# Laminated Keepsake Box

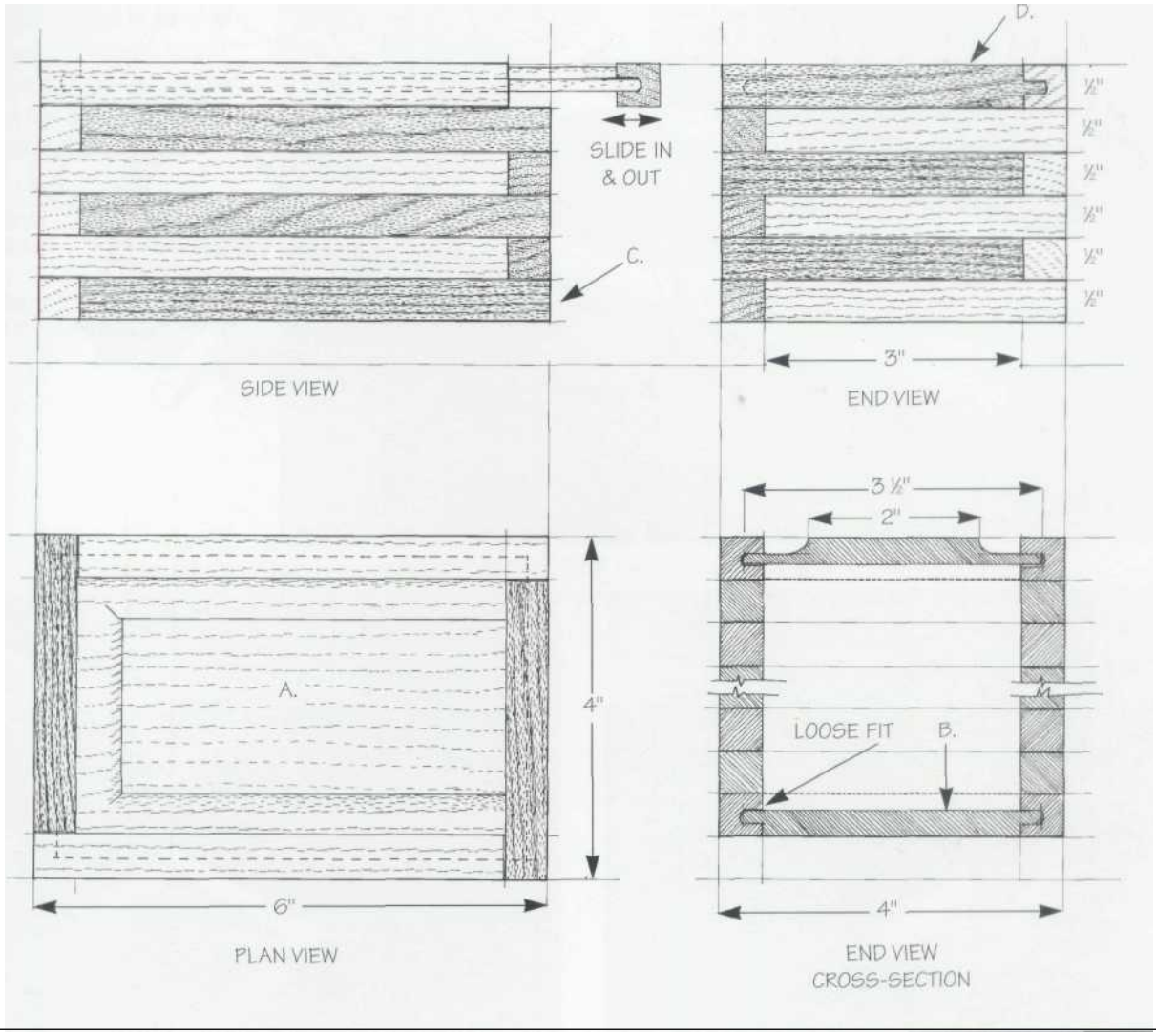
Though you might think that a box is a box is a box and not very exciting, this particular little box is rather special. Not only does it use wood that might otherwise be thrown away, but better yet, the layering technique allows you to very easily modify the length, width and height to suit your own needs. You could call it a "log cabin" box. This refers to the way the sections are layered one on top of another with the ends staggered, just the way the old timers built their log cabins.

## MAKING THE BOX

When you have studied the working drawings and seen how the lid and the base boards are set into slots—with the lid being able to slide in and out—then make decisions as to the size of your box, and size and plane the wood accordingly.

