

viable club. At the present time our membership stands at 295. That is well below our membership total from 8-10 years ago when we were the number 3 chapter in membership and even fewer than last year when we peaked out at about 350. Throughout the year we always seem to gain a few but we need to get old members back and recruit new members all year. A change that the International Board has made may help. This year The Antique & Classic Boat Society, Inc. has announced that membership will be on an annual basis, i.e. membership is effective for 12 months from when you join. You will however, still have to be a paid member by the end of the year to be guaranteed placement in the national directory.

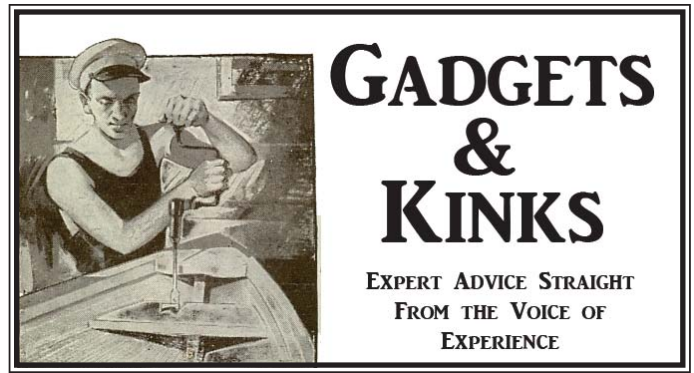
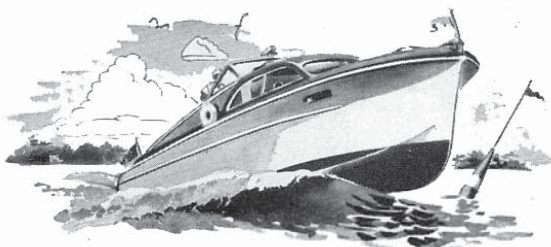
The date of our 'Spring Mixer' is approaching fast, May 22nd, so make sure it's on your calendar. Watch your email and mailbox for more information and remember that registration is a must for this event. We'll be going to Al & Alma's for the event and cruise on one of their boats for dinner. This event has always been a great way to kick off the year.

Scott Hawkinson, one of our longtime club and board members, has decided to close his restoration business, Hawkinson Wooden Boats, as the result of a health related issue. Over the last 10 years, Scott has produced many outstanding restorations and award winning boats. Scott also managed the BSLOL Winter Workshops for 4 years. We all wish him the very best as he moves on to another chapter in his life. Please keep him and his family in your prayers.

If you have any questions or suggestions on how we on the board can better serve you, I can be reached at [president@acbs-bslol.com](mailto:president@acbs-bslol.com) or contact one of the other board members.

Shine 'em up and get 'em out.

Dick Mickelson



## CUTTING DECK SEAMS

by Sherwood Heggen

The romance and memories of days gone by for us older folks are brought to mind when we view the deck of a wooden boat such as Chris Craft, Hacker, etc. The beauty of the gleaming mahogany and brilliant chrome hardware are set off by the mysterious white stripes that are accepted as common place for this type of boat. Why would anyone put white stripes on the boat deck? Was it for appearance, a fad that stuck, or did they have a practical use. How were they made?

My educated guess for the reason of the deck seams is to allow the deck to move, expand, contract, and allow deck boards to bend around the deck crown more easily without cracking. The seams were typically filled with a white caulk to keep the water out. What I do know is that the nicely done seams really make or break the appearance of a boat deck.

Making the seams might appear easy, but it actually can be a bit of a challenge. Making them the correct depth, width and spacing is the primary challenge while doing it in the most efficient manner. I have adopted a method where I can drive planks through the table saw and know that each seam will be consistent in depth, width, and spacing. This article will pass that method on to you.

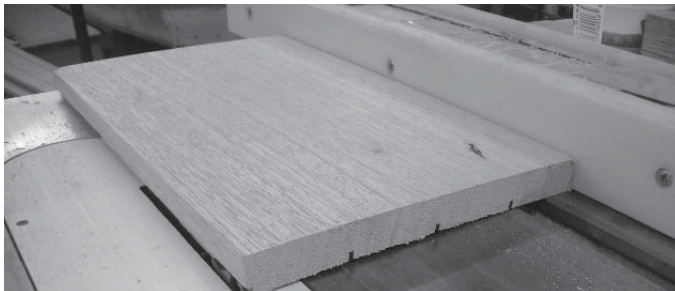
The job requires and table saw with a fence that is dead true to the blade. The blade should have a kerf of no more than 3/32 of an inch which is the about width of a typical deck seam. To provide consistent seam spacing, I use indexing strips made from plywood of any thickness of 1/2 inch or greater. These indexing strips allow the table saw fence to be set once, and the indexing strips are added one at a time to move the deck plank over the correct spacing for sawing each successive seam.



Here is a general idea of how this is set up. In this case, a 7 inch wide deck plank is the subject which will get a total of four seams. The first seam is on the very edge of the plank and three more seams with a seam spacing is 1-¾ inches. Three indexing strips 1-¾ inches wide by as long as the saw fence are used. Deck planks of narrower or wider widths with deck seams of other spacing will require some adjusting of the width of the indexing strips. When sawing the strips to width, make sure that the plywood hasn't taken on a bow laterally. This would upset the correct spacing. That is why a piece of pine isn't used as strips as quite often the inner stresses of the board are released as the board is cut into strips. That is not necessarily true of the more stable plywood.

