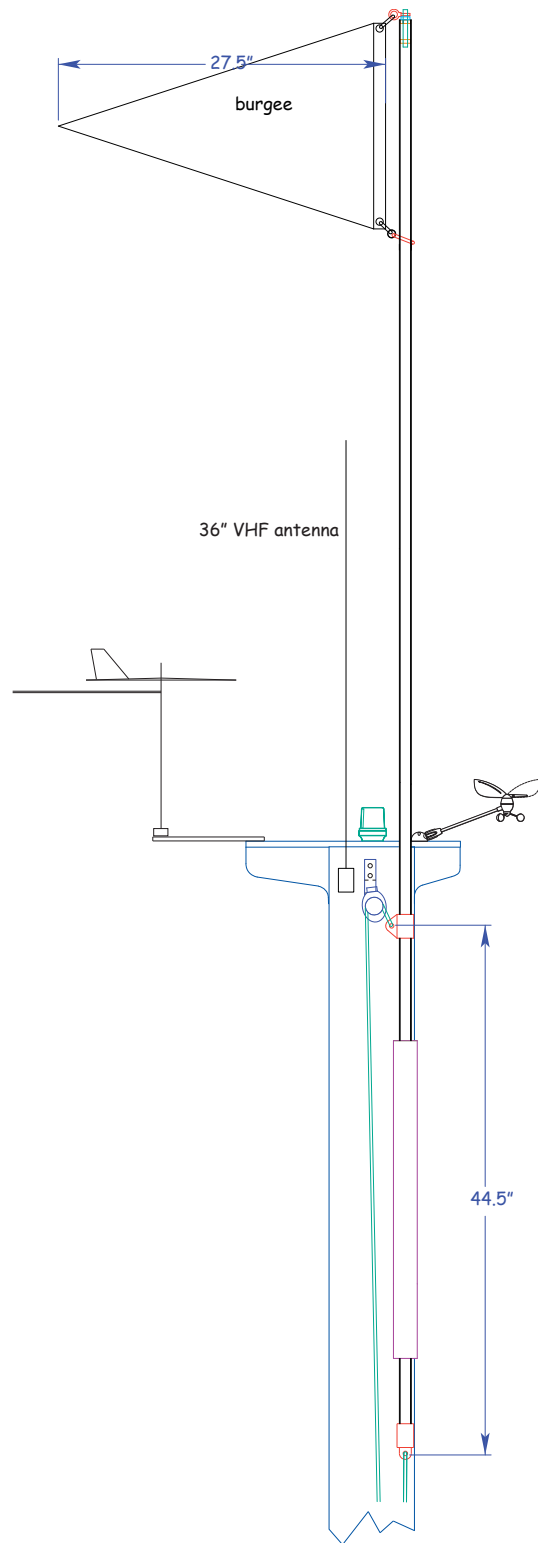


# Building and rigging a pigstick to fly your burgee above your mast

What's a pigstick? A pigstick is a flagstaff that is held at the top of the mast and allows a burgee or pennant to fly well above the VHF antenna, wind sensors etc.

