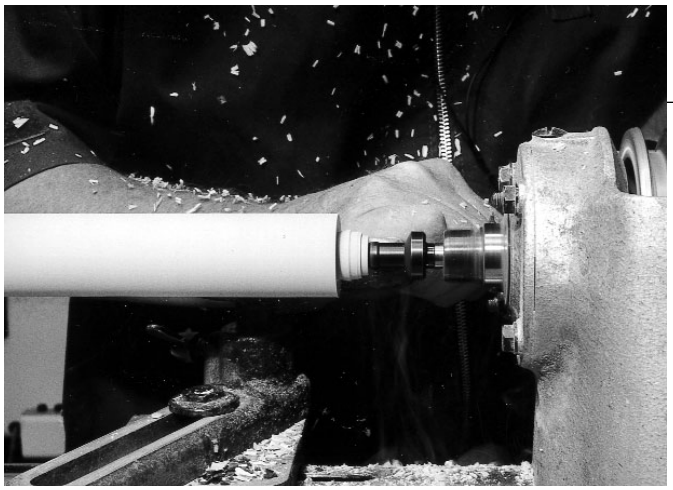

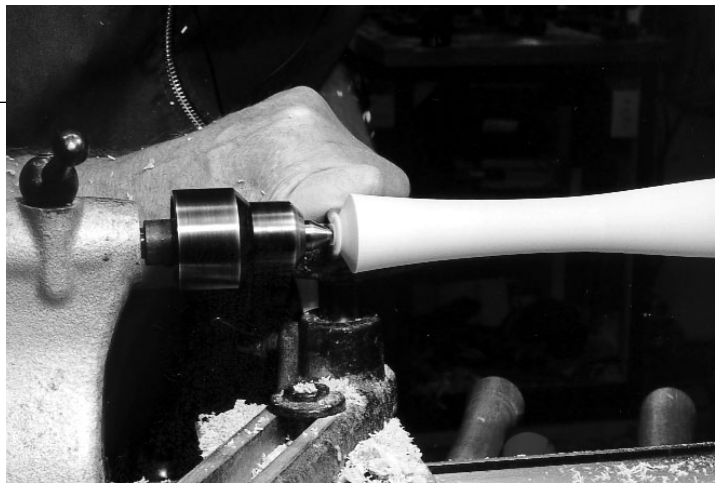

After roughing out the blank to a cylinder, Rosand uses a skew in a peeling motion to form the tenon for the tool ferrule, above left. Then he refines the shape of the handle with a roughing out gouge, smoothes it with a skew and then uses the point of the skew to shape the bottom of the handle, above right.

The first step in sharpening the skew is to create a "screwdriver" shape on the shaft, above left, then grind at an angle to form the skew, above right.

fit, tap the ferrule into place, return the blank to between centers and continue turning your handle. I use my roughing-out gouge to shape the rest of the handle and then make a final cut or two with the skew, followed by sanding up to about 400 grit.

At this point, you need to drill a $^1/_4$-in. diameter hole to accept the shaft of the tool. I do this on my lathe after fitting the bit in a chuck mounted in the headstock.

I drill this hole 2-in. deep. This leaves me 6-in. of usable skew. I find that the round skews on the market have tool shafts that are altogether too short. If the steel doesn't fit snugly into the handle, I mix up a bit of five-minute epoxy and glue the shaft into place and allow to dry.

Sharpening the skew

Now the tool needs to be sharpened.

The first step is to make a "screw driver" out of the round steel shaft. To do this I support the shaft of the tool with my fingers, which I rest on the tool rest. The tool is 90° to the wheel. I grind each side alternatively until it looks like a screwdriver. Then I grind the "skew" angle into the tool.

Once the angle is established, I grind each side alternatively, but at about a 30-to-35° angle until I am satisfied with the grind. To me, the angle is not real critical — a couple of degrees one way or another does not affect how the tools works.

As the tool gets hot, avoid quenching it in water to cool it. I have been told by those who know better than I that high speed steel tends to fracture when cooled in water. I haven't had any problems along these lines, but why tempt fate?

Making tool handles is great practice for the novice. You lose very little if you manage to destroy the tool blank.

A distinctive handle also makes it easier to identify your tools under all those chips and you will save a few bucks if you buy your tools unhandled.

Give it a try!

Bob Rosand is a professional turner and demonstrator in Bloomsburg, PA, and a member of the AAW Board of Directors.