Now, lay out your deck plank material as it would be on the deck. This is where it can get confusing no matter what method is used to saw the seams. If the deck planks are all book-matched, it is important to know that if the boards are all run through the saw in the same direction, *the book matching will be reversed on one side after it is installed on the deck.* Therefore, on the back side of the planks, mark an arrow with a carpenter's pencil or chalk to show the direction the plank should go through the saw. Lay out the planks as they would be on the deck and flip them over. On the back of port side planks, mark arrows that point forward and on the backs of the starboard planks mark arrows that point rearward. Now when you run the planks through the saw, simply point the arrow forward and cut the seams.

Now, set up the saw using a scrap piece of wood the same width as the deck planks to be sawed. Then if you are using a blade with a 3/32 inch kerf, set the fence at 6-29/32 inches to the inside of the blade. Set the blade height to cut into the planks by 1/3 the thickness of the plank. Run the scrap wood part way though as a trial run to be sure the fence and blade are set properly. It should leave exactly a 3/32 inch wide seam on the edge of the plank as shown below.



**Cut seams 1/3 the thickness of the plank.**

With that being correct, place an indexing strip against the fence and tape it in place with some duct tape to keep it from moving with the plank. Run the scrap lumber through again for the second seam. Repeat that step by adding the two remaining indexing strips, one at a time, until all the seams are cut. As long as the plank is held tight against the fence/indexing strips, perfect straight seams will be produced. The results will look like the picture below.

That is pretty easy compared to the next



**With stops in place.**

item on cutting seams. On some boats, the deck seams are not straight. They curve with the shape of the deck. This is the case on such Chris Crafts as the Capri and Continental. Here driving the planks through the table saw "just doesn't cut it". A different method and tool must be used. Shown below is the method using a template, router, and a 1/8 inch router bit.

The template is made by first making a paper pattern of the seam's curve. Rolls of masking paper are available where paint is sold which makes a good pattern material. If you have a solid old plank available to copy the seam's curve you are in luck. Otherwise, use the boat's deck frames or sheer line as viewed from the top for the curvature of the seam. The seam typically follows the shape of the boat. Tape the paper pattern over the plank full length and use a soft pencil to rub the image of the seam through. Then remove the pattern and lay it over the template material of plywood or pine board. Tape it flat and firmly in place. Then, if you have a pattern wheel, simply drive the wheel along the line of the traced seam, piercing the paper and leaving a mark on the wood below. Or, use a small nail and a hammer and drive the nail through the pattern on the line of the seam and into the board deep



enough to leave marks along the seam line. Connect the dots with a pen. (A line marked on wood with a pen is much easier to see than a pencil line) Then with a saber saw or band saw, cut along the line and clean up the saw marks and irregularities with a plane and sanding block. Keep in mind the seam will look as good as the template you prepare.

A trim router and a 1/8 inch router bit are used to rout the seams. The router will ride along the edge of the template secured to the plank by clamps and will rout the seam to the outside of the line drawn for the seam location. The template is set off from the intended path of the router bit by the distance from the edge of the router base to the inside edge of the bit. Measure that distance and with that dimension make a couple of gauges from scrap wood to set the templates accurately. If the distance is 1-1/2 inches, then make gauges that are 1-1/2 inches wide.

Now, prepare the plank on which the seams will be cut. Mark the seam's location with a pen on each end of the plank. Position the template on the marks and trace along its edge onto the plank. Repeat that for each seam to be cut. This provides a visual reference for the location of each seam.

Now using the gauges, position the template at the distance from the seam location as measured above on a piece of scrap wood for practice. Clamp it in place so that it cannot move even a little bit. Next, remove all distractions from the workshop as you are going to want to concentrate on one task, and that is, keeping the router firmly against the template at all times while routing the seam. Also, have a clean work bench so the cord on the router won't snag on anything as the router moves across the plank. If it snags on something it can bring the movement to a sudden stop and the router bit will likely jerk off the intended path and cause a blip in the seam. Bad! Also, remember the router will want to wander and do its own thing. You must become the Alpha male to make it submit to your will. If it sounds like I am being too cautious in the set up, believe me, I am not. It is surprising how little things that should have had attention prior to starting the routing pass will jump out and screw everything up. I tell you this only because I know from experience!

Check out the picture below to see the typical set up. You alert readers will see that my workbench was not cleared prior to making the

routing pass. Do as I say; not as I do. I lucked out on this occasion.



**Hold router tight to the stop!**

Now, using the router, make a pass to the depth of about one third of the thickness of the plank. Start the router and move it into the wood from one end. Hold it firmly against the template and concentrate on controlling the router at all times. When stopping to get repositioned for a continued pass, make sure the router does not move out of the seam path. If it does, it will leave a little blip, or worse, in the routed seam, and it will stick out like a thumb with a big bandage on it and it cannot be fixed. Again - bad!

With practice behind you, it is time to do the actual plank. Let me scare you a little bit here. Mahogany is about \$7.00 a board foot and you might have a big investment in wood that can be ruined with one "oops". Think about what you are doing and measure everything twice - three times - and then think about it to be sure what you are doing is correct. Set up the template and plank, set your mind to the task, and rout the seams. You have only one chance to make it right.

If you have any questions about this topic or any other boat restoration topic, don't be afraid to call me at 715-294-2415 or email me at [Heggensj@Centurytel.net](mailto:Heggensj@Centurytel.net). The advice is free but it could be valuable to you.

Good luck with your restoration project and I hope to hear from you.