If you are going to stay with our design, you need twenty-four 1/2" X 1/2"-square sections in all, twelve long and twelve short. All I did was search through my pile of offcuts, select two colors that went together to make a pleasant counterchange, and then pushed the wood through my portable surface planer. Having planed the wood to a crisp 1/2" X 1/2"-square section, cut the wood to length so that it is perfectly square-ended and slightly oversize. As the long pieces need to end up at 5 1/2"— meaning when they are built into the finished 6"-long box—it's best to cut them at about *5 5/8",* so you can plane and sand them back to a good fit and finish.

When you have made the twenty-four lengths, pile them up in a dry-run arrangement, in the order they are going to be in the finished box, and pencil mark the top and bottom layers of the stack. Draw in registration marks




so there is no doubting the layered order.

Being very careful that you don't make a mistake, take the eight lengths that go to make the top and the bottom layers and use either a router or a grooving plane to cut the channels. Aim to have the grooves at about 3/16″ wide, 1/4" deep, and centered in the 1/2″ thickness of the wood.

With the channels crisply worked, take the wood that you have chosen for the base and the lid and use a router or a plane to cut the rabbeted edges. While you are at it, use a router or a "round" moulding plane, or even a gouge, to cut the beautiful scooped convex curve that runs down from the top face of the lid through to the rabbet.

Starting at the base and working up, glue the four base lengths together so that the base board is nicely contained, and then layer up in log cabin fashion until the box is complete. Don't forget to leave one of the top-end pieces unglued. This done, test to make sure that the lid is a good fit and leave the box until the glue is set. Glue the short length on the end of the lid board.

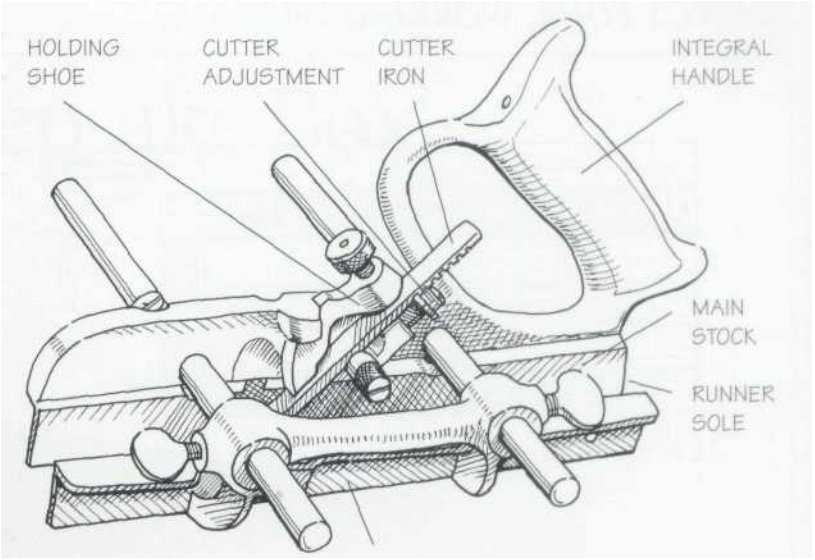
Finally, plane and sand the box down to a flush-sided smooth finish, make sure that the lid is a nice easy fit in the grooves, and then wax and burnish to a high sheen.

**MATERIALS LIST**

| | |
|---|---|
| A Lid (1) | ⅜″×3½″×5½″ |
| B Base (1) | ⅜″×3½″×5½″ |
| C Long lengths (12) | ½″×½″×5⅜″ |
| D Short lengths (12) | ½″×½″×3⅜″ |

## SPECIAL TIP: USING OLD PLANES

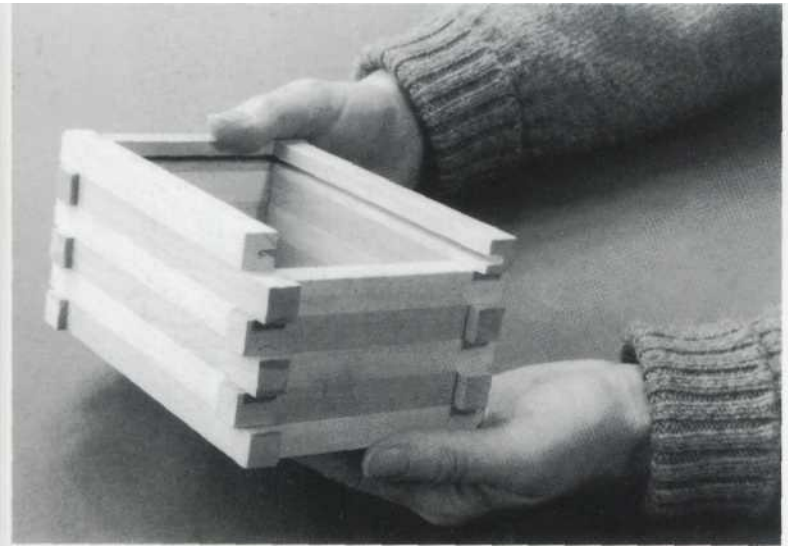
Though there are any number of ways of cutting tongues, grooves and rabbets, I think that the old metal grooving plane takes a bit of beating, meaning one of the old metal Stanley or Record planes. 1 use a Record 043 and 044, both made sometime before 1950. It's true they are no longer made, but 1 picked mine up at a flea market for no more than the cost of a new router bit. The Record 044 has eight blades that range in size from 1/8″ to 9/16".



