STEP CABINET FOR GALLEY STORAGE

John MacBride, T-30 #495, *Kestrel*, August 1997*

If you live aboard a Tartan 30 for the sailing season, it quickly becomes apparent that the boat does not have adequate galley storage space, especially in the aft galley layout. My solution was to replace the ladder with a step cabinet (Figure 1), a fairly complicated wood working project, but one worth it in terms of the increase in storage capacity without loss of living space. It yields two good sized lockers with hinged doors and a large drawer, in an area that is otherwise poorly utilized. The weight is low and centered, contributing to good vessel trim, and the unit screens the area under the cockpit — a junk pit on many boats. I added a fold-out trash compartment (Figure 2), further screening the junk pit while getting trash out from under foot.

I constructed the cabinet of quarter inch plywood with all joints made by bonding them with fiberglass tape and epoxy resin. This method produces a very strong, rigid, light container ideal for boats. Sides are cut out with a saber saw. Back and cross braces are butted against the inside edges of the sides and the unit clamped while tape and epoxy are applied. Where extra strength is needed, a second layer of tape and several coats of epoxy can be added. Corner clamps, such as those used for mitered frames, work very well to hold units square until the resin sets. The steps were made of ¾ inch oak, although any hardwood would do. The drawer was also made of quarter inch plywood bonded with tape and epoxy. Since we use the drawer as can storage, it becomes quite heavy. I attached small wheels at the rear lower corners to facilitate easy opening and closing. Many types of drawer rail or slider hardware are available in hardware stores. A half inch lip along the front bottom of the drawer prevents it from opening underway.

I chose to give the two upper lockers teak louver doors, the drawer a solid front of teak veneered plywood. I painted the units with white polyurethane paint and dressed them up with teak trim covering edges and corners. The step cabinet is attached at the top to the bulkhead directly below the companionway hatch using two loose-pin hinges screwed to the top of the cabinet and the bulkhead. Small blocks screwed to the cabin sole contain the bottom sides. The cabinet stays in place in the roughest of seas, but can be removed quickly by rotating it slightly upward, freeing the sides from the blocks, then sliding it sideways releasing the hinge pins.

The trash bin is separate from the step cabinet but flush along its port side. It is attached with small slide bolts, top and bottom that penetrate into the fiberglass liner. Thus, it too can be removed easily. A short piano hinge along the bottom of the trash bin allows it to pivot outward. The weight of the internal shelf and trash basket hold it closed and make it self-closing.

The step cabinet occupies the same area as did the ladder. It is 15 inches wide, 33 inches high from the cabin sole to the top step. The top step is 8 inches deep, the two lower 6 inches. That may not sound very deep for a step, but it is quite adequate. There is 10 inches of height between the top and second and the second and third step, 13 inches from the third step to the cabin sole. The small rise above the top step is 2 inches high, 3 inches deep, making the total cabinet 36 inches high. It is an option I added to accommodate the hinges. Its top opens and I store a few essential tools there since it is handy to both the cockpit and cabin. The top step could be 11 inches deep and the hinges attached directly to it.

The trash bin is 10½ inches wide, 31 inches high, the door 9 by 19. However, buy a plastic trash basket first, then build the inside holding shelf and door to fit the basket. These dimensions are approximate. You will want to measure your boat for precise fits. There is a 2½ inch open space on the starboard side of the step cabinet which I filled with teak louvers to screen the area but allow for ventilation. Ventilation is not a real concern though, since the area under the cockpit is still open to the quarter berth.

---

* Originally published in *The Hook*, newsletter of the Chesapeake Tartan 30 Association.

Figure 1. Step Cabinet

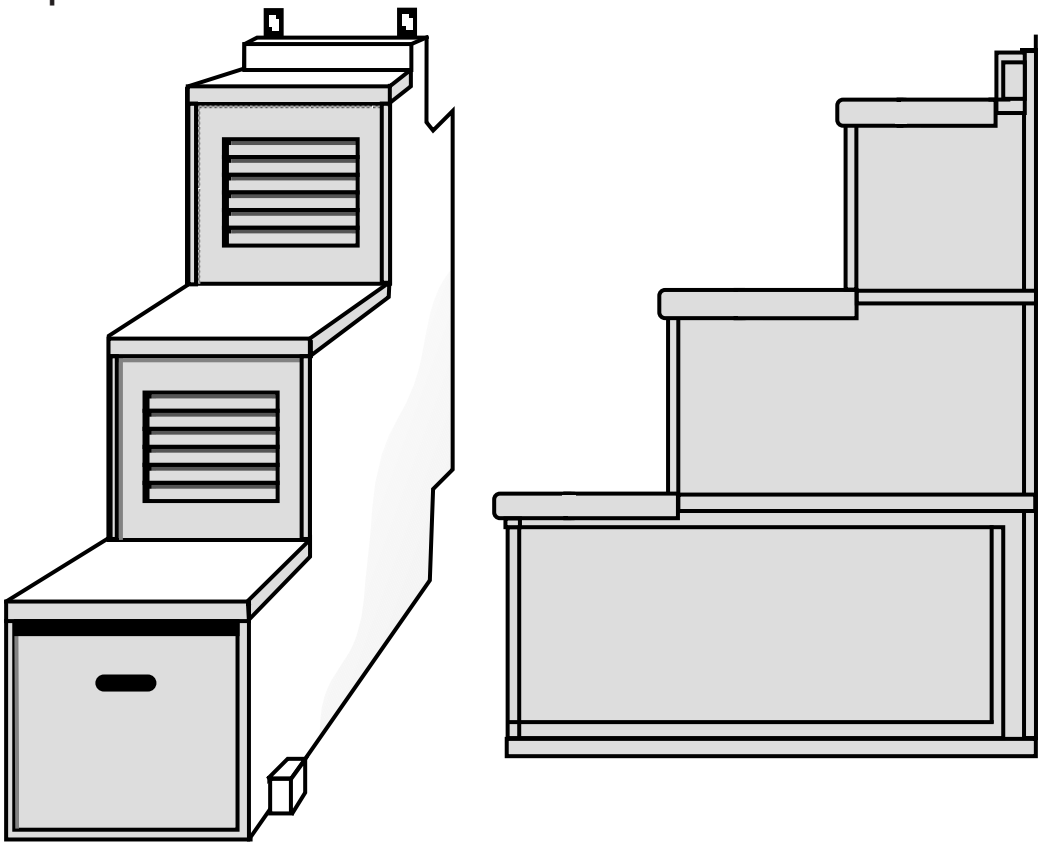

Figure 2. Trash Bin