

# Jack Lawton's Questions & Answers

**Q:** *What is the best method of repairing extra holes in wooden drum shells? Mike Balkom, Roanoke VA*

**A:** Unfortunately, you can never “un-drill” holes in drum shells. Once a non-factory hole has been installed, the drum’s value can drop drastically, depending on the size, location, and amount of damage caused to the interior by the splintering effect of a dull or improper type of drill bit. Also, this type of repair is more difficult to perform on a finished shell, as opposed to a shell that has been stripped for refinishing.

## **Plugging Holes on a Stripped Shell:**

Once you’ve removed the original wrap from the shell, identify and measure all of the non-original holes that you wish to plug. Next, you will need to purchase dowel rods or

grooved dowel pins which are the same diameter as the holes. If any of the holes are too small for the standard dowel rods, you can either enlarge the hole to accommodate the dowel, or, using a pencil sharpener, you can taper the dowel to custom fit the hole. Apply a good quality wood glue around the end of the dowel rod, and insert the glued end into the hole, (from the outside of the shell). Make sure that the end of the dowel is flush with the interior of the shell. Then, using a flexible flush-cut saw, or a fine tooth hacksaw blade, cut the dowel flush to the exterior surface of the shell and sand smooth.

For plugging larger holes, (1 1/2” or larger), you may want to consider using a piece of plywood that is the same thickness of the shell, or perhaps even a piece cut from an old drum shell of the same diameter. After you’ve measured the hole, rough-cut a piece from the plywood or shell section that’s about an inch larger than the hole. Then, hold that piece inside the shell over the hole, and trace around the perimeter of the hole, using a sharp pencil. It’s a good idea to put a reference mark on the shell and the plug, so you can line them up when you’re ready to glue the plug in place. Take the oversized plug, and, with a coping saw, carefully trim it to fit the hole snugly. Next, apply wood glue to the outer edge of the plug, line up the reference marks, and insert the plug into the hole. Make sure that the edge of the plug is even with the edge of the shell. Once the glue has dried, sand inside and out to assure a smooth surface. You may find it necessary to use some plastic wood to even out any rough or uneven spot. When the plastic wood has dried, sand it one more time. Now, you’re ready to apply the new wrap and hide all of those plugged holes. But what about the inside of the shell? You’ll probably want to do something that will dress-up the interior surface.

Most shell interiors are either going to be natural wood or some type of painted surface. The shells with a natural finish are usually clear finished or raw maple or mahogany. These can be very difficult to blend. One product we often use is a two-step paint and stain finish from Carver Tripp. Apply the neutral wood color base coat and let dry. Then, follow with their Provincial Maple stain, blending it into the grain of the wood, (easier said than done). Once the stain has dried, you may want to give it a coat of clear



gloss polyurethane, such as Minwax. If the shell has a painted white interior, it's a little easier to cover with a couple of coats of semi-gloss white paint. We use the Benjamin Moore Latex, semi-gloss AquaGlo White (#333 01). Depending on the amount of discoloration of the original paint, it may be necessary to tint for a better match. Another shell interior finish is the speckled-gray interiors found in some Rogers and early 1970's Ludwig drums. These are my personal favorite to work with.

First, make sure you cover any paper labels to protect them from the paint over-spray. Then, using a flat gray primer, spray paint the area where the plugs are located. Once the primer has dried, follow with a light mist of "PLASTI-KOTE" Fleck Stone spray paint "Gotham Gray", (available at Wal-Mart). With a little bit of practice, you'll be able to blend it in real well. The last type of shell interior we'll mention is the Gretsch silver painted interiors. For these, it's good to use the RUST-OLEUM Aluminum oil-based enamel. I prefer to brush it on with a foam paint brush. It's easier to control than the spray paint and you can get a neat edge around the paper labels. As with all shell interiors, depending on the condition of the original finish, it may be necessary to refinish the entire surface, instead of just touching-up around the plugged area.

#### Plugging Holes on a Finished Shell:

The basic procedure is the same that was used for the stripped shells, except instead of gluing the dowel in first and cutting it

flush with the exterior, you must measure the thickness of the wood shell and cut the dowel to that exact length, prior to gluing and installing. The other main difference is that you will need to install a cap over the plug. The cap should be cut from a piece of drum finish that matches the original finish as close as possible. You can cut the cap with a pair of scissors, a paper punch, a three ring punch, or you can use arch-punches that are available at your local hardware store. However you decide to cut them, they need to be the same diameter as the plug. You'll want to glue the cap in place with contact cement, such as 3M FastBond, and you should do so before the wood glue around the plug has dried so you can make sure the surface of the cap is even and flush with the surface of the original drum finish. Once that is completed, you can dress-up the interior using the same methods mentioned earlier.



In future issues of *VINTAGE DRUMMER* Magazine, we'll answer more of these types of questions. If you have a particular restoration problem or inquiry that you would like addressed, please submit it to *Jack Lawton's Questions and Answers* Column, c/o Vintage Drummer, 770-438-0844, fax # 770-437-9044, email [billy@vintagedrummer.com](mailto:billy@vintagedrummer.com).

## Jim Chapin Tribute



On October 19th, 2002, drummers had an opportunity to pay tribute to a man who made an indelible mark in drumming: James F. Chapin. The event was organized by world drum ambassadors, Dom Famularo, Frank Bellucci, Joe Cavalaro and Matt Miller, to celebrate Jim's 83rd birthday, and raise funds to assist the drumming legend with a series of personal challenges.

Musicians from as far away as Canada and Germany gathered at Famularo's home in Long Island, New York to salute Jim. Each

received specially made Vic Firth drumsticks with Jim Chapin's signature, and the newly designed reissue of "Advanced Techniques for the Modern Drummer". The book which virtually revolutionized drumming, now includes two CD's of Jim performing its material, and is available from Warner Bros. Publications.

Under a huge tent erected on the Famularo property, Jim held court, teaching and demonstrating hand technique, and sharing his historical knowledge of drumming greats, past and present, in his unique and humorous fashion. With ample food and drink provided by the hosts, drummers gravitated to the Wizdom DrumShed (a personally designed, state-of-the-art teaching facility by Dom Famularo) to express themselves, create exciting duets, share licks and have a ball.

For more information about Jim, please go to [www.jimchapin.com](http://www.jimchapin.com). For additional information about supporting Jim, please go to [www.domfamularo.com](http://www.domfamularo.com)

Written by: Dan Britt and Cheech Iero