Brandon Woodworkers Club Newsletter January 2026

Let's Get Started

This month's meeting started at 7 PM with the Pledge of Allegiance led by Tom Bolen, followed by the invocation from Dave Merrill. After the invocation, Tom Bolen reminded everyone to sign in and get a "sign-in" raffle ticket from Ken Coleman.

Club Business

- This was our first meeting of 2026. We made a lot of strides in 2025 thanks to the great ground work from the previous board. We have continued to grow and it truly is a pleasure to see so many friends share this great hobby we enjoy.
- As always, a special thanks to Rockler for allowing us to use their facility.
- We always want to add new pictures to the website – don't be shy – send your pics!
- **Shop tours:** We need volunteers! It is the perfect time of the year now that the weather is cooler. Please consider hosting club members to come out to see where your magic happens. Tours are typically a couple of hours in the morning on Saturdays.
- We have added the membership directory to the website. We will discuss access and additional features as we go. Now it is simply names and email addresses.
- **Tool Loan Program:** The program is now open for business. Tom will pick up the used Festool Domino from his brother in Georgia later in January. The club also owns a Dewalt 735 planer, purchased by the club from Rockler. Rick Williams has agreed to be the keeper of the tools. If you wish to borrow a tool, please make a request through the club officers (bwcofficer@gmail.com) – not to Rick directly – and the officers will get with Rick. The club will put out a detailed email on the process of loaning out tools. We are open to

suggestions, so please offer your ideas. In addition, we will gladly accept donations of any woodworking tools that make sense for this program. The club has added a Waiver and Release from Liability form which you must sign to participate in the Tool Loan Program. It is necessary to protect the club and its members. A copy is posted on the protected area of the website to sign and bring in. Please get your signed copy to our treasurer, Ken Coleman. This is a simple form used by many similar clubs; it is just basic, common sense.

- It is time to renew your club membership; $35/year, cash or check made out to Brandon Woodworkers Club, and it includes your family. Membership includes a 10% discount on Rockler products, Intercity Lumber and Hardware, Hardwood Lumber and Millwork, Triple L Rustic Designs, Central Florida Live Edge Slabs, and Ropers Saw and Tool Sharpening. It is also a good time to sign the Waiver and Release from Liability form.
- Club by-laws will be edited and posted on the BWC website; officers will serve two years before an election.
- BWC will not have an official presence at the State Fair this year. Time in the past has not proven cost effective in gaining new members. However, if you wish to volunteer for a shift or two, see Robert Babbitt.
- The Woodcrafters Club of Tampa has changed location and times: 2nd Thursday of each month at Tampa Covenant Church, 13320 Lake Magdalene Blvd, Tampa, FL 33618. The doors open at 1800 and meeting begins at 1900.

Presentation

Tonight's presentation was by club member and expert turner Rick Ward (Fig 1) who has turned 2,000 pens.

Rick started about 12 years ago, shortly after he joined the Brandon Woodworkers Club. It was at the fairgrounds, and they were having a show with a lot of the vendors, and you could learn to make a pen, but it was closed. It was the end of the day, and Rick was actually working that event but got there too late to make a pen. He got introduced to the booth that was selling starter kits and got one. The guy says, "Do you have a lathe?" Rick said, "No, but I've got a Shopsmith." He said, "Okay, you can do that." So, Rick got a starter kit that had five kits in it – slimline pens – which is what Rick is demonstrating tonight.

Figure 1 Rick Ward

After those kits, he bought 10 more, then 30, then 50, and he's still turning to the tune of 2,000 pens. His late wife referred to it as an addiction, one that pays for itself.

Turning a custom pen involves preparing a wood or acrylic blank, drilling it, gluing in brass tubes, squaring the ends, turning it to shape on a lathe, sanding, finishing, and assembling the

hardware. Key steps include using a lathe with a pen mandrel, following a kit-specific bit size, and applying a durable finish.