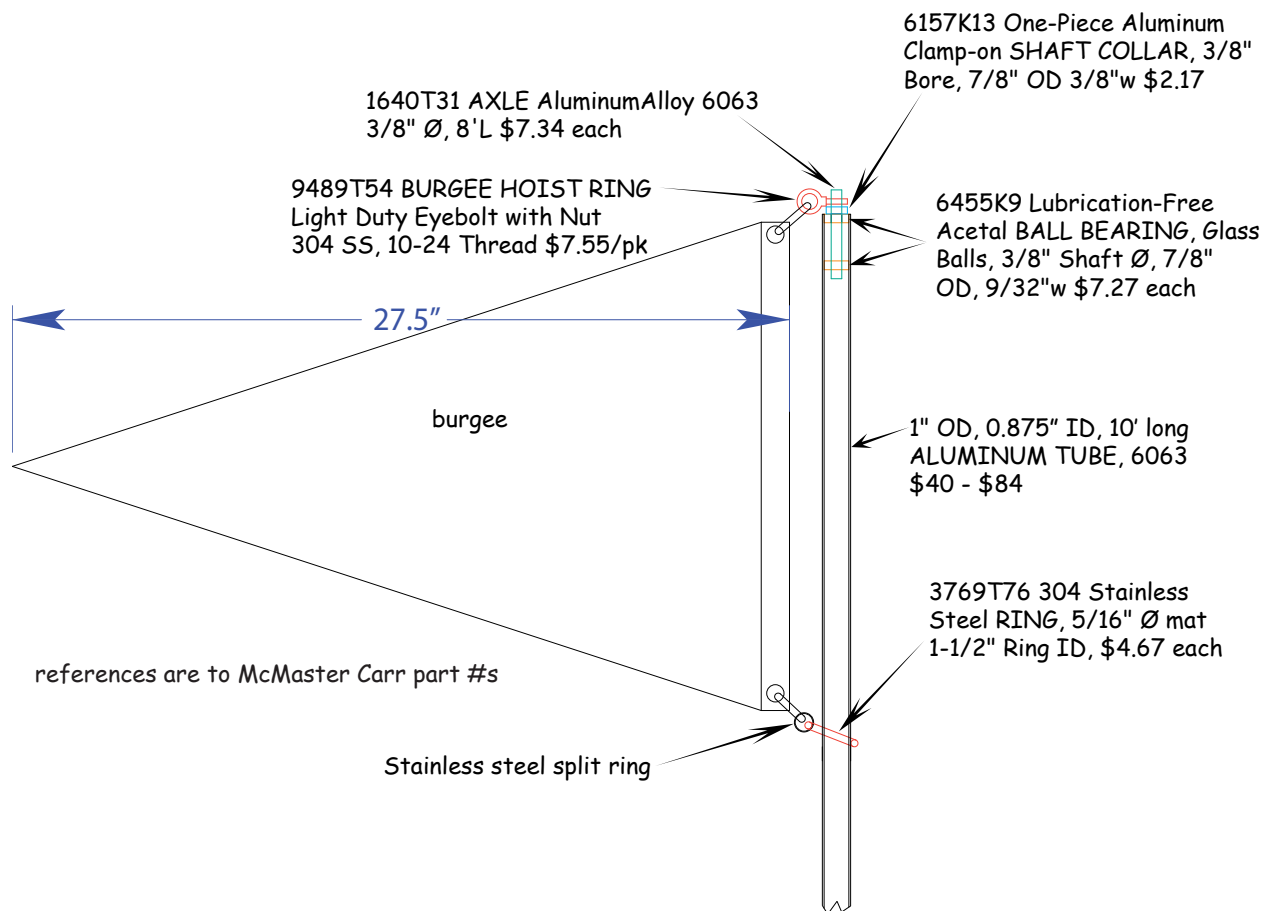
And why would you want one?

1. It is traditionally the correct place to fly your yacht club burgee; the place most of us fly our burgees, under the spreader, being reserved for signal or courtesy flags that fly for a limited time.
2. On my boat the spreaders are not wide enough to allow even a small burgee to fly without touching the shrouds or the mast and so the (rather expensive) burgees need replacing every year or two. The burgee flying free and clear above the mast has lasted two years already without any visible degeneration at all.
3. The pigstick burgee is easily identifiable on a yacht, whereas those under the spreader are rarely visible because of sail.



