Segmented Pens

By Don Ditto

During the Show-n-Tell at our November 2006 meeting, folks asked how I created the inlay in the pens I had on display. It's actually a segmentation process. I wish I could take credit for this idea, but I learned it by watching a demo at the recent Woodworker's Show in Portland. It involves four glue-ups to create the pen blank. From there, you turn the blank as you would any pen. The following pictures show the steps I follow to get the desired result.

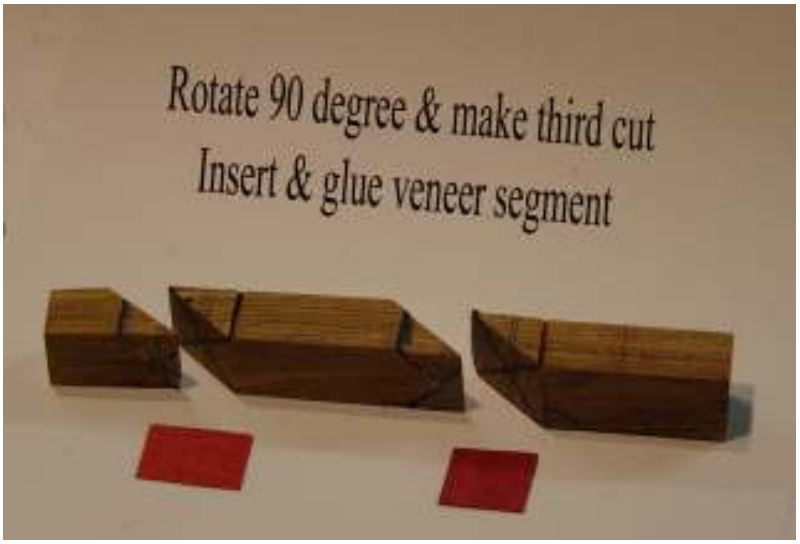
I select the desired pen blank and a basic Slim Line pen kit, and four pieces of veneer. You can use the same color on all the veneer, or you may decide to have two different colors of veneer. In this example, I use two pieces of black and two pieces of red veneer, which make a nice contrast to the Zebrawood blank.

Make two 45-degree cuts, positioning each one so it aligns about in the center of the barrels. Keep in mind that the saw kerf will subtract from the length of the blank piece of wood if it is larger in thickness of the veneer segment you are gluing to the blank. In this case I allowed 5 inches for the blank. You should end up with two 2 ¼ inch blanks once they are cut in the middle.

Once your first set of veneers have been glued and set, make a second set of 45- degree cuts, going in the opposite direction of the first set. The picture below shows how your pen blank should look after the first two sets of 45-degree cuts have been made, with the veneer segments glued to the blank.

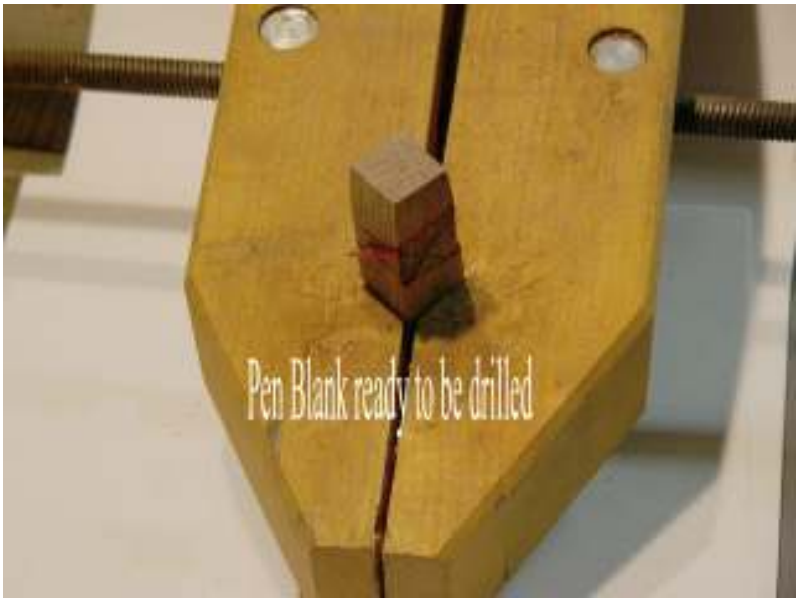
Square up the blanks with a disk sander after the second and third cuts so they lay flat against the miter fence when making the next two cuts.

Rotate the blank 90 degrees in either direction to make the final two cuts. The picture below shows the blank after the third cut has been made, with two pieces of red dyed veneer ready to be glued to blank.



I took an existing wood clamp and made a cut out to hold the blank for drilling a 7 mm hole for the kit barrels.

Blank ready to be drilled using a drill press.



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Blanks are cut to a length about ¼ inch longer than barrels. Glue the barrels using CA glue. Set with accelerator after pushing barrel into the blank

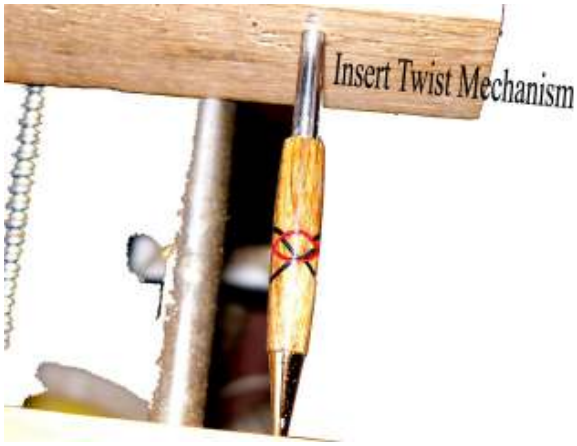
The blanks are now ready to be turned using a pen mandrel.

The following is a picture of a barrel trimmer and the turned blanks.

Using a wood vise, wood clamp or pen insertion tool, install cap and clip.

Insert tip using wood vise.

Insert twist mechanism to a depth where the pen point is usable when exposed and protected when retracted. Make sure threads are toward the center of the pen before installing.



The finished pen with black and red dyed veneer segments

Samples below show pens made with .20 & .10 segments, as well as a pen made without segments. The center pen has .20 thick Tulipwood segments and a maple pen blank. The pen on the right was purchased at the Woodworking Show in Portland and used as the model.