

# COLLARS FOR HOLLOW VESSELS

*A neat way to crown your work*

ART LIESTMAN

**I**N THE FALL OF 2000, I STUDIED WITH Jacques Vesery in Damariscotta, ME, thanks to funding from an AAW Educational Opportunity Grant. My two days with Jacques were an incredible learning experience, providing me with lots of ideas to explore in more detail for years to come.

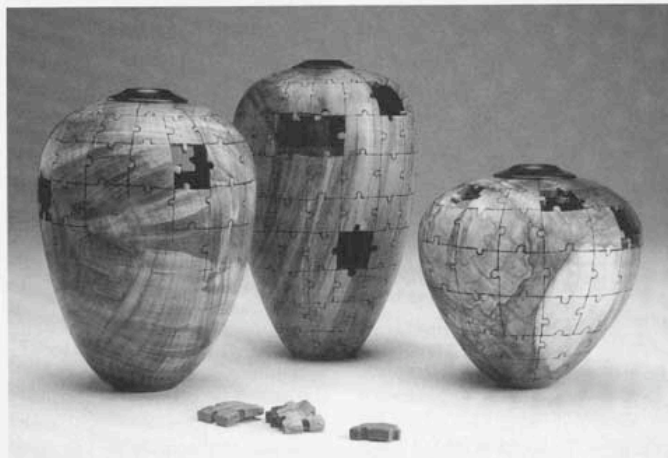
Jacques is known for his small hollow vessels that are made in two pieces. The main body is made of straight-grained domestic wood, usually cherry. Its surface is carved, leaving little if any of the original turned surface, and then colored with acrylic inks and paints. This main body is then topped off with a separate "collar" or "neck piece" made of fancier wood (a burl or an exotic) chosen specifically to contrast with the main body. The collar is sanded and finished with a friction polish, retaining the natural wood look.

The addition of the collar significantly enhances the overall appearance of these carved and colored vessels. A well-chosen collar can also add interest to other hollow vessels. In this short article, I'll describe the process for making these collars, as well as the tools that will help you efficiently shape these pieces.

## Vesery's special tools

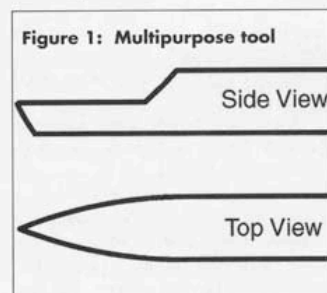
Jacques uses a couple of special tools during the process, although the collar can be made without them. One of these tools is his "multipurpose tool" — a pointed scraper made from a 1/4-in. round high-speed steel blank. This tool can be used in shaping the collar. It can also be used in the final shaping of the main body of the hollow form, particularly on the endgrain. The tool is excellent to use in shaping the concave bottom of the hollow form.

To make the multipurpose tool,



This group of vessels, part of the author's Puzzling Illusion series features the type of collars described in this article. These vessels, which resemble three-dimensional jigsaw puzzles, range from 5-to-7 1/2-in. high. The bodies are big-leaf maple and the collars are ebony. Photo by Kenji Nagai. Drawings by author.

begin by forming a flat surface at the business end of a 1/4-in. round blank. This surface will become the top of the scraper.

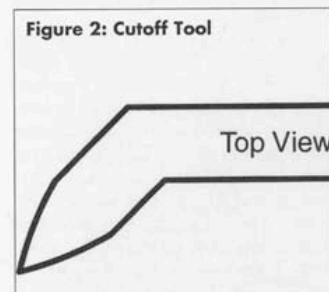


Shape the sides of the tool to form an arched v-shape as shown in the top view of Figure 1, above. The curvature of the v can be adjusted to suit your purpose. Both sides of the V can be used for cutting, but do not

attempt to make deep cuts with the tip of the tool. I find it easier to shape the tip and sharpen this tool with a 1-in. wide belt sander.

## Modifying an Allen wrench

The second special tool is the cutoff tool. This is made from an Allen wrench that has been straightened out to less than 90°. Its cutting tip is



shaped much like the multipurpose tool with a flattened top and arched v sides. This tool is used to widen the through hole at the bottom end of the collar and it can also be used for parting the collar off from the waste block, cutting from the inside out rather than cutting from the outside in as with a traditional parting tool.

