

# BETTER BUNGS BY BOB

BY BOB WHEELER, PACIFIC NORTHWEST CHAPTER

At this point in my restoration of my 1948, Chris-Craft 17' Deluxe, I am ready to install bungs, about 2000 of them in the topside planking. I have been using Don Dannenberg's fine book *How to Restore Your Wooden Runabout* and he has some really good ideas on how to install bungs on an almost production-line basis. I gave his methods a try and to a point, they work pretty well. But I had some difficulties.

Basically, he says to cut your bungs in line with the grain, in a row on the drill press with your stock against a clamped-on fence to a depth just shy of full penetration and then cut off the row on the band saw. Take this row of bungs, rub the end bung in glue, position it over the hole in line with the grain and tap it home, breaking off the bung when secure. Repeat as necessary.

He also states to use a bung cutter matched (machined) to your countersink and to take advantage of the round-over (chamfer) that will occur when the bung cutter reaches maximum cutting depth.

OK. Several conflicts and problems arise once you have to do this. I have the Fuller wooden box of tapered drills and countersinks and plug cutters. First: I have worn out all of the countersinks and drills for a # 8 screw by 3/8" countersink that I bought new from a local outlet called Tacoma Screw Products (TSP). Second: the plug cutter that came with the Fuller wooden box couldn't possibly be machined to fit my new parts; and third: the same plug cutter cuts a plug 3/4" deep which means it will go right through my 1/2" saved-and-matched plank stock and never give me the benefit of the chamfer. This makes life difficult. This shouldn't be so hard.

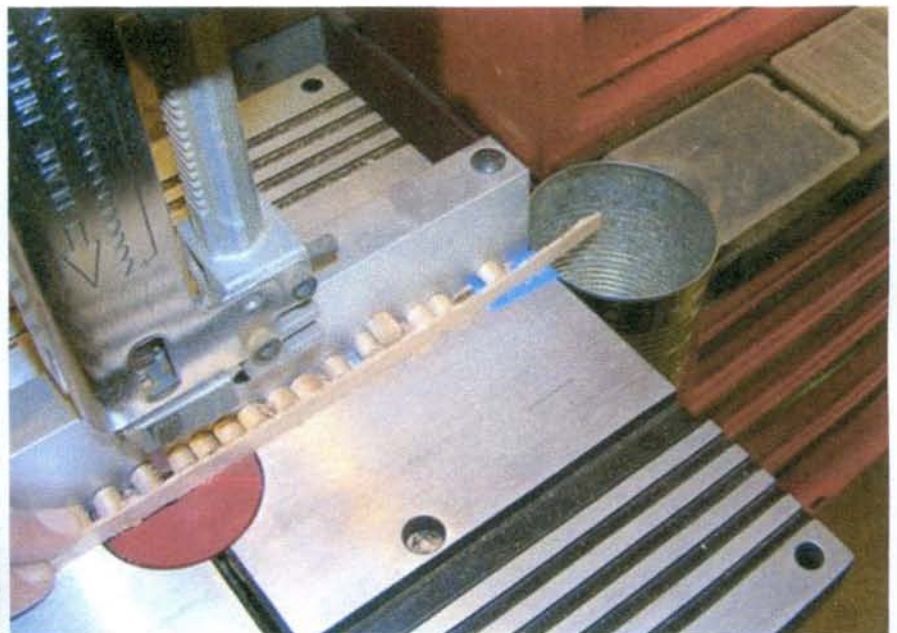


Careful reading of Don's words reveals the recommendation of using the Fuller plug cutter with the 3/8" shaft. A check in the Fuller wooden box shows a 1/4" shaft. Nothing fits...what's up? Hmmmm. My local

outlet (TSP) does not have this unit. So I check Fuller products on the Internet. Bingo! They make three different 3/8" plug cutters: a 4 flute, straight cut, max. length of 1/2", 3/8" drive shaft, product # 11660375, sold by Jamestown Distributors (JD) for \$11.18; a four flute, tapered cut, max. length of 1/2", 1/4" drive shaft, product # 11640375, sold by JD for \$11.18; and last; a two flute, straight cut, carbide tipped beauty # 11860375, that JD did not list on the Internet but when I called them, they had two in stock at a cost of \$107.78 each, no thank you. Shipping was over \$12.00. No thank you.

