

STABILIZING THE SETTEE TABLE

Rick Lucas: *Ping*



The design of the settee table on the 323 is not particularly robust. I've heard stories from other owners about how theirs can swing like a pendulum on a clock. Not only is this a messy situation. It could be hazardous to anyone below, especially at dinnertime when four people are sawing on their steaks at the same time.

For reasons unknown to me, Ping's PO replaced the support pole and both its mounting brackets. The new bottom mount had nothing to keep the pole from turning, and the top mount just couldn't do the job alone. The table secures to the pole by a round bracket that exerts pressure on the pole with a knurled screw knob. When a 200 lb. man leans on the corner of the table without the pole being fully secured, something had to give. In this case, it was the pole turning in its mounts.



I was convinced that the table/pole link was sufficient to hold the table in place so I turned my efforts toward the two mounts at the top and bottom. The teak that was used at the top was very well honed and looked very nice, but the two screws that were originally used to affix the pole to the base were splitting the wood and pulling it apart. The two pieces of wood that made up the assembly were also not securely fixed to one another, allowing the one with the pole attached to it to shift around inside the larger piece. Those two issues needed to be resolve.

The solution was not the most elegant I've ever devised, but it was effective. I first unscrewed the wooden base from the cabin roof and removed it from the pole. I applied some polyester glue to bond the two pieces of wood together and set the assembly aside to dry. Polyester glue works wonderfully well on wood and other substances, but it has a tendency to expand and bubble out from the gaps as it dries. The bubbles can be easily removed within 24 hours of application, but after it has fully cured you may as well try to separate the minstrel from Jimmy Buffett! The tan residue you see in the picture at left is the part of that overflow that I couldn't remove a week after I applied the glue. Oh well. If I get motivated, I can probably clean it up with a Dremel cut wheel.

The other solution is where the cosmetic aspects of the solution get really dodgy. The screws that went through the wood and into the pole would cause the wood to split when lateral pressure was applied. I didn't think that glue would be enough to put this Humpty Dumpty back together for the long term because the wood grain ran vertically, from the top of the piece to the bottom. Fixing one split would only invite another.



A hose clamp was the best thing I could come up with to keep the wood from splitting and providing a solid surface that would keep the screws and the pole in place. I first put glue on the split wood on the inside, where the pole would go. I then tightened the hose clamp around the wood and slid the complete wooden base over the pole. I then drilled two holes in the hose clamp in line with the existing ones in the wood base. Next, back went the screws into the holes to hold it to the pole, and I screwed the whole mess back into the cabin roof. Once all the glue had cured, I gave the table the pressure test. Success! The two screws held the pole to the

teak bracket and the table didn't move... much.

(UPDATE: I removed the cap and epoxied the two pieces of wood together. There was enough room above the level of the tube to add some glass fabric for added strength. I also replaced the two screws and clamp with long, thin bolts that go all the way through. It turns out that with the brackets on the foot of the tube [described below], the clamp was no longer needed.)

I did notice that the bottom of the pole would still move around a little when I moved the table. Some kind of angle brackets seemed to be the answer. I couldn't find anything suitable at the local chandlery or at SailNet so I searched until I found some in solid brass at the local Ace hardware store. I know that brass isn't the strongest metal, but I didn't want it to take the whole load. I just needed them to provide additional stability to the bottom of the pole. That it did. While not perfectly solid, the table's motion is now less than one inch.



The solution, at present, is a tradeoff. The table's stable, but the aesthetics of the installation aren't quite as nice as they used to be. Since I don't know what was there originally, I don't have the benefit of the factory installation as a model. So, for now, I'll leave it as is.

Things I'd do differently: Nothing now since I added the epoxy and cloth to the cap. It solved the problem.

Cost: Less than US\$10.00 (hardware)

Time: About 3 hours