

Road Sign

The first barn sign had been two varnished pieces of 2x10, words routed and filled with black on both sides, the boards nailed into chambers in 4x4 posts. The sign was on an east-west road, and the boards took morning and afternoon sun directly. Over the years, I'd sanded and re-painted the varnish three or four times. The black lettering had still held, but the wood had become streaked, darker, quite dreary, as moisture had wicked into the cut-ends of the boards. And, given a smallish hillside placement (one leg deeper than the other), and that I'd put one nail into a later-day planter, that sign heaved one end up, noticeably higher than the other. And the horizon stayed perfectly the same. Let's say things had turned ugly. So. What's an amateur to do?

Materials:

- Six of 2x4x8
- Decent 3/4 inch plywood (about 20 x 13 inches for this project)
- Half-inch plywood (for letters)
- Good oil paint in cheap small cans in barn colors
- Good quality caulking
- Very good primer paint
- Exterior paint for frame
- Three-inch drywall screws for assembly, generally, and mounting
- Self-adhesive door insulation (1/4 by 3/8, here)

A place to start: this is another of those “concept” pieces. And the concept is to keep the brightly colored sign floating, no matter the temperature or weather.

The gray frame, as designed on 2x4 spacers, and as it has been screwed to existing stubbed-off 4x4 posts, can be set—and then later re-adjusted—to horizontal by re-setting some three-inch drywall screws (illus. 1).

With exterior glue, the 1/2 inch-thick lettering was fixed to a 3/4-inch plywood piece measured to fit in the gray frame that was based on the posts from the earlier sign. And the letters were caulked to the plywood. And this assembly was primed, allowed to dry, lightly sanded, re-primed, and so forth, for three cycles. The sign board was painted three times with the blue-and-white shiny-bright oil paint.

And the concept also allows for revitalizing the bright portion of this amateur sign. Two provisions contribute:

(1) The brightly-painted board's ends, held (lightly but firmly) inside brackets, are (from the road) invisibly wrapped with closed-cell foam weather-stripping: I wanted water to shed away from the paint. I wanted vibration from wind-and-weather not to produce early micro-cracks in the exterior paint's "skin."

(2) I wanted repeat access to the brightly-painted board, and so I designed (what are vertical, in this view) two strips of wood that are not glued-on, or "filled" with sealer or paint, but only by screws (illus. 2). Withdraw the four screws to remove these two strips, and the "bright" part of the sign can be re-worked, sanded and re-painted.



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