### Creating a collar

To create a collar, follow these steps:

1. Mount a waste block in a chuck or on a faceplate. For the waste block, Jacques prefers a close-grain hardwood such as plain maple. It should be oriented side grain.
2. Cut a small blank of collar material large enough in diameter for the desired collar size and thick enough for the height of the collar plus the thickness of the main body.
3. Use medium viscosity cyanoacrylate glue to attach the collar blank to the waste block.
4. Set calipers to the desired outside collar diameter. This must be large enough to cover the opening in the vessel but can otherwise be made as large or small as you want.
5. Turn the blank to the desired diameter and clean up the top surface.
6. Bore or drill the opening hole into the blank. Clean up the surface with the multipurpose tool.
7. The next step is to set calipers to the size of the tenon to be glued into the opening. The opening may not be perfectly round, particularly if the wood was not dry when the vessel was hollowed. It is important to have a snug fit, so set the calipers to the largest inside diameter of the vessel opening.
8. Form the tenon on the blank near the waste block to the proper diameter leaving extra material on the waste block side for parting

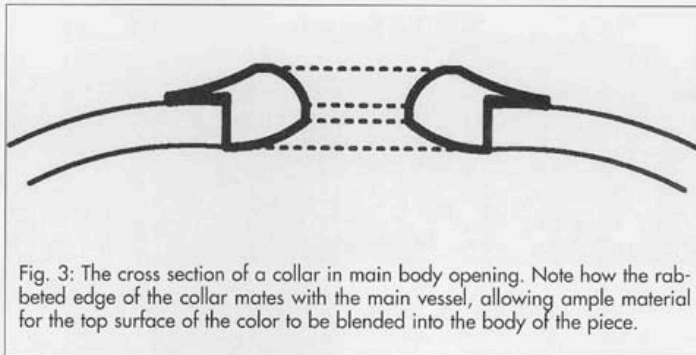


Fig. 3: The cross section of a collar in main body opening. Note how the rabbeted edge of the collar mates with the main vessel, allowing ample material for the top surface of the collar to be blended into the body of the piece.

- off.
9. Shape the collar as desired using either a bowl gouge or spindle gouge. Clean up the surface with the multipurpose tool.
10. With a thin bladed parting tool, undercut the collar to allow the edges to sit flush against the main body.
11. Sand as needed.
12. Apply finish as desired. Jacques uses a homemade friction polish applied with the best-quality toilet paper – a highly recommended shop supply Jacques makes his friction polish by combining two parts shellac, one part oil, and one part alcohol.
13. Part the collar from the waste block. Jacques does this by parting partially from the outside and then finishing the parting from the inside using the cutoff tool.
14. Reverse mount the nearly completed collar in the chuck (or, another option that I have used is to attach the collar to the waste block with double-stick tape).
15. Using the multipurpose tool, clean up the frayed edges at the inside edge of the through hole.
16. Again, sand as needed and apply friction polish.
18. Remove the collar and check the fit with the vessel opening. If the vessel opening has warped, it may be necessary to enlarge it to fit the

tenon. This can be done with a small drum sander mounted in a rotary carver or with hand tools.

19. The collar can then be attached to the main body using medium viscosity cyanoacrylate glue.

Figure 3, above, shows the cross section of collar in main body opening.

### Experimenting with design

Since studying with Jacques I have been exploring several designs for hollow vessels that are enhanced by the addition of contrasting collars. The photo on the previous page shows three hollow vessels from my Puzzling Illusion series. These pieces appear to be three-dimensional jigsaw puzzles. The vessels range from 5-to-7 $\frac{1}{2}$ -in. in height. The bodies are made from big-leaf maple and the collars are made of ebony.

The addition of contrasting collars to hollow forms dresses them up. Give it a try!

*Art Liestman is a turner in Coquitlam, BC, Canada. If you would like to see more work by Jacques Vesery, the teacher who showed Liestman this method for turning collars, check Page 34 in the Winter 2001 issue of American Woodturner and the back cover and pages 27 on the Winter 2000 issue. Jacques will also be a presenter at the RI symposium.*