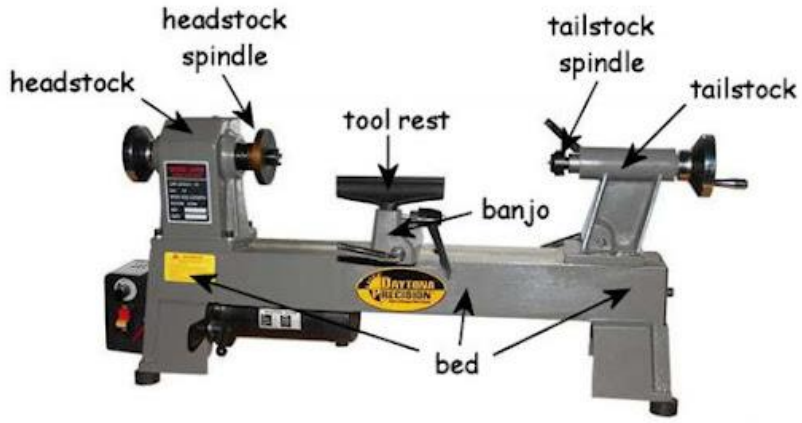


Figure 2 Basic lathe

The Lathe

As with most machines, there's the basic machine (Fig 2) and an array of accessories that transform a general-purpose machine into a specialized tool, reducing the need for multiple, expensive machines and expanding operational capacity. Rick will show and demonstrate some of them.

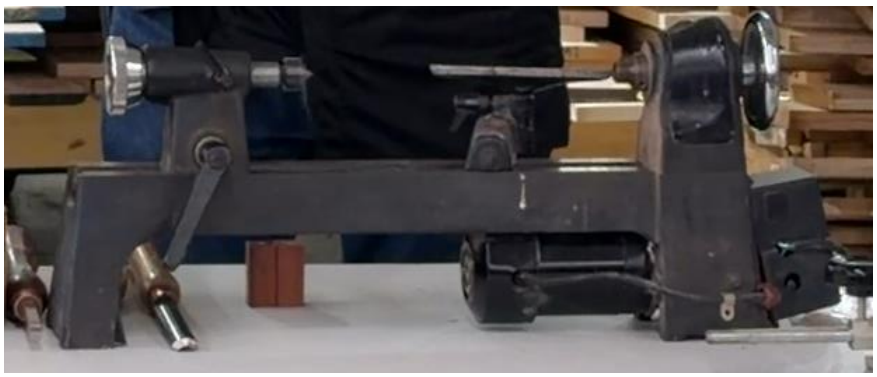


Figure 3 Rick's pen turning lathe

Rick has three lathes and this is his go-to (Fig 3). He's the third owner in the club of this machine and he's rebuilt it three times. It was manufactured in 1983. Rick said it's old, like him, but it works.

There are small, medium, and large lathes made from steel, cast iron, or aluminum and they come in various weights. If you're just going to make pens in your shop, the size and weight of your lathe might not matter. If you think you might want to turn peppermills or larger bowls, a small lathe might not be big enough. Rick's can't do peppermills but can do small bowls. If you're thinking of doing craft shows, you might want something lighter and more portable. As a point of reference, Rick's demonstration lathe is 43 lbs. And you will also need a solid table or cabinet to hold it. You might also want a lathe with variable speed and digital readout to know the exact speeding you're turning. The amount of club members with lathes makes it easy to check the options and "try before you buy."

To turn anything on a lathe, you'll need turning tools. Rick prefers high-speed steel (HSS) over carbide for pens. Usually, he'll use carbide when turning a bowl. With HSS, you shave the wood; with carbide, you scape it. Rick used a spindle gouge and skew chisel to turn the pen. The actual process of turning using turning tools will not be covered in this newsletter. Recommend you side saddle with a turner or watch pen turning videos on YouTube.

To make pens, you'll need certain components or accessories. Here's a basic list to get started. You can buy pen kits (core components) from Penn State Industries, Rockler, WoodTurningz, and others. Browse various kits to see what might appeal to you.

Core Components of a Pen Kit (e.g., Slimline)

- **Brass Tubes:** The foundation; wood/acrylic is turned around these.
- **Mechanism:** Twist-action (aka transmission) or click mechanism for extending the refill.
- **Refill:** The ink cartridge.
- **Clip & Cap:** The top assembly.
- **Tip/Nib:** The writing point.
- **Center Band:** Often separates the top and bottom barrels.

