Buying a Mariner - What to Look For …
and <u>look out</u> for!

Posted by Steve Hock (#3627 *Whitecap*)

A member recently suggested that the club post a kind of **"what to look out for"** when purchasing one of our antique boats. **That could become quite a lengthy list when it comes right down to it!!**

I thought through the various issues that I came across with my 1978 2+2 boat and compiled the following list. Those who are experienced with sailboats may find some of the items a bit elementary. Novices may appreciate the detail.

Make paper & pencil notes of problem areas and missing parts as you inspect to use in the negotiation process. Trust me ... you wont be able to remember everything you see! Common problems you may discover will be highlighted in **bold red**.

FIRST !!! Does the owner have the proper documents, <u>titles</u>, registration for both boat and trailer to transfer ownership to you? If not ... fugetaboutit ! Cross state transfers can be a <u>REAL</u> <u>PAIN</u> even with the proper documents !!!!

When inspecting a newer 2+2 Mariner for purchase (in no particular order).

General Hull Inspection

1. Sight down the sides of the hull and look to see that the curve is smooth and fair. Flat spots may indicate damage and a less than professional repair. Look for non-marine type fittings, rusty screws, sloppy putties, and broken parts.

If you immediately see an abundance of these items, the owner lacked skill, knowledge or money to properly maintain the boat. **Proceed on down the list with caution.**

2. Check the bottom for scrapes and spot repairs.

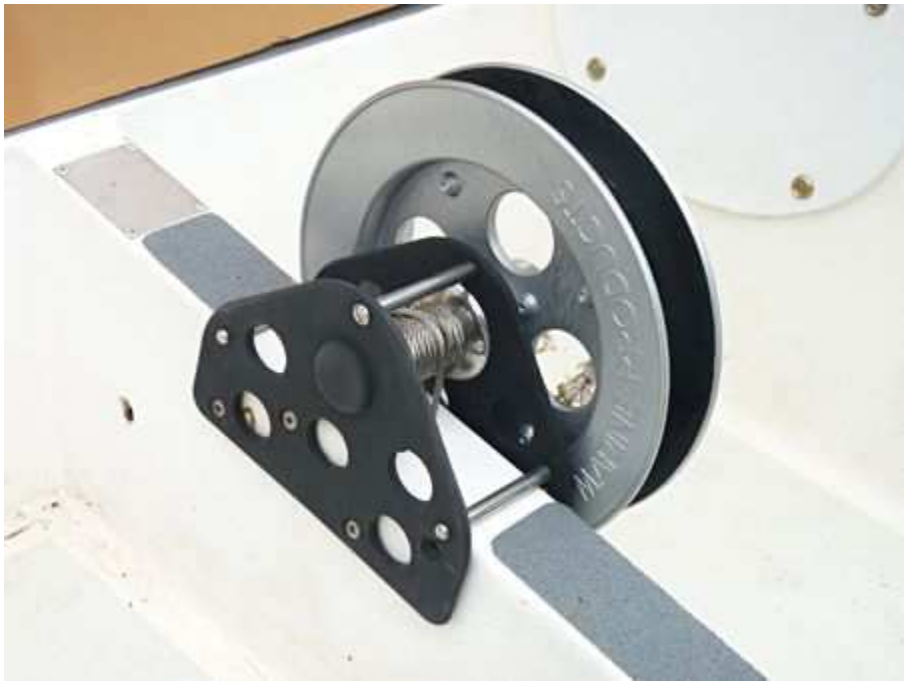
3. Mount the rudder and forcefully shake it to see if the gudgeons are loose. Inspect the rudder for movement, blade shape and condition. Are the components all there? Is it a snug fit or sloppy? Are the haul up and haul down lines there?

My rudder had been modified by a previous owner .. and not too well.

4. Look at the blocks and cleats. Are they all there and are they in good condition? Do the cam cleats work properly if present? Are the blocks free? Are the sheaves cracked or broken? Is the jib track tight? Is the forestay fitting solid? Is the bow pulpit and its backing plates solid?