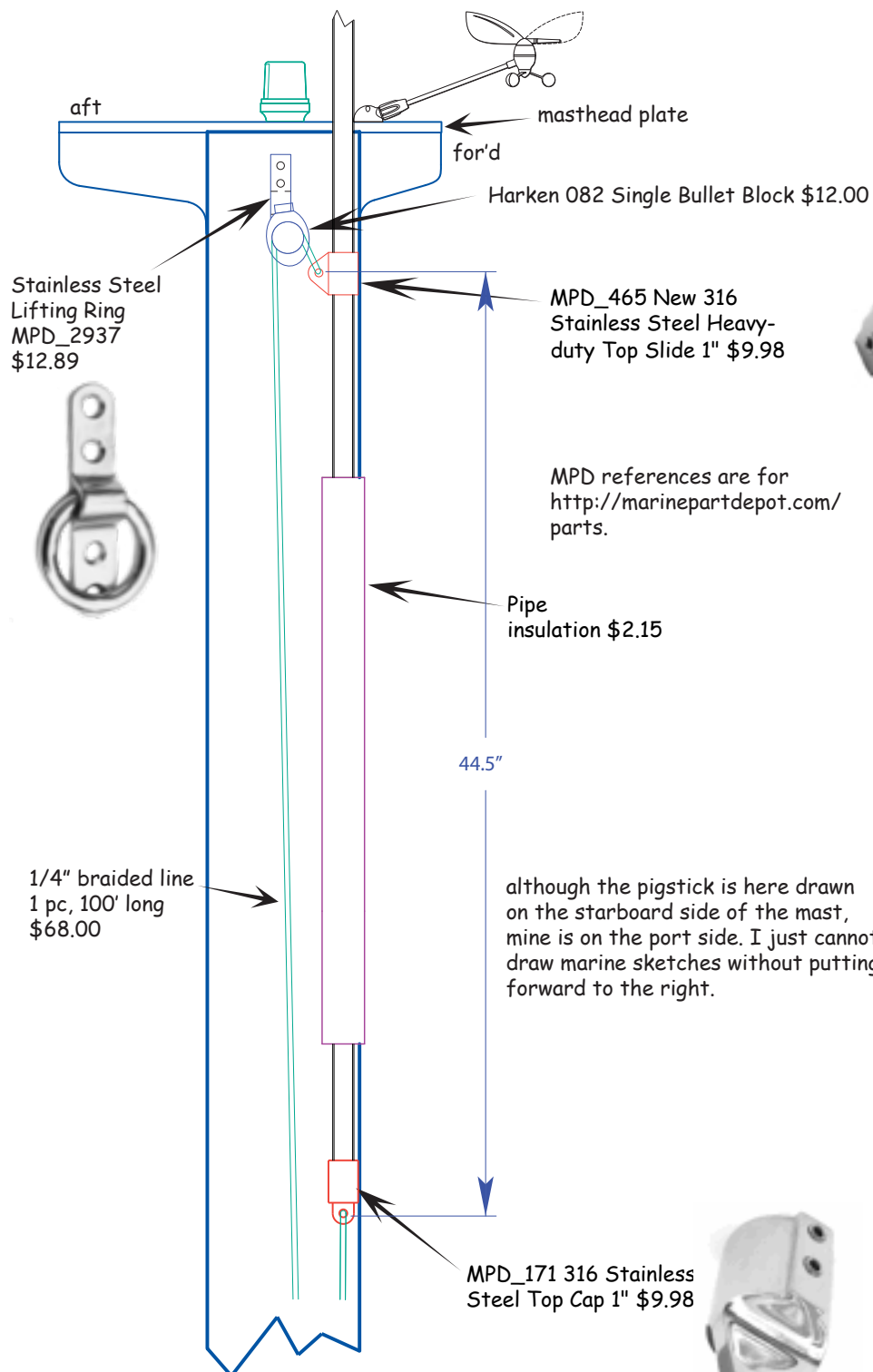
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We all make compromises between the correct or best way and the easiest way. Most people would not dream of going to the bother or expense of using a pigstick. I have made two now and my second one is lightweight, inexpensive, easy to build and easy to rig (my first one was too heavy). I have to agree that taking them down and hoisting them every time you go to the boat would get old fast, but I leave mine up, a compromise that works for me.



My pigstick is a 10' long piece of 1" diameter 6063 ('architectural' corrosion resistant) aluminum tubing. It has two internal bearings at the top that allow a short center aluminum axle to rotate freely. This axle holds the top grommet of the burgee. The bottom grommet is attached to a stainless steel

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ring that floats freely on the stick, allowing



the flag to rotate around and pull the ring up in strong winds. Below the masthead level there is the first halyard attachment point, a stainless rail fitting, then a wrapping of pipe insulation neatly held with duct tape, then the bottom halyard attachment



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point, another rail fitting. The halyard comes down to the base of the mast and is tied off to a cleat. The halyard is reeved through a Harken O82 Single Bullet Block shackled to a stainless steel lifting ring that is screwed into the side of the mast at the top, just below the top plate.



The 1" 6063 aluminum tube is strong enough (we sail in 30 knot winds as a matter of course) and very light weight. It is just thick enough to be tapped 6-32 for set screws to hold the top ball bearings in place (the acetal bearings were indented with a center drill first). The aluminum axle rotates very freely in these bearings, even with the shaft collar sitting on the top one. The two rail fittings that allow the halyard to attach both have set screws which I allowed to indent into the tube (I replaced all supplied set screws with stainless steel ones with sharp ('cone') points from

McMaster Carr). I wrapped the tube in a piece of 1" foam pipe insulation (\$2.15) to prevent the aluminum or the fittings from banging against the mast. I secured this with 4 or 5 bands of duct tape. The 1/4" braided line (I bought 100' because I have a 54' mast: I had some left over) is New England Ropes Sta-Set Polyester Yacht Braid at 0.68 per foot.

For those of us who are keen on tension, then installing a little #6 Lewmar winch on the mast (on an 8° angled pad) to tension the pigstick halyard is

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easy and ideal. Cleat off the downhaul with a few inches of play and then winch in the halyard (okay, its the same line, but you know what I mean).



The total cost of the project without the winch, duct tape or screws was \$235.27 plus tax and shipping. I overpaid for the aluminum tube (\$84 is what I paid), but its difficult to find in 10' lengths.

Now, there are commercial sources for the stick itself, but they are just that. The stick. And a short stick at that, unless you ask for a reasonable length. Tapered? - I defy anyone to perceive from the deck whether a pigstick is tapered or not on a 54 foot mast. VHF antennas are generally 36"

unless you scrimped. Ten foot is just right. Doesn't anyone consider the continuing smooth rotation of their burgee to let it fly full with the wind as they sail over the years? Hmmm. Curious.



Can you tell which mast belongs to Catcher?