



The Project: Part TWO of Three Total Refurbishment Of A 1978 Cruise Craft Reef Raider

Why refurbish an old boat? There are many reasons why we do it, but at the top of the list, family finances loom large. To purchase a new rig like the sweet little Reef Raider above, will typically cost \$40-\$60K . . . nice work if you can stump up the reddsies, but many people can't. But hang on, if you could buy an old one, and do it up for around \$20K BMT all up and fishing - does that sound like a plan? It did for special guest contributor, Peter Crocos, who kindly agreed to share how it did with this fascinating Three Part Series. Now read on . . .

You will remember from Part 1 in last month's issue that after purchasing three Cruise Craft rigs ("the three boat donor strategy") in order to source the optimum boat/motor/trailer combo, the Reef Raider 166 hull selected for the full restoration was now sitting on the shed floor with all of the fittings and fixtures removed, ready for the real work to begin.

A plan of attack was arrived at whereby each stage of the restoration work would be done in a logical

fashion such that each stage did not interfere with an already finished stage. Therefore the plan was to begin with the transom work, then move to the interior fitout and floor, as these tasks required a lot of grinding, timber work and 'glass work - this gets all the "dirty" jobs done first. The hull would then be turned over and the preparation and painting of the bottom and sides completed. The hull would then be turned back over to complete the preparation and painting of the top deck. Finally, I would tackle

the fitout, with the installation of deck fittings and fixtures, wiring and electrics, carpet & upholstery and the rigging of the motor. Meanwhile, the trailer would be subjected to a full refurb as well.

Looking at the shabby old hull now sitting in the shed, the water test seemed a long, long way off!!

Replacing The Transom

After hearing so many stories of rotten transoms in boats of this age, I was naturally concerned about the

state of the transom in this boat. After all, it had been moored in the water for a few years, potentially adding to the likelihood of rot as a result of water penetration through fittings on the transom, some of which were underwater all the time.

There were no obvious symptoms of internal transom rot - tapping over the whole area with a screwdriver handle did not suggest any hollow spots, and the half-tilted motor leg could be pushed down vigorously with no indication of movement. Still, I was concerned, given the age of the boat and its history.

Any consideration of not replacing the transom became an easy decision when I purchased the used Evinrude 115 ETEC for the boat. This motor has an extra-long shaft (25"), but the existing transom was a standard 20" long shaft. I liked the idea of the extra long shaft motor sitting that much higher on the transom, and therefore keeping it out of the slop when fishing from the stern. So, the purchase of this motor tipped the balance and committed me to replacing the transom and building it higher to suit the 25" shaft.

After studying several approaches to transom replacement, and taking advice from my son who has done a fair bit of 'glass work on boats, I decided to do it by cutting out the glass skin from the outside, then removing the old timber component of the transom and rebuilding it from scratch.

I marked out a cutting line about 80mm inboard from the borders of the transom, and cut through on this line at about 5mm depth. This was sufficient to cut through the fibreglass skin. The skin was peeled free, leaving the timber of the transom exposed (see photos Transom 1 & 2).

I was somewhat surprised at the condition of the plywood structure beneath the glass skin. I was expecting significant rot, but this was not the case. While all of the timber was damp, indicating water ingress, the only sign of darkened soft timber was around the motor mount bolt holes, the engine-well drain hole and the screw holes where a couple of transducers and a speedo pickup had been mounted at various times. You would call these areas "softish" rather than "rotten". The structural integrity of the transom was still in place. Even



This is Boat Number One . . . purchased for the hull,



. . . and this is Boat Number Two . . . purchased for the near new outboard

. . . and here is Boat Number Three . . . purchased for the trailer !

