



## Seam Edge Rot Repair

By Sherwood Heggen



It was a “simple” job I was asked to do, having done it a few times before, and that was to refinish a Chris Craft barrel back. Strip the finish, repair and eliminate the blemishes, stain, and put on a shiny show finish. And by the way, I was to take a look at a couple of planks on the port side. There seemed to be some deterioration at the seam between the first and second planks at mid-ship. Deterioration!? No, after prodding the area with an ice pick, I found a case of pure rot! And, of course, it had to involve two of the most difficult planks on the boat to replace. It was time to think of the best plan of action. With that in mind, this article is offered to get you thinking that there is always an alternate way to fix a small problem rather than tear everything apart and destroy a lot of original parts.

The rot had gone past the planks and into the seam batten behind. The planks would have to be removed, but should the planks be replaced? The rot was localized to a span of about a foot. Beyond that, the wood was hard and appeared normal. To replace the entire plank seemed such a waste of beautiful, original ribbon grain mahogany from the 1930's. Probing into the soft wood, it was easy to confirm the rot was only on the edge of the planks and didn't go very far across the grain. It was such a small area, why not repair the small area instead of replacing two huge difficult to replace planks? A boat of this character must be handled with a lot of consideration. There are too many botched repair jobs out there. There is no need to add to the number. So, the goal was to make a patch, make it blend into the existing wood, and retain as much original wood as possible. That is quite an order to fill! Where to start!?

Did the entire planks have to be removed? Certainly not. It was only necessary to loosen the planks in the area which required repair plus a little more for wiggle room. But before doing that, the fair line of the plank seam should be retained. To do that, tape a piece of masking paper over the affected area and rub the side of the pencil lead against the seam area. This will give a defined seam line to use as a reference to retain the seam line. Before removing the paper, establish a reference mark on the boat and paper to be able to reposition the paper after it has been removed to accomplish the repair. The paper will be cut in two at the seam line to trace the new seam line on each repaired plank.

Now it is time to loosen the problem planks. Get out the ice pick and screw gun and remove the bungs and screws. Loosen the planks as far as necessary to pull the planks away from the hull to allow working room.



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Removing the rotted batten could be a problem, but the right tools always make the job so much easier. In this case the right tool is a Makita circular saw with a three inch blade. Set the blade cutting depth to the thickness of the batten and cut it alongside the frames. The pieces between the frames will fall out and the parts in the notches of the frames will still be firmly in place held securely with a nail. Since the planking is restricting access to the nail, it will have to be removed from the inside of the boat. Take a chisel and split the batten stub in the middle where the nail likely is and then knock it loose with a hammer. All that will remain is a nail. If space allows, it can be removed with a pliers, or simply saw it off with a hand held hack saw blade. Now measure to size and wiggle in a new batten. Install short batten blocks over the batten ends to make a continuous batten and secure with some screws as show in the picture below.



With the affected frame members replaced, it is time to remove the rotted edge on the planks and replace it with new wood. This will be an exercise in grain and wood color matching. Luckily, the line of the grain on the original plank had a slight upward angle to allow a long wedge to be removed in the rot area. A piece of wood was chosen with similar color and straight grain. A line was drawn with a straight

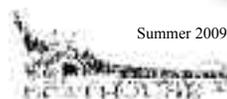
edge and black ball point pen on the original plank in line with the grain for the cut line. The ball point pen is used rather than a pencil because the pen line is far more visible than a pencil line. The bad wood as removed with a saber saw and an edge plane is used to trim to the line. The replacement piece was cut a bit over size to allow trimming to exact size. Try to match the grain on the replacement piece with the grain on the original plank where the edges join. Glue and clamp the new piece in place with Titebond III.



Remember the tracing of the seam made on paper earlier? That paper is now taped in place according to the reference marks placed on the original plank and the paper. This will allow a marking of the original seam line again with a black ball point pen. Remove the excess carefully to the line with an edge plane. Do the same with the other plank after the new piece is installed. Some fitting will have to take place. Sneak up on the fit with an edge plane to provide a relatively tight seam. Once the fit is good, screw everything in place, sand the new wood fair to the old. Install and trim the bungs flush, do the final sanding and apply the new finish.



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With the subject boat, a full strip, stain, and varnish will take place so there won't be a problem with blending the old and new finish. If the whole boat is not to be stripped, it would be a good idea to tape off and strip at least the affected planks and refinish them. Trying to blend a patch area into original stain and varnish is difficult at best to create a seamless finish.

That is the basics of repairing rotted plank seam. Of course, there are variations of the above method according to the problem area to be repaired, so use your own good judgment for repairing the problem area on your boat.

If you want, give me a call or email me with your particular restoration problem. I will be glad to offer whatever advice I can.

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As always, don't destroy it; restore it.



Member Featured in TV Ad

By Andreas Jordahl Rhude

Have you seen the television advertisement with BSLOL member Dennis Evinrude promoting travel in Wisconsin? One evening, I was watching non-descript TV and an ad appeared with an old 1950s Evinrude motor pushing a boat through the water. My attention was peaked. A few seconds later a modern Evinrude is pushing another boat. The voice sounded familiar and all of a sudden a man appears in a fishing boat with a big modern Evinrude outboard E-Tec motor and says: "I'm Dennis Evinrude...." I was thrilled to see him and the motors. The ad was promoting tourism and travel in the state. Way to go Dennis!

Evinrude Motors is celebrating their 100th anniversary in 2009 

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