

Raw Beauty

From a basic 2x4

By Dave Ramsey

It has been said that you can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. Join Arizona turner Dave Ramsey as he describes how he transformed \$3.94 in 2x4s into a \$500 bowl.

Lumberyard treasure

It has been said that you can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. Applying this concept to wood turning, most bowl turners would agree that they want only selected wood for their creations. This writer seeks to prove that you can make a good vessel

from one of man's most lowly wood sources—the common eight-foot 2x4" fir stud.

My source was a local lumberyard where I selected two eight-foot 2x4s. The cost: \$1.87 each. My bowl stock was green, filled with knots and somewhat bowed. After a month in my Arizona

garage to dry out, the 2x4s were even more curved than when I bought them, but at least they weren't twisted.

Design a 2x4 masterpiece

After several design ideas, I decided to glue the bowl's pieces together with the four-inch



surfaces together. (See the Glue-Up Diagram page 43.) In laying out this form, I was able to make a bowl blank about 16" in diameter. The studs had a round chamfered edge, which would make the finished piece about 1/8" less than the widest dimension when they were turned out of the blank. (As you probably know, "two by fours" measure only 1 1/2 x 3 1/2".)

Before you begin this project, you'll need four 20"-long clamps, four 10"-long clamps and about 12 ounces of glue (I used Tite Bond Red Label glue).

Get out the glue

I started the blank by gluing two 7 1/4" pieces to a solid 16" segment as shown in Photo A. Next, I glued two shorter pieces to the long members as shown in Photo B. Determine the length by referencing the page 43 drawing.

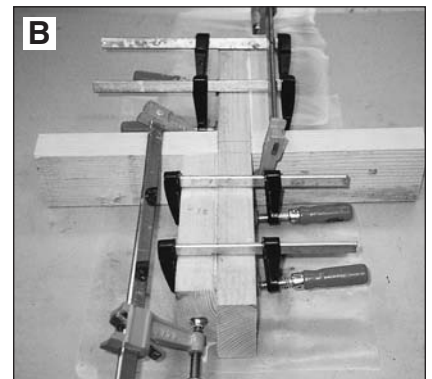
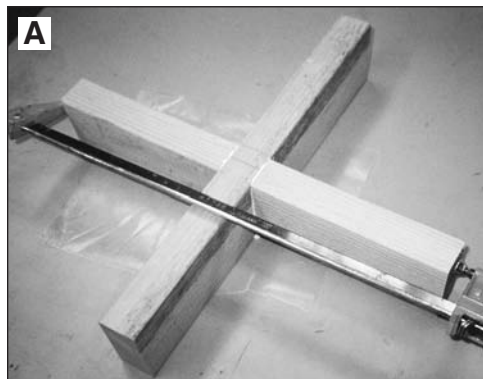
Notice that pressure is applied by two sets of clamps at right angles to eliminate gaps from surfaces. Allow the glue to dry for two hours under clamped pressure before moving to the next step.

In this manner, additional pairs of the stud were cut and glued until all pieces were in place as shown in Photo C.

