Re-doing the doors on *Annie*
26-064

A project description by Ruth Jansson & Bette Conner, 1/10/04

By way of introduction, *Annie* is a 1982 Nordic Tug. We purchased her in 1994 and enjoyed her for 6 wonderful years. During that time water damage on the doors became more and more evident. During the summer of 1997, we made a temporary door and brought the doors home, one at a time, to re-make them.
We took some pictures now and then during the process.

Exterior of starboard door

Before starting on the project, we tried to find new rubber gasketing material, but couldn't find any—at least not locally. Since we were not fond of the rubber gaskets anyway, we decided to use automotive glass and extend it all the way out to the edge, negating the need for an upper wood panel and giving us better visibility as a bonus.

We made a trip to a teak wood yard about 20 miles away and hand-picked a 4' x 8' x 1/4" sheet of double-sided teak plywood (they wouldn't sell part of a sheet). We planned ahead and brought cash since they don't accept credit cards. But we hadn't brought a saw and they refused to cut it, so we strapped it to the top of the car and took 20+ miles of non-highway roads home. That was quite a trip!

During the course of the project, we made one really big revelation: The doors are not square! They look square, and the measurements from top to bottom at the forward end and aft end are identical as are the measurements left to right at the top and at the bottom. We had

Interior of starboard door

made a temporary door with the measurements. When we went to put in the temporary door, it was cock-eyed. After much head-scratching—and more head-scratching— we realized that the whole door is a parallelogram, with parallel sides and un-equal angles. (More on this later.)

Heat gun recommended by Rebecca Wittman,

Back in the garage: The first thing was to remove the top and bottom panels from the door.

Next we removed the varnish from the exterior side. When we first got *Annie*, we had picked up a a copy of Rebecca J. Wittman's book *Brightwork: The Art of Finishing Wood* and considered it our bible for varnishing. She recommended a particular heat gun called the Easy Gun* which we immediately purchased, and we used it to re-do all the varnish on the boat. It's a great heat gun—and made the job of stripping the doors quite easy.

*We bought ours from Easy Time Refinishing Products, Glen Ellyn, IL—630.858.9631

I don't remember if I had to increase the routed edges on the inside, but I think I did so that the glass and the lower panel would have more to rest on and consequently sit more securely.

After sanding both sides to a real smooth finish, we were ready to proceed.

So far, so good.

Inside of door with back routed out.

Lower door panel

Molding cut from teak wood

Now for the tricky part. Remember earlier I mentioned that our temporary door was cock-eyed? Well we learned pretty quickly that rather than all corners being 90˚, one side of the corner had an angle of 43 1/2˚ and the other side was 46 1/2˚. I remember these numbers as well as I remember my own name because they figured in when cutting the panels, making the moldings, having the glass cut. And remember, too, that the port door slants one way while the starboard door slants the other way! The fact that the door is not square is not at all obvious until you start working on it.

Panel installed, but before molding is attached

Tips:
- When selecting/cutting/installing the panel, remember to make the grain run vertically.
- Do not glue the panels; they need to be able to move.
- Predrill holes in the molding before nailing it in to the sides; otherwise the molding pieces will split.

We brought the door to the auto-glass man. He measured leaving some space for slight movement. He also recommended some waterproof putty material to use between the glass and the exterior wood. As I recall the stuff was light gray to the eye and greasy to the touch, but it sure did the job well. The doors never leaked.

Annie sporting her new door

Once the doors were completely assembled and finished, we sanded and sanded until the wood felt like furniture. We varnished the exterior with multiple coats and oiled the interior and the top.

We did *no*t oil or varnish the bottom of the door. Rather, we bought Slick Strips from Woodcraft for $5.99.
www.woodcraft.com
Item #16L64 Phone: 800.225.1153
The adhesive on the Slick Strip was sufficient to hold the material to the doors—we used no other fasteners. The doors slid beautifully and were heavy enough that they didn't slide while underway.

The project turned out very well. It was a lot of work with some frustrating moments, but well worth it.

We don't own *Annie* anymore, but she was a great boat to us and we enjoyed her so very very much.

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