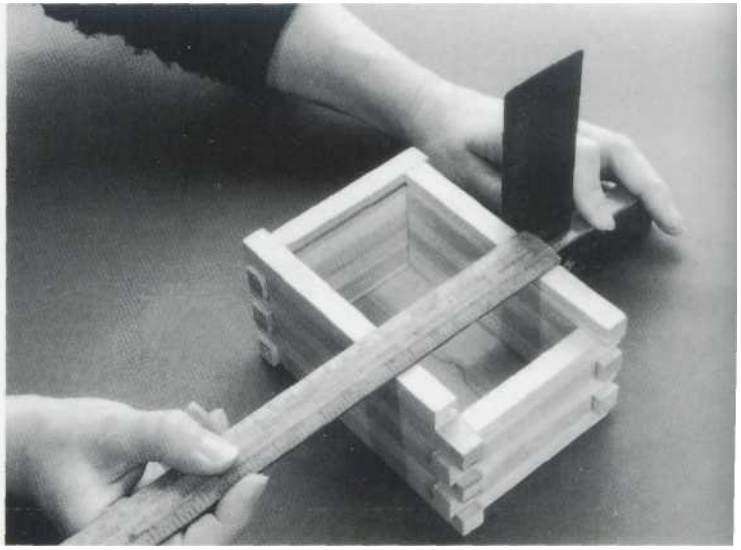

**USING OLD PLANES**

*The* classic *Record* 044 grooving *plane is a beauty, easy to tune and pretty foolproof to use.*

