dowel, turn the stopper with a skew. Finding such a collet chuck might be more work that making a Dave Dunn styled wedged rod.

