



You are realizing that it has been five years since the run-about has had any fresh varnish. It is starting to look a little dull. You have all of the equipment. Sand paper, foam brushes, varnish, painters' and masking tape are all in

your possession so it is time to get the hardware off and get to work. But wait! How are you going to sand and varnish around that hideum welt. You know - hideum welt - the strip of upholstery that covers the edge of the crash pad upholstery around the cockpit. A not too brilliant idea is to tape off around the hideum welt. Why is that not a good idea? Well, the hideum overlaps some of the varnished surface on the deck to be varnished. Taping off the hideum may keep the varnish off the hideum welt, but the varnish will build up under the hideum. It is also a great place for sanding dust to hide. You will be plagued with unseen dust all through the varnish job. Let's cut to the meat of this topic. You should remove the hideum welt and the crash pad upholstery to have a chance at controlling dust and a nice varnish job.

Seems simple, doesn't it? Just remove the hideum and crash pad upholstery. But, the means by which they are removed is important to understand. First, remove the hideum welt tips by pulling the small nail holding it in place. Set them aside in a plastic bag for safe keeping. Staples hold the hideum and upholstery in place. If it is original upholstery, you will probably see carpet tacks. Regardless, they must be lifted out to remove the upholstery. This brings us to the tool to use to pry the staples out. The incorrect tool is a screw driver. The correct tool is a staple lifter which a special tool that cannot be purchased at the hardware store. It is only available from an upholstery supply store. By accessing the Internet and searching for "upholstery supplies" you will be able to locate your local upholstery tools and materials supplier. What you want to get is a staple lifter. The one shown in the pictures below is made by Osbourne and has served me well for years.

Considering you have the staple lifter, let's see how this is done properly. You will need a couple of

HIDEUM WELT AND THE STAPLE REMOVAL
OR
WORKING HARDER TO MAKE WORK EASIER
BY
SHERWOOD HEGGEN

other tools to help make the job easier - a wedge, a pliers, and a small plastic container to

hold the removed staples. The wedge is simply made by cutting a piece of wood scrap to the shape shown. In the picture below, you will see the

wedge holding the hideum apart. This makes it so much easier to get at the staples.

With the wedge in place, work the points of the staple lifter under the staple and lift it out by pushing down on the handle. Work carefully so as not to slip off of the staple. If you slip off the staple, you are likely to drive the staple lifter into the varnish and make an ugly gouge in the deck. Learn from my mishaps. Often, only one side of the staple will come up. If so, use a pliers to pull it out the rest of the way. When you get the hundreds of staples out of the hideum, there will still be the crash pad upholstery with as many, or more, staples to remove.



Patience and determination will ultimately see all of the staples removed. You will be glad you did when it comes time to sand and varnish. If you hadn't, it would be kind of like wash-

ing your ankles with your socks on.

OK. Lay back the crash pad upholstery and remove the half round crash pad, unless it is glued in place. You might want to tape the crash pad upholstery away from the deck to keep it out of the way while you are working. If the half round is glued on, tape it off with blue painters' tape so as not to get varnish all over it.

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Remove the seat backs if they are in contact with the decking. Otherwise cover the upholstered seat backs and bases with some kind of "drop cloth" to protect them from dust and varnish drips and you are ready to sand and varnish.

Before you start to varnish, you will want to check the condition of the wood where the staples were. Quite often, you might find that steel, rather than stainless steel staples were used. This breeds big trouble called "staple sickness". The staples will rust from moisture getting under the upholstery which destroys the wood surrounding them. This mess has to be corrected so that the staples have something to grip. First, be sure there are no broken off staple ends remaining in the wood. If there are areas of soft wood, dig them out. Certainly that will leave holes in the deck. Since it would be difficult to get all of the questionable wood out, soak the holes and gaps with Smith's Clear Penetrating Epoxy Sealer (CPES) and let it cure for a couple of days. Then, fill the holes/gaps with putty made of epoxy and filler. Once it is hardened, sand it flush to the surface and proceed with the sanding/varnishing process. It is interesting to note that not all varnishes will harden well when applied over epoxy. To correct that problem, apply a coat of clear sealer over the epoxy area and then varnish over that.

After you have finished applying that last coat of varnish and the deck seams have been repainted, it is time to put the crash pad upholstery and hideum welt back on. Oh wait, a special tool is required again. You will need a staple gun to hook up to your compressor and air hose. Yeah, I know this is running into some extra money spent, but it pays to do the job correctly. The upholstery supplier can help you out with what you need. A basic upholstery stapler that uses half-inch wide stainless steel staples will do the job. The stapler will cost about a hundred dollars.

Start installing the crash pad upholstery by laying it over the half round and draw it reasonably tight, or original position, and staple it in place with your brand new staple gun and stainless steel staples. Start installing the hideum welt by laying the metal welt tips over the ends of the hideum and install the nails through their original holes. Lay out the hideum around the cockpit, holding it down temporarily with tape. Pull the hideum taut to the first corner in the

cockpit against the metal welt end and secure it with a tape at the end of that straight run. Now, position and staple the hideum around the curve to get a smooth flowing line to the beginning of the next straight run. Correct positioning of the hideum can be made easier by lining up it up with the impressions left by the hideum and staples from the previous installation. Again, draw the hideum taut and staple it down at the beginning of the next corner. Continue by stapling that corner down, etc. With the corners secured and all of the straight runs taut, finish stapling the straight runs down. You may become aware that not all straight runs are straight. It is likely that a slight curve may exist. Whether it is straight or curved, take the time to tape one side of the hideum in place as shown in the picture below.

When the hideum is aligned, staple it down. One staple every inch is sufficient to properly secure it in place. With all the staples in place, remove the tape.



Check to be sure the hideum lies in a nice fair line all around the cockpit. If not, you would want to make whatever corrections are necessary. This will involve pulling staples in the problem area and re-stapling. If it looks good, it is finished!

Now, are you not you glad you went through all of that? It sure looks good, does it not? There is a lot of satisfaction to be realized by a job done well.

There are so many tricks of the trade in doing restoration work on a vintage boat. I do not know all of them, but I have a network of acquaintances that do. ↩

If you are wondering what steps to take in any stage of restoring or maintaining your old boat, contact me at:

Heggensj@Centurytel.net
or 715-294-2415.

It would be my pleasure to help you find an answer to your restoration questions.