Essential Turning & Assembly Materials

- **Pen Blanks:** Wood, acrylic, or resin, typically 5-6 inches long.
- **Pen Mandrel & Bushings:** Holds the blank on the lathe; bushings ensure proper diameter.
- **Drill Bits:** Specialized bits (e.g., 7mm) matching the brass tube size.
- **Barrel Trimmer:** Squares the blank ends flush with the brass tube.
- **Glue:** Thick CA glue or epoxy to secure tubes in the blank.
- **Pen Press:** Used for assembling the finished parts.

Once you have the materials, it's time to start the process of making a pen. In turning a pen, what you're basically doing is creating two cylinders. You might want to make them the same size or not. Typically, Rick starts out making them the same size if he doesn't know which end he'll choose as the grip. Once he decides that, he knows where to form the tapers.

Steps to Turning a Pen:

- **Prepare the Blank:** Cut the pen blank roughly 1/16" longer than the brass tubes. If using two pieces, mark them to ensure grain alignment later.
- **Drill and Glue:** Drill a hole through the center of the blank using a drill press and the appropriately sized bit. Scuff the brass tubes with sandpaper, apply CA glue or epoxy, and insert them, ensuring they are flush or slightly below the blank's surface.
- **Square the Ends:** Use a miter saw or pen mill or barrel trimmer to remove excess glue and cut the wood exactly flush with the brass tubes.
- **Mount on Lathe:** Place the blanks on a pen mandrel, separated by appropriate bushings.
- **Turn the Pen:** Use a lathe (typically 500+ RPM) and turning tools (like a roughing gouge or skew chisel) to turn the material down to the desired shape, making it flush with the bushings.
- **Sand and Finish:** Sand the barrel through150 to 600+ grits while the lathe is running. Apply a finish, such as a friction polish or CA glue, for protection.
- **Assemble:** Use a pen press or vise to carefully press the components (tip, transmission, clip, cap) into the finished barrels.

Prepare the Blank

Rick brought wood and acrylic pen blanks. Typical sizes are five-eighths by five-eighths by five inches, and three-quarter by three-quarter. Since this is a small lathe, basically for doing pens, the instructions call for a Morse Taper (MT)-1, commonly called an MT-1 spur or drive center. Larger lathes take an MT-2. The Morse Taper is not threaded; it slides in and locks in the spindle because of the taper on the inside.

Rick's going to turn a wooden pen tonight because turning acrylic will cover the whole area with melted plastic. He doesn't really like making acrylic pens, but they're pretty and women like them so he makes them occasionally. Since he's turning wood, most of the dust will be contained to the immediate area.

Drill and Glue

He started with a bloodwood blank already cut to the length for a slimline pen. He cut the blank into two 2-inch lengths and placed them on the MT-1 pen turning mandrel (Fig 4). This mandrel is seven millimeters. There are some kits that require an eight-millimeter mandrel, but he's only seen a handful of those – just be aware. He uses a self-centering apparatus like this (Fig 5) and centers a blank in the V notches to drill a pilot hole for the brass tube. Make sure the drill bit size matches the brass tube. Rick uses Zap Adhesives five-minute Z-poxy to glue in the brass tube using a pen press (Fig 6) or a vise. With Z-poxy, you don't have to brighten up the brass to get a little bite with the glue, and Z-poxy is also a filler, if you have a small gap between the blank and the tube. You need to work quickly with a five-minute setup.

Figure 4 Pen turning mandrel

Figure 5 Self-centering drill press vise

Figure 6 Pen press

If the pen blanks have a grain pattern (Fig 7), you'll need to decide how you want the pattern to be displayed – which will be the top or bottom. If there's no grain there's no issue unless there's a flaw (character) that you'd like to emphasize. You can also use different types of wood for a certain effect.