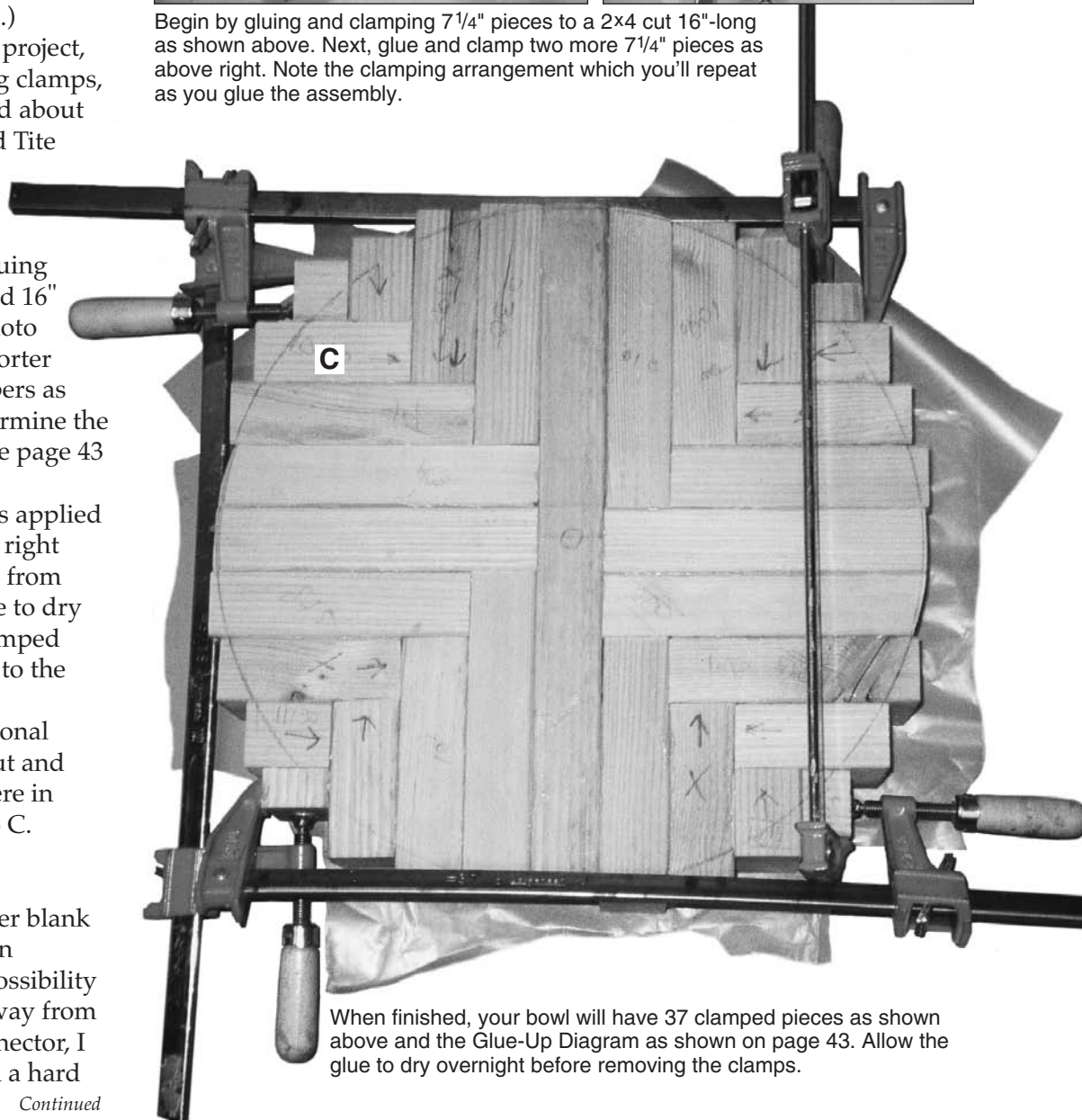
On to the lathe

The finished 16"-diameter blank (Photo D) weighed seven pounds. To avoid the possibility of the blank breaking away from the face plate wood connector, I used a 6" face plate with a hard

Continued



Begin by gluing and clamping 7 1/4" pieces to a 2x4 cut 16"-long as shown above. Next, glue and clamp two more 7 1/4" pieces as above right. Note the clamping arrangement which you'll repeat as you glue the assembly.



When finished, your bowl will have 37 clamped pieces as shown above and the Glue-Up Diagram as shown on page 43. Allow the glue to dry overnight before removing the clamps.

maple disc (A) fastened with 1" lag screws and glued to a similar sized poplar "sacrificial" disc (B), as shown in Photo E. This strong attachment provided a lot of glue surface. Before gluing the face plate to the blank, I turned a flat spot on the blank to eliminate the chamfered edges of the stud. This was done by wedging the blank against a 14" flat plate attached to the head stock using a live center in the tail stock as shown in Photo F. After gluing the 6" face plate to the newly flattened blank, I allowed the assembly to dry for 24 hours to attain maximum glue strength.

Final touches

The resulting blank produced a low profile bowl 16×23¼". The knots did not present a problem as long as my scrapers were sharp. There were only a few cracks requiring cyanoacrylate filler to mend. The rough turning was sanded with a 3" disc sander (available from Craft Supplies USA; 800-551-8876) starting with 60-grit and progressing to 80-, then 100-, 120-, 150- and finally 220-grit. I colored the flat edge of the bowl with red mahogany stain before applying 15 coats of water-base urethane.

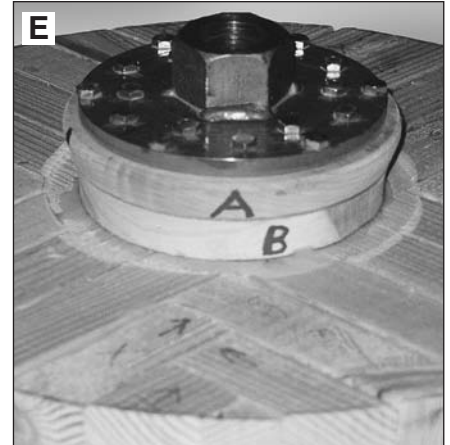
During lively bidding at a charity auction, the finished bowl from \$3.94 worth of 2×4 studs fetched a handsome \$500 price.