Missing Cleats & Hardware evident from puttied holes.

5. What is the condition of the **winch and cable**? Is the cable frayed with broken strands? Is the winch mount solid? How about the stopper cleat?



A winch and cable in excellent condition.

A remounted centerboard stop cleat.

Lower the centerboard as much as possible and inspect the board. Rehabbing a **badly rusted board** is a lot of work and is **not an easy job**. Consider what it would cost if you would pay to have this done.

Pretty Bad lookin' Board

6. Look at the **rubrail**. Is it in good condition? Look at the fiberglass at the edge around the rubrail and stern for evidence of collision and breakage. Check the bow fitting and bow area for evidence of collision there. **Hull to deck joints are notorious leakers** but this area is very difficult to inspect. The rubrail must be removed and no seller will allow that. That problem, if it exists, will have to be addressed after purchase.

Also, check the **backstay fitting for damage** to the fiberglass and leakage.

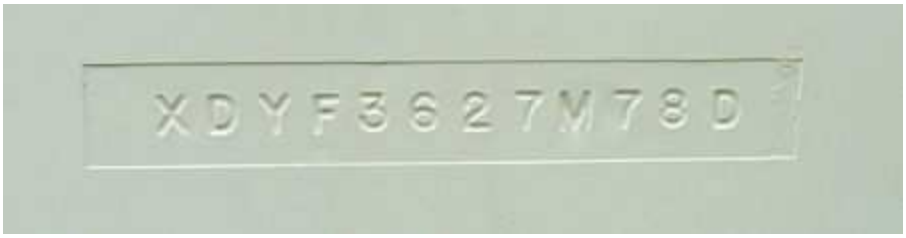
7. Check the cabin top slide for breakage, movement and the condition of the **wood slide rails** if present.

8. Look at the condition of the hatch boards. Do they need replacement or only refinishing?

9. Look at the cockpit sole for evidence of cracking or damage.

10. Inspect the mainsheet block & cam cleat on top of the centerboard trunk for condition and solid mounting. If a ratchet system... does the ratchet work?

11. The **chainplates (where the stays attach to the hull) are hard to keep sealed**. Plan on leaks there if the boat has not been well maintained.



12. **Is there a SERIAL NUMBER and manufacturer plate present. Without one you may have trouble registering it in some states.**

Mast & Boom Inspection

1. Look at the mast & boom for **holes which are empty**. What is missing from the mast/boom? Get a drawing from the website an be sure all the fittings & blocks are present including the stay wires. Raise the mast if possible and inspect the turnbuckles.

* Are the turnbuckles all alike or is there a "hodge-podge" indicating possible cheap repairs?
* Are the turnbuckles bent?
* Are the stays the proper length?
* Are the stays free of **"meathooks"** or broken strands that require replacement?
* Can the mast be set up properly?
* Is the **gooseneck on the boom** serviceable or must it be replaced?

A Hodge-Podge of Turnbuckles

2. Is the proper mast **pivot pin** present? Or is it just an old bolt? What is the condition of the mast step on the hull. Check for broken cast metal and loose screws. Inspect the area of fiberglass surrounding the mast step for cracks. If the mast support post (below ... in the cabin) is not solidly supporting the mast, downward pressure could have damaged the deck.

The putty is bad and leaking into the cabin.

3. Check the **spreaders for straightness** and that the attachment points are firmly riveted. Test the tangs where the stays attach to the mast for firmness and solid riveting.

4. Sight down both the mast and boom for **straightness**. Run your finger down the sail slots and feel for any denting, pinching or rough spots.

5. Look at the mast head fitting. Are the sheaves free and in good condition. Is the cast metal free of breakage and is it firmly riveted to the mast tip?

6. Go over the lengths of the lines, sheets and halyards to see to their general condition and serviceability. If possible, rig the boat and go sailing to be sure all the **components are present** and proper working order.

