



A Commemorative Urn FOR A SPECIAL FRIEND

Kevin Felderhoff

Sometimes you meet a person who is going to change everything and make you want to be a better human being. For me, that person was my friend Gary Kendrick. Gary seemed to have never met a stranger; he loved people and learning new things. After we became fast friends in 2009, Gary found an interest in woodturning. I taught him the basics, and on his first day he turned two wooden bowls. He was so proud of those bowls that he decided to pursue woodturning and made bowls for friends and family over several years.

Earlier this year, Gary sustained a head injury as a spectator at a boxcar derby race. One of the boxcars suddenly veered off course and crashed into a crowd of onlookers. Although he fought to recover, Gary passed away one week later.

A commemorative urn

I decided to turn an urn in Gary's honor and remembrance. Choosing the wood was easy, as I had some beautiful ambrosia maple from a tree that had been removed near Gary's home. He could see this tree from his deck, so its wood was the perfect choice.

I wanted to prepare the urn in time for a scheduled gathering of friends and family to celebrate Gary's life, so I had only five days to complete it. I ordered brass insert threads right away,

then found and cut the best piece of wood to use. I mounted the wood on the lathe and turned the urn endgrain to ¼" (6mm) wall thickness in hopes the wood would dry quickly.

When the brass insert parts arrived, I noticed that the urn was not going to be dry enough in time, so I needed to accelerate the drying process. I did so by using a microwave oven in short intervals and weighing the urn between each "cooking." I knew the urn was dry enough when its weight stopped decreasing. I took extreme care not to get it too hot and form any cracks.

After the urn was dry enough and the brass pieces were epoxied to the mesquite top, it was time to remount the urn, flatten its top, and glue on the lid (Photos 1, 2). I then sanded all the parts and reverse-mounted the urn using a jam chuck to turn and sand the bottom. I finished the urn with oil and wax (Photo 3).

Friends and family gathered at my home to enjoy a celebration of Gary's life (Photo 4). We ate and drank, just like Gary would have wanted us to. At the end, we made a toast to Gary, and I privately presented the urn to his wife and daughter. ■

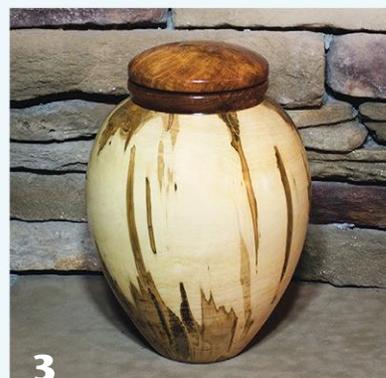
Kevin Felderhoff is a member of the Carolina Mountain Woodturners and lives in Brevard, North Carolina.

The urn in progress



The hollowed urn is remounted for final turning after drying. Since the urn was made from green (wet) wood and the author was working on a short schedule, he sped up the drying process by "cooking" the work in a microwave oven for short intervals.

The finished urn



3
Memorial Urn, 2018, Ambrosia maple, 11" x 7½" (28cm x 19cm)

A celebration of life



4
Friends and family share a toast during a special celebration of Gary's life.