



GETTING IT UP AND OFF THE TRAILER (OR GIVING YOUR SHOP A LIFT)

BY SHERWOOD HEGGEN

A few years back there was a TV program narrated by Leonard Nemoy regarding strange phenomenon. This particular program was of a man in Florida who built an amazing complex where he lived far away from civilization with huge slabs of stone. No big deal really, but he didn't have any apparent heavy construction equipment with which he could lift and move the incredibly large slabs of stone. This man allowed no one to watch him work, and when he was alone, he made obvious progress in constructing his complex. On one occasion, a man happened upon the builder who, when the builder realized he was being watched, he suddenly stopped working. The builder was at his stone quarry and had a large slab of stone weighing hundreds of pounds beside his flat bed truck. The builder asked the man to leave, which he did. The man walked left but shortly after his leaving, he heard a heavy thud coming from where he met the builder. Thinking there could be a problem, the man returned to see the builder standing beside the truck and the slab of stone was on the flat bed truck! The immediate question was, how did that slab of rock get moved from the ground to the truck?! The only "logical" conclusion was that the builder used levitation to load the slab of rock. It could be concluded that he also used levitation to move and position the huge slabs that made up the complex he was building.

This story comes to mind when I am faced with getting a boat off a trailer in my shop. Getting a heavy boat moved to a pair of dollies could most easily be done with levitation. Wouldn't that be cool? Wow, would levitation be wonderful.

We all know levitation works in science fiction movies, but this is reality. Reality is having to carefully lift a boat with mechanical devices. What devices to use and how much time one has to do the job prompts some serious thought. What works the best is an overhead hoist with chain hoists.

Not having any space for an industrial size overhead hoist in my shop, levitation has come to mind many times. Instead, I have had to resort to the intensive work of blocking and jacking to get boats unloaded. But, once they were unloaded and on blocks, they still required lowering to get

them on a pair of dollies to be able to move then about the shop. That requires some delicate jacking and removal of blocks to step the boat down to a lower level. The fear of dropping the boat is constantly there during this process. I had to figure out the next best thing for my work space. In doing so, I

believe the idea could be used by many other restorers with limited work space.

My shop is like most amateur restorers' shops which do not have an abundance of free space. I needed to find a way to get boats off trailers and onto dollies quickly without creating a permanent obstruction to my work space. Commonly used are "swing sets" on which chain hoists are suspended to lift boats. But I did not want the swing sets in my way after their use is over. What to do? What to do?

To make the job of unloading boat more convenient, I dreamed a bit, put a plan on paper, and put it into action to build a boat lift. Here is what I came up with and what you could easily construct for yourself.

My shop has a low eight and a half foot ceiling and a nine foot wide over-head garage door at one end where I unload boats. To the right of the door is a wall and to the left is open shop floor space. The typical swing set, which is what my plan is based on, has legs on either end with a pipe spanning overhead between them. I decided to set up one of the "legs" permanently. That "leg" would be the wall. That wall supports frame work similar to a door jamb made with two-by-fours with a four-by-four "joist" resting on the top and bolted to the wall studs. The joist is about four feet long. The "joist" has three-quarter inch holes drilled down the middle on the top and spaced six inches apart. More on the holes later.

The overhead beam is next. To it, the chain hoist is suspended to lift the boat. Obviously, the beam must be substantial to carry the weight of a boat. The beam is two two-by-eights, twelve feet long, set apart by short sections of two-by-fours. All of the parts are held together with large deck screws and carpenter's glue. The two-by-eights are set apart to accommodate the two-by-four leg the holds up the other end of the beam. It is made up of two two-by-fours set apart by short two-by-four sections just like the beam. The two-by-fours provide support directly under the two-by-eights. To hold the beam and the leg together, a two-by-four tab extends beyond the top of the leg and nestles between the end of the two-by-eights. The tab is actually two two-by-fours face to face. To hold the beam and the leg safely in place, a hole is drilled through the end of the beam and the tab, and an eight inch long, five-eighths inch bolt is passed through the hole and secured with a nut.

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Remember the holes in the joist on the wall? Their purpose is to hold the joist in place by means of a three-quarter inch dowel installed in the underside of the beam at the wall end. The hole is drilled an inch and a half inboard of the end of the beam. The dowel is positioned in one of the holes and keeps the beam from sliding off the joist. It also allow positioning fore and aft for various size boats.

The end result is a boat hoist made up by one leg being a wall with a supporting frame bolted to it. The beam allows for the hanging of a chain hoist and the leg of two-by-fours holds up the other end of the beam. It is a real simple device to build and has allowed fast and safe unloading of boats. Of course, a hoist is needed at each end of the boat, so build two.

One of the goals for this lift was to allow for the floor space to remain useable. When the lift is not in use, the leg can be removed after removing the bolt at the leg/beam junction. The leg can be stored in an out of the way area until it is again needed.

What holds up the beam while the leg is removed? Two support brackets were made of light gauge angle iron and a length of pipe secured to the supports with U-bolts. The beam rests on the pipe when the leg is removed. The pipe is positioned about an inch below the level at which the leg would support the beam. When the leg is installed, it lifts the beam from the rod and the rod remains out of the way until it is needed again to support the beam when the leg is removed.

Below is a picture of the hoist in my shop which hopefully can inspire you to dream up your boat lift for your shop environment. Many little details have not been mentioned about the design of the lift, but the picture can inspire you to design your lift according to the need to make it a safe and useful tool in your shop.

Give it a try. It has worked very well for me. I wish I would have built it long ago.

So how is your boat project going? Are you running into problems you never thought would come up? That is no surprise. Easy projects for me have turned into complete rebuilds. If you are running into a snag and need questions answered.

Feel free to contact me at Heggensj@centurytel.net or call me at 715-294-2415. I would like to see you restore it rather than destroy it. I will do what I can to answer yours questions or refer you to someone who can.

It is time to get back to the shop and turn ugly into pretty.

Why don't you go do the same?