## STEP-BY-STEP STAGES

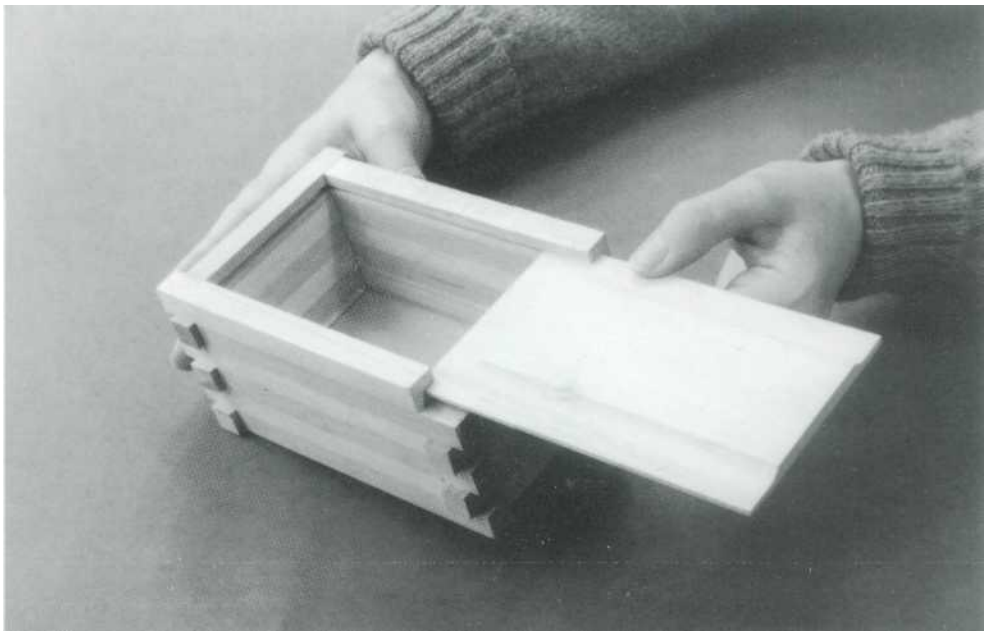


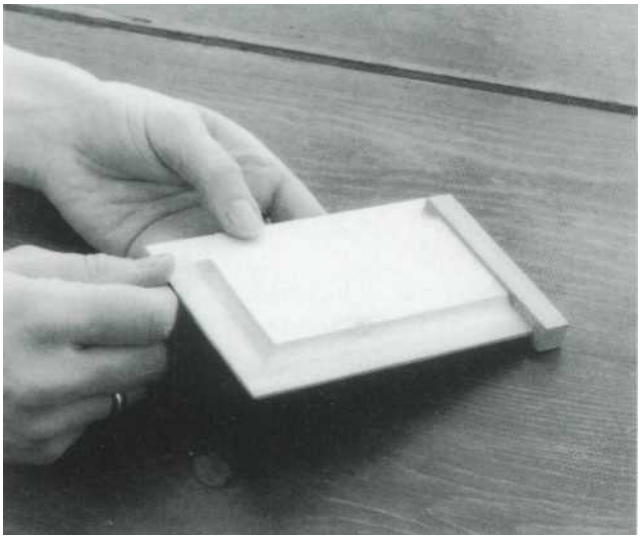
1 With the base dry fitted in place—meaning no glue—layer the square sections up log-cabin style so that the ends stick out beyond the corners. Pay particular attention to the alignment of the grooves.

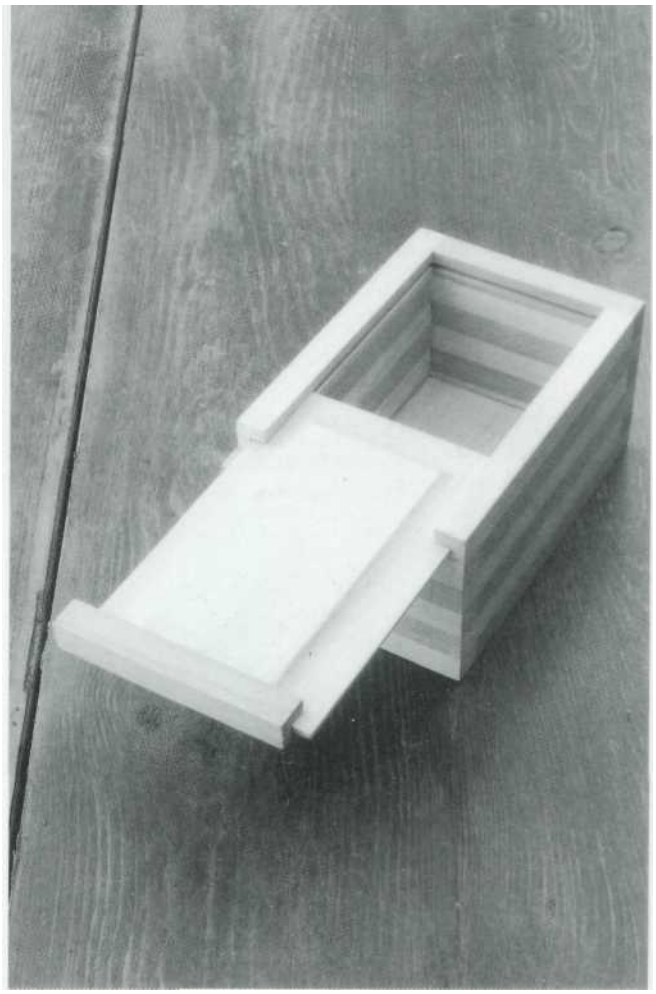


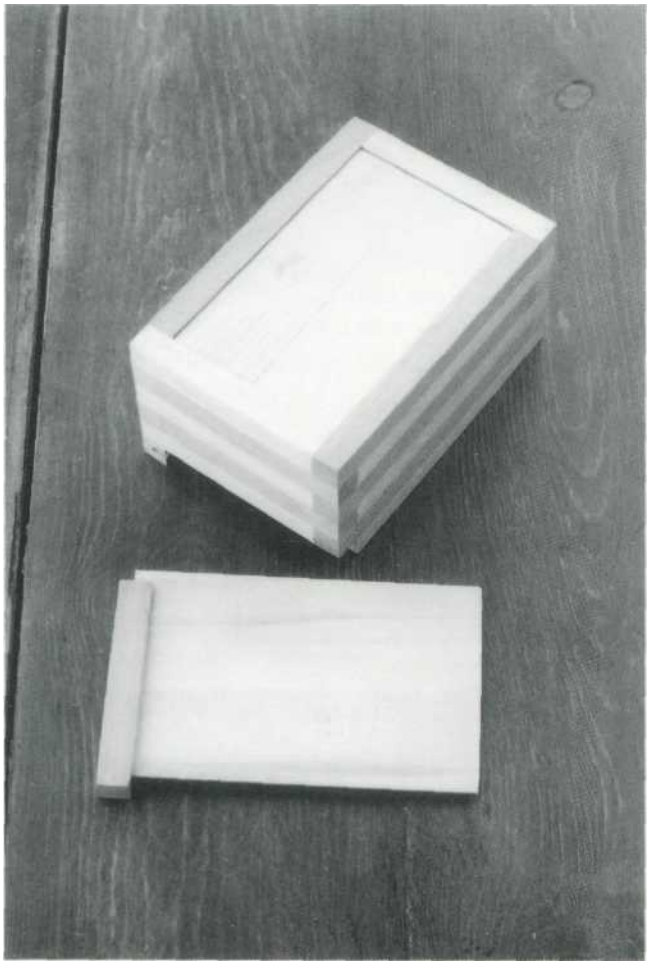
2 When you are happy with the overall shape and alignment of the box, use a ruler and square to check for squareness.