At this time inspect the sails for rips, tears, stains, missing sail slugs, condition of the bolt rope, reefing points, cringles, headboard, and so on. Be sure the sails fit the spars properly. Without decent, properly fitting sails your boat won't go very well !

Inside the Cabin

If possible, inspect the cabin on a rainy day.

1. Look all around for evidence of **leaking**. Is the bilge full of water? Look at the cabin top around the the mast support for **evidence of leak staining**. Also in the glassed in wood areas of the roof for migration of water into the wood. Brown stains will be evident unless painted over. Look at the screws holding the jib track and cabin slides. Are they wet or badly stained? How about the windows? **They leak on most boats**. (Fresh paint covers stains from leaks.)

If you see a lot of sealant used, you can bet there has been and possibly still is leaking going on.

Leaky windows with sealant oozing out.

2. Crawl forward with a flashlight and look at the **bow area for damage** and at the **backers** for the cleats and bow pulpit fittings. Do they need replaced?

This shows the repeated tightening and subsequent crushing of the backer.

3. Feel the cushions if present. Are they squishy .. wet ? If so, the boat probably leaks water badly or has sunk recently. Are they **all funky with mildew**? If the zippers are broke or jammed, forget drying them out. Can they be used or are they trash? **New ones are expensive.**

4. Look at the **centerboard pivot bolt**. Is it a mass of silicone goop? If so, it probably leaks.

5. If you are small enough ... slide back a quarter berth with a flashlight and look at the **backers on the motor mount** and the gudgeons. Are the plywood backers delaminating? Probably. Also look at the **backstay fitting**. If you see light coming in, it leaks.

6. Are the shelves present? Is there a potty? Is the sink spigot present? Water Tank? Compartment covers? Quarter berth cushions?

This is what you can expect ... or worse from an "unloved" boat.

7. Look at the **lower end of the aluminum mast support**. Has it **pushed through the fiberglass** at the base? This is a big problem and a fair amount of work to repair. If broken, there is probably **water trapped under the berths**, **requiring drilling at the bottom of the hull to drain**.

Lots of work to be done here ..... Ugh!

8. Is there an electrical system/nav lights? Do they work? Is the wiring professional grade? Is there a battery. What's the age / condition?

Inspecting Trailers

Inspecting a trailer is hit or miss. The most important part, the wheel bearings, can't be easily inspected. The best you can do is jack up each wheel and spin it. Does it spin freely? Roll slowly by hand. Does it seem to rotate smoothly? Grab the wheel and forcefully push and pull it in and out. Does it seem solid with no movement? Are the tires in good shape and free of **dry rot and cracks**?

Next look over how the boat fits. Is the hull well supported? Is the bow up to the stopper? Is the winch and cable serviceable? Is the ball receiver in good shape? What size ball is required? 1 1/2" or 2"?

Don't forget to check the lights and electrical plug. Do you have the same type plug or must you get an adapter to hook it up?

Is the frame in generally good shape? Is it rusty? Are the bolts that hold it together all rusty? A new high quality trailer could easily cost $1200.00. or more.

Is there a SERIAL NUMBER and manufacturer plate present. Without one you may have trouble registering it in some states.

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As you can see there are many things to check out, even on a small sailboat. Items may be physically small to replace but may be quite costly. You will be surprised at what a new hexaratchet, or cam cleats cost, or the price of blocks or a new boom vang system, sail or trailer.

Much time and effort is involved with patching, sealing, cleaning and fixing. At times repair work may become overwhelming when an ugly discovery is made. **Be sure you are ready to tackle the job in terms of skill, tools, and budget.**

Time is money as they say. If you find a great boat that the owner has lavished time, money and energy on, don't cheap out. If you really want to sail right away, be prepared to pay for a "sail away" boat in excellent condition. In the long run I think you will be glad you did. **As many of our members will attest, repairing ... and not sailing, gets old after a while.**

Create a balance of repair work and sailing.
Don't disable your boat for long periods if you can help it.

Anchoring in Johnson Bay, MD