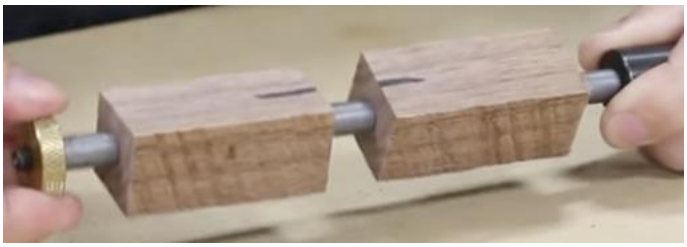


Figure 7 Mandrel with wood blanks and sizing bushings. Note the marks on the blanks for grain orientation

Square the Ends

Rick uses a miter saw and a small sanding disc to square up the ends but you can use a pen mill or barrel trimmer (Fig 8) to remove excess glue and cut the wood exactly flush with the brass tubes. If you're sanding the ends square, make sure that the blank with the tube in it is perpendicular to the sander because there are some pen kits where that is critical. Put the parts – bushings and blanks – on the mandrel and tighten it by hand or with pliers. DO NOT OVERTIGHTEN or you risk warping the mandrel. Put the mandrel in the spindle.

Figure 8 Pen mills and barrel trimmer

Mount on Lathe

Once you've placed the blanks on a pen mandrel, separated by appropriate bushings, mount it on the lathe, tapered end into the headstock spindle. The other end of the mandrel will go onto a live center mounted in the tailstock.

Turn the Pen

Rick runs his lathe around 2000 RPM and uses a roughing gouge and skew chisel (Fig 9) to turn the material down to the desired shape, making it flush with the bushings.

Figure 9 Gouge and skew chisel

Sand and Finish

With a well-sharpened skew, you can get a fine finish that may not require sandpaper. However, most people will use sandpaper, anywhere from 150 grit through 600+ grits while the lathe is running. Sometimes, Rick (Fig 10) just uses 220, 320, 400. A lot of times he'll use 400 grit. For softer woods, you really don't want to use 600. While sanding, do not stop in one place or you'll put a groove where you don't want it. You can also burnish the wood by grabbing a handful of shavings, pinch it together in your hand and press it against the spinning wood for additional luster. In this demonstration, before Rick applies a finish, he puts grooves in the barrel using a thin piece of walnut (Fig 11). You can also use a piece of wire or a skew chisel. He touches it up with sandpaper.

Figure 10 Rick sanding at the lathe

There are myriad finishing options for protection and durability: CA (superglue); friction polish and wax; oils; lacquer and varnish; and, buffing using a compound and buffing wheel. Rick used several coats of CA finish applied with a paper towel. He does a touchup with 0000 steel wool – which makes it look like he just ruined it – and then buffs it with a hand-held buffing wheel (Fig 12) and the shine comes right

Figure 11 Grooving wood with another piece of wood

back with no texture in it. For the final finish, he adds a touch of Renaissance wax. It's a micro-crystalline wax ideal for wood, providing a durable, glass-clear, and acid-neutral protective layer that won't yellow.

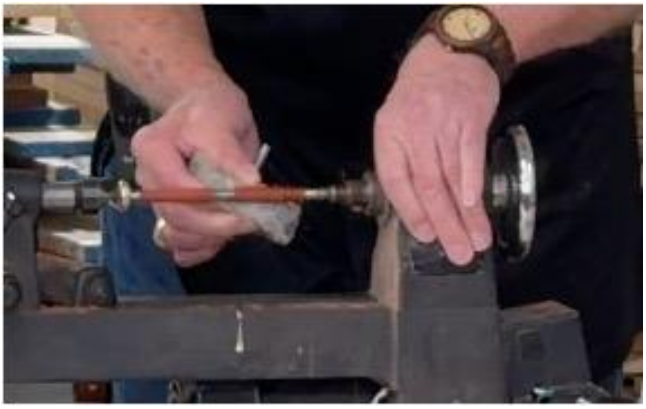


Figure 12 Buffing with a buffing wheel

Assemble

To assemble the components (tip, mechanism, clip, cap), use a pen press (Fig 6) or vise to carefully press the tip into the bottom barrel and, separately, the clip and cap into the upper barrel. Add the click or twist mechanism to the bottom, slide the center band over it, slide the top on and you're done.

Turning pens is a popular woodworking craft that involves crafting custom writing instruments using a lathe and specialized kits. It is favored by both beginners and experts for its low entry cost, minimal space requirements, and the ability to complete a beautiful, functional project in a short amount of time – often under an hour.

For additional information, see *Turning Pens with Kip and Rex* (Fig 13).