My conclusion was that it is possible to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear if you devote enough patience and time.

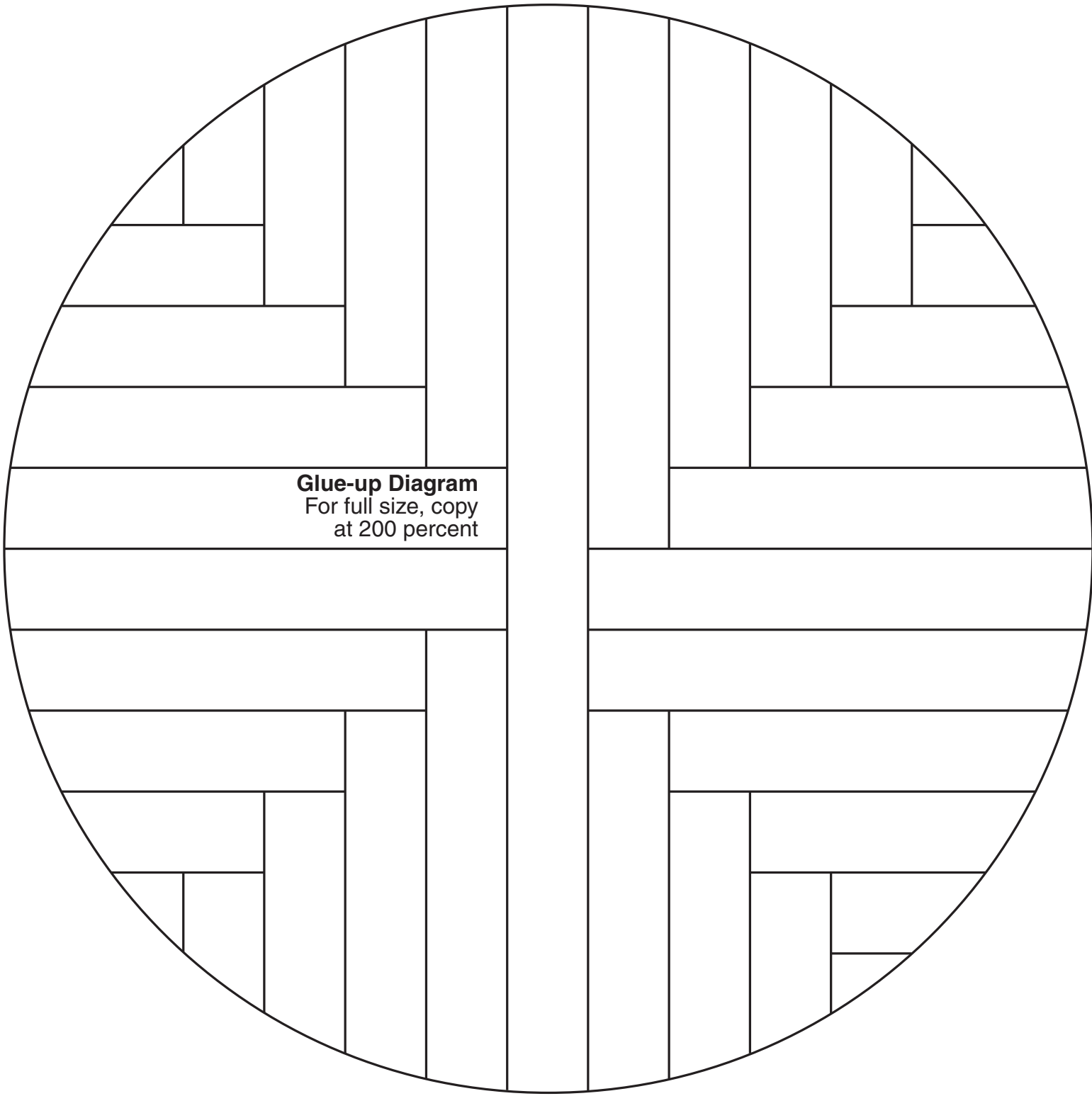
Dave Ramsey (dvewood@aol.com) didn't stay retired long after he moved to Phoenix. Dave has fine-tuned his stave bowl skills, and now four galleries exhibit his work.



Pencil directional arrows in your blank to help guide your blank assembly, above. Maple (A) and poplar (B) discs, right, are key to the bowl preparation.



To ensure a solid mounting surface, turn a 6"-diameter flat spot in the assembly with a scraper as shown above. For this step, wedge the blank against a 14" flat plate attached to the head stock using a live center in the tail stock.



Glue-up Diagram
For full size, copy
at 200 percent