

Edson Steering Gear Upgrade

I write a cautionary tale with respect to the importance of checking the condition of Edson cable steering systems. Approximately 15 years ago, I replaced the failing Whitlock pedestal steering on my Strider 35 with Edson cable steering (a process in which Edson was most helpful). However, upon leaving the mooring on Saturday of Labor Day weekend with my 16-year-old daughter at the helm, she soon called out that the boat was not responding to the steering.

Following a predictable Chinese fire drill, getting all the sails down, putting the anchor over the side and finding the emergency tiller, we were able to make it back to the mooring. Luckily, the failure occurred at a place where we could do these things before



disaster struck.

The problem turned out to be that the bronze idler pulleys at the base of the pedestal were mounted on a nice bronze bracket, which in turn was mounted on a flat steel backing plate.

Over the course of the last 15 years, the backing plate had completely corroded, as had the aluminum bolts that secured the pedestal to the backing plate. Given the inaccessibility of these systems under the



The original idler pulley assembly (left) on this Edson cable steering system succumbed to corrosion after 15 years. Edson now sells a replacement that has an aluminum backing plate instead of steel. Owners should inspect the cable and pulleys at least once each season.



cockpit, I suspect most owners of older boats do not follow Edson's advice to inspect these units at least once a year. Let this tale urge them to do so!

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