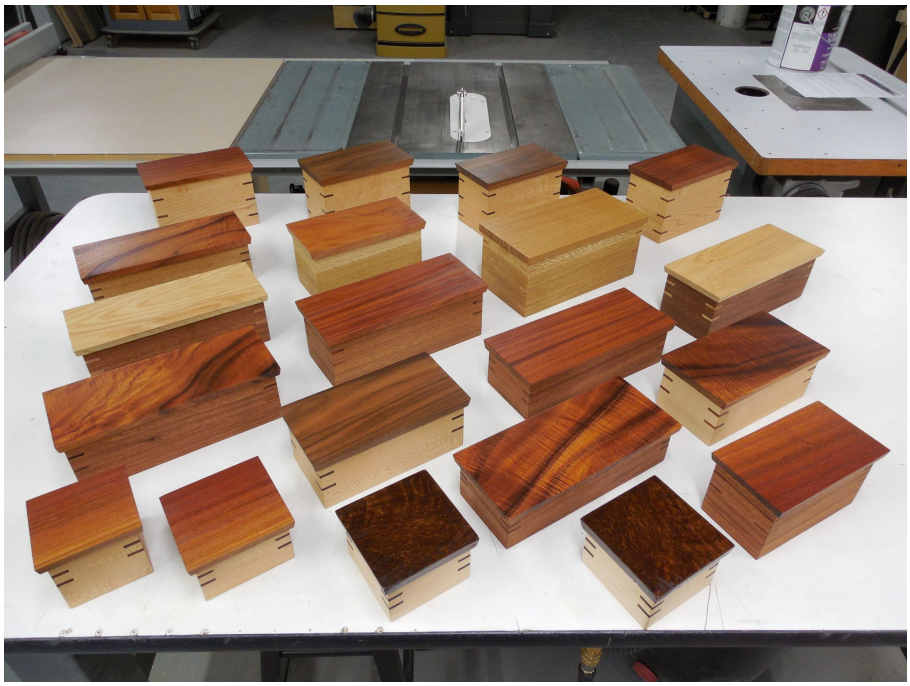
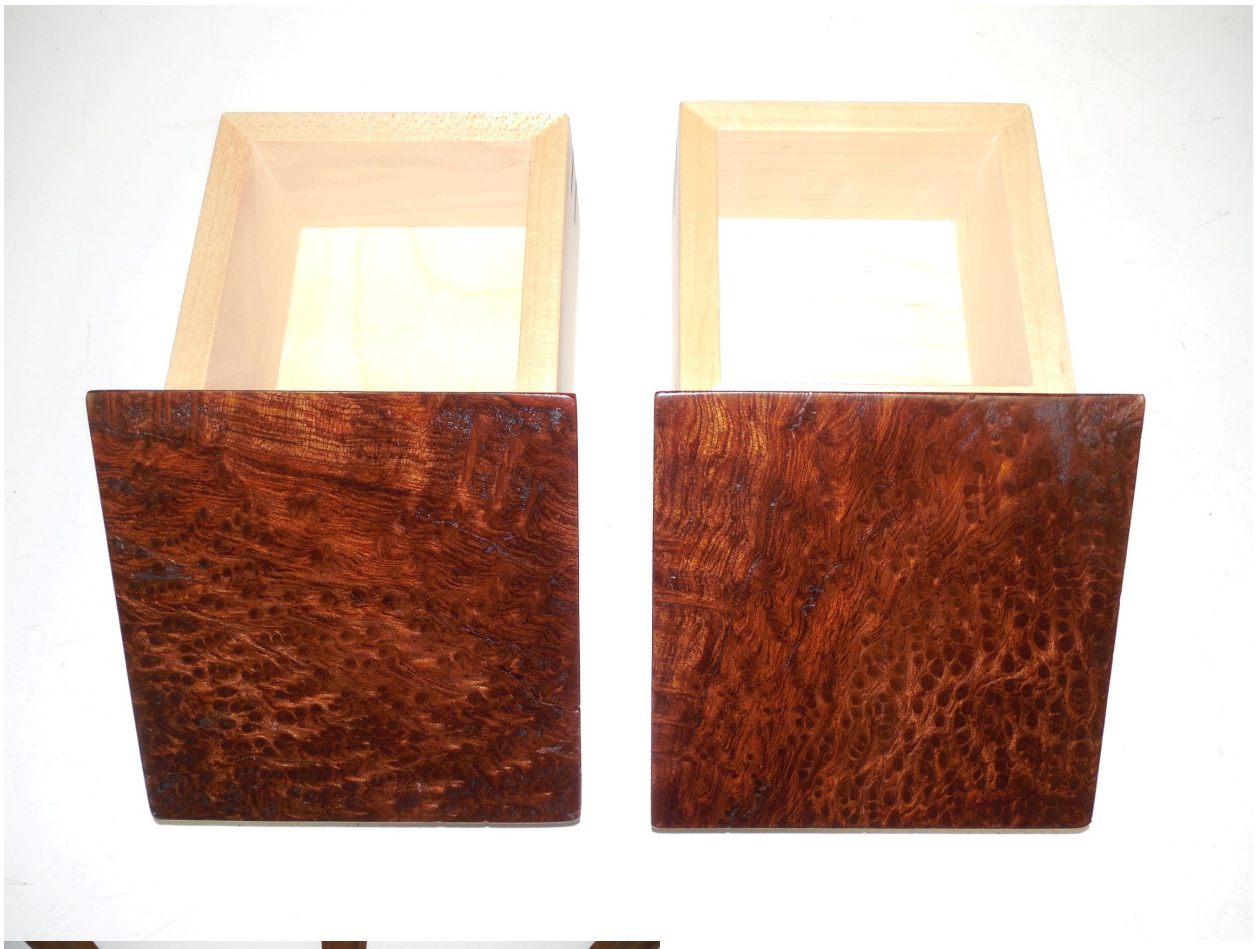
January 15, 2021
Dear fellow members,