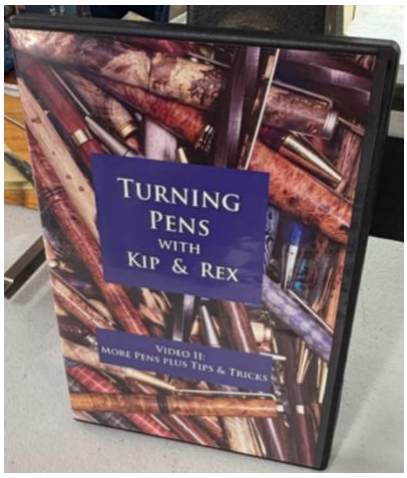


Figure 13 Pen turning book

Newcomers/Visitors

The club welcomed Mary, Felix, Chris O'Brien, Roy, and a couple others whose names I didn't catch.

Show and Tell

Alright, let's get to everyone's favorite portion of the meeting.

Grant Coleman

Grant saw simple little cars for sale on AliExpress, but he'd never seen cars with spherical wheels. It looked really cool and thought he'd make one for his grandson. It turned out to be more complicated than he thought finding the wheels, because they're not wheels, they're spherical drawer pulls, which means they're threaded for machine screws. So, he had to get threaded stock the right size and pitch, and then realized it was going to act like a little rasp inside the hole to wear the holes out, so he had to find the right size tubing, stainless steel tubing, to put in. This car was made from birch and finished with walnut oil. If you've ever had a kid and you had a wooden car that didn't really roll, this one rolls; it rolls great!

Holly Bentley

Holly, with the help of Rick Ward, turned five measuring spoons she bought at Rockler. Because of the way the metal spoon screws on to the wood, the hard part was lining up the spoons so that when they're facing up the color side would be represented. If any of you have worked with these before and you can predict what is going to be right side when it's facing up, please let her know what the secret is. Of course, if you don't use striped wood, you don't have that problem, but then where's the fun in that.

Conrad Wheeler

Conrad wanted to get back in the shop and start working on stuff because after an accident you have to overcome your fear or you may never get back. So, back in he went and made a drill press table for his new drill press. It is heavy; it still has the base attached. Two layers of three-quarter ply on the bottom keep the deck from having to have a notch cut out when you go to crank it. He's getting to be friends with the table saw again, although it's not trustworthy. He used a hole saw to cut out an insert where the spindle drops down. He'll use that insert as a template for extra and better fitting inserts, which he hasn't gotten around to, yet. The next part is building the new router table.

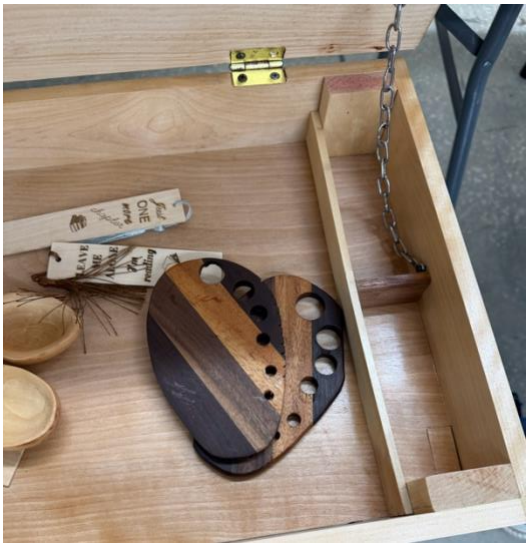
Frank McMullen

Frank has six kids and 13 grandkids; a couple are married and bunch are getting married. They have a long list of what they want from him. So, he made four end grain cutting boards from a $300 slab of beautiful canary wood from Jeff Futch. Canary wood has a pattern in it. The board

he showed had 10 slices across one piece with every other one turned up. Since it's end grain, it will last for a long time and with canary wood, it's heavy. He finished it with cutting board oil, conditioner, and beeswax. They each get a bottle of the beeswax to maintain it. Wash it with a soapy sponge, rinse and let it dry and recondition it. Do not let it sit in water and never put it in the dishwasher.

