

sticks. For safety sake, use some sort of a push tool to move the wood through the saw blade.



## **Plugging Stripped Screw Holes Or Making Square Pegs Fit in Round Holes**

**By  
Sherwood Heggen**

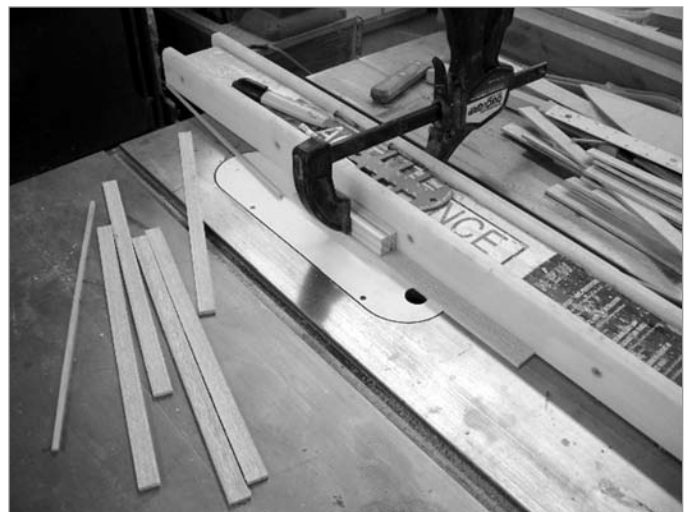
**During** the course of restoring a boat, there will be stripped or unwanted screw holes in the framework. Plugging the screw hole is the obvious repair but what is a good method to get proper results? I have used the method below for years with excellent success. I hope you find it helpful.

First, let me tell you what I do not favor as a repair for screw holes - toothpicks and dowels. Why? Toothpicks don't fill the entire hole and the epoxy, or whatever kind of glue used to hold them in, makes up the bulk of the hole repair. Glue does not have any strength against the screw. Dowels have a lot more bulk to them and a little less glue mass so they might seem to be a better choice to fill the hole. But, the materials that make up the dowels and toothpicks area generally harder than the framework in which they are being installed. This can cause the screw to go in at an angle when the screw seeks the path of least resistance. If you are repairing rub rails screws, the screws should go in straight so the screw head is set flush to the hole rather than having an edge of the screw head proud of the rub rail. This edge catches towels during wiping down the boat and can be hazardous to hands that rub against the rail when assisting in docking the boat.

So, where does one get the magic hole fixer? You make it yourself with scrap mahogany and a table saw that has a zero clearance blade insert. Below are pictures showing the process.

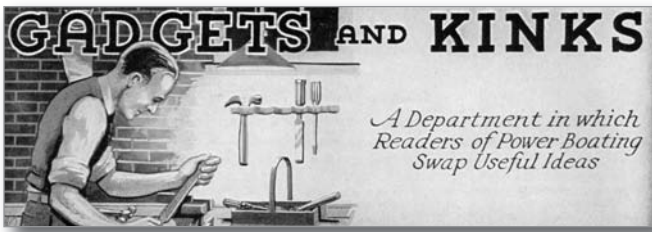
To start, determine what size the stick should be to fill the hole. Make the stick the same size as the shank of the screw that goes in the hole. Set the fence to that dimension. Using the table saw, cut "slabs" from scrap wood and then cut those "slabs" into

Here is an additional safety instruction that should be followed. If the "slabs" are pushed through the saw with no way to hold them down throughout the entire pass, they can easily kick up on the back side of the blade and break or cause flying debris. To avoid this, you need to use a restraining block. Lower the blade to a little higher than the thickness of the wood being cut and pass a four or five inch long block over the blade to create a notch for the blade to ride in after the next step. Lay a piece of the wood to be cut beside the blade and set the block over that so that it covers the front the blade. This will keep your fingers away from the blade as you pass the wood through the saw and will keep the flimsy sticks from breaking while being cut. Clamp the wood block to the fence. You might have to adjust the block to allow the wood to pass through freely.



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The set up is now ready for use. Start the saw and push the wood through the saw. Use another piece to push it all the way through and repeat that process until all the wood is turned into uniform sized sticks. With a jig saw or band saw, cut the sticks down to a useable length. Hundreds of sticks to fill screw holes of any size can be made in just minutes.

To install the stick, dip one end in some exterior carpenter's glue, put the glue end to the hole and drive it into the hole like a nail. The glue will

coat the sides of the stick as it is driven in. Isn't it amazing how a square peg fits in a round hole? There is no need to prepare the holes for the stick other than removing any broken screws. When the glue is dry, break the sticks off and sand them flush to the surface. The hole now is ready to hold a screw securely.

I am sure that you innovative boat restorer guys out there can see many variations of how to make the sticks using your equipment. However you do it, keep safety in mind. You will be working with some small parts and fingers can get close to cutting blades very quickly.

If you have any question regarding bringing your boat in to tip-top shape, email or call me at [Heggensj@Centurytel.net](mailto:Heggensj@Centurytel.net) or 715-294-2415.

I will be glad to answer your questions.

Now, get to the workshop and spend some time on the boat. ⚓