I hope you are all safe and doing well. Stan asked me to share some of my recent woodworking projects.

My work finally slowed down recently so I decided to finish all of the Fine Woodworking Group projects that I started over the last couple of years. I was almost finished with the 16 boxes when my wife said that if I had made them slightly taller, they would fit tea bags and we could use them for gifts. I had some extra tops so I made 4 more taller boxes, bringing the total to 20. The 4 taller ones are in the back row of the photo. All of the boxes are 4-corner grain matched and the corner keys match the species of the tops. The boxes are made from maple, quarter sawn white oak, and mahogany. The tops are Koa, Brazilian cherry, ash, walnut burl, mahogany, white oak and black walnut. They were all sanded to 400 and finished with multiple coats of wipe-on polyurethane. I finally finished a project that I started a long time ago and got rid of some wood scraps in the process. Now I have a wall cabinet and some dovetailed tea boxes to finish.

I was having trouble with the walnut burl lids on my small boxes turning really dark when finished, hiding the beautiful grain. I put out a plea for help to Roger and Stan, who enlisted the additional knowledge of Howard Atamian and Ben Douglas. They all suggested starting out with shellac as the first coat. Burl darkens drastically because it is basically mostly end grain, so I sanded the lids to 1,000 grit. I then sealed them with a couple of light coats of shellac, followed with 2 more coats of wipe-on polyurethane. I'd like to thank Roger, Stan, Howard and Ben for sharing their finishing knowledge with me.

My other recent project was on our home. When we purchased our house 10 years ago, our family room fireplace wall was wall to wall, floor to ceiling adobe brick. We removed some of the brick and added a couple of windows a few years ago. I recently removed the remainder of the adobe bricks, framed in a new wall, extended the beams, re-bricked the front of the fireplace opening and re-installed the gas insert. The assortment of 1970s Miller beer pull top cans that I found in the wall might explain the poor craftsmanship of the red brick chimney. We had the popcorn ceiling removed and I primed and painted the ceiling, as well as the darkly stained beams. The mantel shelf in the photo is a cardboard mock-up. Once we get new flooring installed, we will pick a type of wood to build the mantel that goes with the floor color.

Thanks,
Mike Weatherson