Ken Boyd

Ken had to make his wife a Christmas present. As he thought about it, he studied her, and saw her in her chair. His wife's an old English teacher at Brandon High, and she's been using this TV tray for 30 years. He decided to make her an arm chair table with Shakespeare, Charles Dickens and Hemingway laser etched into it for her to put her stuff in. He also made a phone stand and charger, and a coaster and book mark. He has a new engraver which he is really enjoying; he even engraves on wooden spoons. Ken's nine-year-old granddaughter, Camilla, made a spoon with a chisel and spoon gouge and he engraved "Don't bother me, I'm eating" on it for her. The table was made from birch and purple heart with a Deft finish.

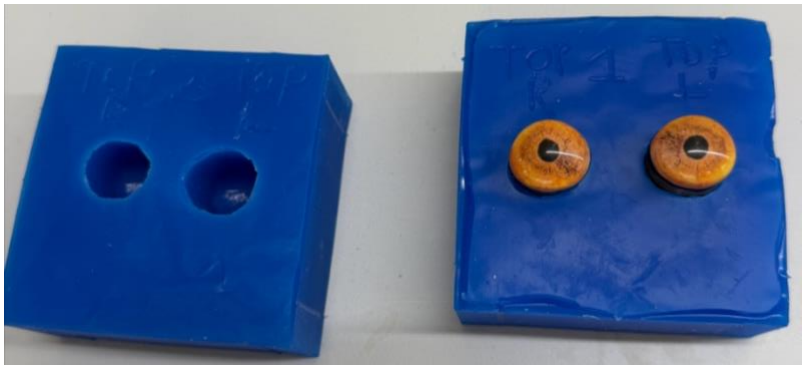


Aaron Harrigan

Aaron, with Ken Boyd's help, made two cutting boards from purple heart, rosewood, padauk, yellow heart and birch with a butcher block oil and wax finish.

Caleb Nixon

Caleb's been working on his state fair project, a big lion head intarsia with 140 pieces. Originally, the eyes in the picture were made of wood but he didn't like that so, after much contemplating, he thought of using a silicone mold. He made the wooden eyes first and cleared them with water-based polyurethane and then made molds of them. Then he carved those down and made another set and finished those with an epoxy clear coat. The first set is thinner than the second and, for reasons unknown, the first set clouded up. The second set, not pictured, are now in the intarsia, ready for the fair.



David Carvalho

Dave was looking for knife blanks and also found a gladius, a short, double-edged sword used by Roman legionaries. He made the sword and knife handles from walnut and Indian rosewood with a boiled linseed oil finish. The sword and knife blanks were bought online and he added the handles and brass hardware. He said the sword's a little heavy but looks nice on the wall.


IN MY DEFENSE
I WAS LEFT
UNSUPERVISED


IN MY DEFENSE
I WAS LEFT
UNSUPERVISED


IN MY DEFENSE
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Robert Babbitt

Robert made two double-sided strops from the kangaroo leather Jim Ethington brought back from Australia. The strops are adhered to torrefied* ash. He gave them to Jim.

*Note: per Google AI, torrefied wood, or thermally modified wood, is timber heated in an oxygen-starved kiln (400–600°F) to remove moisture, sap, and oils, creating a lightweight and highly stable material. This process mimics decades of natural aging, making the wood resistant to warping, rot, and moisture damage while increasing stiffness.

Tom Bolen

Tom made a brochure box from padauk, oak, and poplar with a clear finish. It lacks our club logo on the front –hint, hint for you carvers or laser engravers. When finished, we'll fill it with BWC brochures and put it on Rockler's counter to promote the club. You can never have too much good advertising.

Jeff Futch

In December 2025, Jeff did a band saw box presentation and made a band saw cat box (drawing and finished box pictured below). It's made from canary wood and cherry and it's finished and flocked. He also did a couple free forms; one from black walnut with maple pulls, the other from ambrosia maple with cherry pulls. They are finished with TotalBoat's Wood Honey.

Darryl Kehoe

Darryl made a turkey call from imbuia wood he got from Ralph. It has a carbon fiber sound board in it and the playing surface on it is krypton glass. This one is not etched because he was going to enter it into the state fair but somebody wanted it so he didn't etch it. Stacy will soon start etching the glass for Darryl in a nice oval. Stacey's been playing around with one and figured out how to do it. Stacy also makes the centers as well as the matching stick. Robert makes the stands with an angled dovetail, not an easy task.