3 Before you leave the glue to set, make sure that the lid is an easy but snug fit and that it runs right through to the end of the box, so that the end runs into the groove.

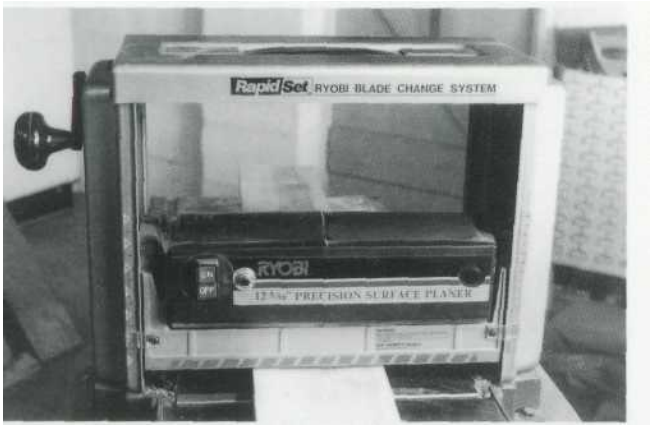








6 If all is correct, the base slab should be well con-unncd, but should fit loosely, so that the box side can move without splitting the base.




*The portable surface planer is a great bench machine. All* you *do* is *feed the wood in one side, between the cutter blades and the bed, and it comes out* ***the*** *other side nearly finished!*

## PORTABLE SURFACE PLANER VS. HAND PLANES

If you are a beginner to woodworking, then sooner or later you will have to make decisions about your overall approach to the subject, or your "working philosophy." One of the main questions that you have to ask **yourself** is, do you want the emphasis to be on the bench power tools—meaning routers, press drills, planers and all **the** rest—or do you want to focus on using hand tools? Most woodworkers 1 know fit in one of four groups:

- Will not use power tools at any price.
- Will grudgingly use the occasional power tool, but much prefers hand tools.
- Enjoys using power tools for most of the work, and tidies up with the hand tools.
- Very much enjoys using power tools and is reluctant to use hand tools.

I reckon that Gill and 1 fit into group two. We much prefer working with hand tools but will sometimes use a power tool to speed things up.

Okay, so you must surely have gathered by now, that we're not very keen on power **tools.** It's not so much that we can't afford to power up, but rather that we both dislike all the dust, debris and noise that power tools generate. To our way of thinking, there is nothing quite so unpleasant as being covered with fine dust and blasted with noise.

All that said, 1 was so tuckered out one day last summer—when I was heavily involved in the strenuous and sweat-making procedure of hand planing a massive rough-sawn oak plank—that I decided, against my better judgment, to invest in a portable planer thicknesser. To cut a long story short—or you could say to plane a fat story thinner (ha!)—when I first saw this machine, I was firmly convinced that it was the beginning of the end of my way of working. My thinking was that it would somehow or other weaken my belief that slow-and-quiet is beautiful. However, there is no denying that it has changed the way 1 work. For example, where I once struggled and strained with a jointer plane, and then a smoothing plane, 1 now pass the wood a few times through the surface planer. In fact, I have to admit that it's a beautifully efficient machine that gets a lot of use. Of course, it is noisy, and 1 do have to house it in its own shed, and I did have to get myself a dust sucker and a full-face respirator mask, but against that, I can now spend much more time playing around with my various grooving, moulding and combination hand planes.

Most experts would agree that the best way is to start with hand tool techniques and then power up when you fully understand your needs.