I also checked the Rockler website and they have a four flute, tapered cut, 1/4" hex drive plug cutter but no comment on depth of cut. I call the local (30 miles away) store and they cost about \$14.00 each so I grab my calipers and will see for myself what the depth of cut is and what the taper is. Viola! 1/2" depth and a taper of 0.010" to 0.011". I buy two and now we're in business. There is no product number but the SKU is 400000689685. I also learn that my spindle speed must be 1,000 to 2,000 RPM. Now to climb the next hill.

I do just a Don's book says (as described above) and find it just isn't all that easy. Experience, or lack of it raises its ugly head again.



Get a good grip on your bungs. The trick to that is a custom bungholder. (Facing page) File your hole for a precise fit; use the band saw to remove the flimsy bottoms— bungs go into the can. (This page) Bend the plexi slightly for a better angle on your work; cutting a slot allows for a flexible bung hole; make sure to mark your tapered ends and i.d. each can for their final destinations.

Lining up the bung properly is difficult because the wood backbone (that all the bungs are attached to) breaks at funny angles. It's hard to get glue on just one plug and tapping it often led to a partial hit because the next bung is so close, and on and on. Your fingers get in the way and extra light is mandatory. Slow, tedious work.

I get about 25 bungs in and I am saying to myself, "this is too hard." Yes, I am not real flexible and not real mobile but there must be a better way and I think I have found it.

After sleeping on this conundrum I come up with an idea for a "bung holder". I'll call it "Bob's Better Bung Holder" (I love alliteration). A scrap piece of 0.010" thick Plexiglas is cut into several pieces about 3/4" wide and 7" long. A 3/8" hole is drilled, centered and about 3/16" from one end. The pieces are laid one end on a 2x4 scrap with the last 2" (the end with the hole in it) clamped flat to the bench. It bends but doesn't break. A heat gun is applied and we have a handy bent handle that will keep our fingers out of the glue and away from the hull so that a square alignment is made plus you can see through this thing. The bung must be squarely placed in the holder with proper grain alignment and taper down.

The bung must also slip through the hole once hammered into place. This means a clean bung top and a slightly flexible hole. First, I cut a thin slot at the end towards and penetrating the 3/8" hole. Then, using a nice sample bung, I file the hole until I get the fit I want. A pry bar in the form of a commercial tack remover tool is my helper for removing the holder should it not wiggle off. This would be placed carefully under the split end of the holder to gently pry it off if needed.

Bungs: All of Don's ideas are good but we need free bungs with the tapered (thinner) end marked. We cut all the bungs on our stick of leftover plank stock and clear out all the sawdust and wood particles. Grab a felt tip pen and place a dot on the end of each bung.



The dot marks the end that is smaller. Then cut the bung strips off on the band saw as Don suggests. Get a tin can and mark it with the plank these bungs are to go in. Take your flimsy string of bungs over to your band saw and adjust the fence so that you will remove just the flimsy piece of wood connecting them all with the dotted tops of the bungs against the fence. Tape the tin can previously marked at the end of the fence. Now carefully cut all the bungs free. As you move the string forward, the loose bungs will be captured by the bottom scrap and will roll nicely into the tin can. Be careful here. Repeat as necessary.



**Load:** Place one of your bungs (from your marked tin can) into your holder (dot down, grain aligned, axis perpendicular and just a bit of bung showing above the holder).

**Install:** Goober up the end of the bung with glue just as Don describes, place over the hole carefully (this takes a little practice but you can see what you are doing and feel the bung hit the hole) and tap it partially in. Now remove the holder by wiggling and/or prying and finish tapping the bung home. Repeat as necessary.

I have made three of these holders and I figure with Faithful Crew (my wife) loading and goobering about as fast as I'm installing, we can move right along. And not everybody needs to put 2,000 of these in. This device helps you do it right when you are out of practice and only have a few to do.

The pictures show this thing and how it works. So keep plugging away, but now with greater control. 