So, for this ensemble cast, the Academy Award goes to Darryl for Directing; Stacey for Sound and Visual Affects; Robert for Production Design; and Best Supporting Actor goes to Ralph for supplying the wood. Great teamwork, fellas!!

Rich Nannis

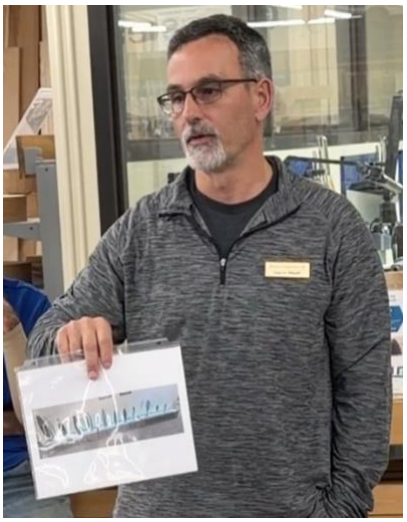
Richard saw the club was going to make pens for the monthly presentation so he decided to make one no one had made, a solid brass pen. There are no tubes in it, just solid brass. He used a series of automotive sanding disks to finish it. You don't have to worry about the finish cracking!

Jim Ethington

Jim's neighbor asked Jim to build him a cabinet for his laundry room. The cabinet is 8' H x 30" D with six doors. The doors are made from poplar and will be painted. Jim has never done doors before – rabbets, hinges, frame and panel –so he enlisted the aid of Tom Bolen. This club is great for teamwork!! The cabinet and doors should be finished and installed by the next club meeting. Can't wait to see the pictures …….. of Jim taking all the credit. ☺

Stacey Rhody

Stacey made a topographic relief of the CENTCOM Area of Responsibility on a CNC. The blue represents bodies of water. The plaque is made from pecan and epoxy with a lacquer finish. The lower right corner was scaled down to fit a standard metal business card, which he'll engrave. He makes these as going away gifts. He also made an ordnance display stand – too big and heavy (couple hundred pounds) to bring in. It's three separate boxes of ¾" sapele plywood, custom trim on top, ½" plate glass, carved sapele lettering and LED lighting. It's finished with Rubio Monocoat.



Rossie Knighton

Rossi made a chevron cutting board from mahogany, padauk, honey lotus, and ambrosia maple and finished with oil and wax.

Rich Ollis

Rich needed a way to get rid of his 4-inch dust hoses all over the floor and he didn't want to route everything with 4-inch pipe so he made magnetic dust collector fittings. You can get them online for $20-25 apiece, so for Christmas he got his daughter a 3D printer and he's been using it way more than she has. He has them with positive and negative opposites so when you switch it up it'll pop on itself. He made them in 4" and 2 ½" sizes.

John Miller

John took a break from making cigar ashtrays to making a cutting board from birch. It needs some more sanding and a finish. He made it for Valentine's Day and even cut a heart in the handle.

Fred Langes

Fred made bread board from birch and walnut with no finish. She wanted one with a handle; he didn't, so he made it rectangular with a hole. Since he only has a jigsaw, he made a jig to radius all four corners identically. He also added some epoxy. The board has no finish.

Club pictures


SLABS


Rockler.com/classes

Reminders

Thank Yous

The club gives a big **THANK YOU** to Rockler for their support and generosity in 2025. May we both be as fortunate in 2026.

Loads of thanks to Sherry Jardin, Diane Boesdorfer and Joe O'Connor for the delightful repast.

And the Winners Are

$10 Rockler Gift Certificate for attendees (sign-in tickets) – Brian Mathes
$10 Rockler Gift Certificate for Show and Tell – Holly Bentley
$15 Rockler Gift Certificate for Show and Tell – Jim Ethington
$25 Rockler Gift Certificate for Show and Tell – Aaron Harrigan
50/50 (for the big moolah) - $53 Steve Shipley

Meeting times

The BWC meets the 2nd Tuesday of the month at Rockler Woodworking & Hardware, 169 Brandon Town Center Dr, Brandon, FL 33511, 813-793-6030. February's meeting will be the 10th from 7-9 PM.

Newsletter by John Bacca
AV support by Conrad Wheeler

Club Officers

Tom Bolen, President
John Bacca, Vice President
Ken Coleman, Treasurer
Holly Bentley, Secretary