

Living Dockside

by Ginny Jones

"The Holding Tank"



There are few things on my boat that can take away my smile and make me think fondly of being a landlubber again. The holding tank does it for me, or should I say, it's when there is a problem with the holding tank. Is there a more insidious contraption that we could possibly be saddled with?

Don't get me wrong, I believe it is a necessary evil; I will not pump overboard unless I am out cruising and the regulated number of miles from land. I swim and dive at my dock, and MOST of my neighbors feel the same way.

There are a few hold-outs that piss (oops, pun alert!) off all of us with their remarks, such as, "I've been

here for years and I've always dumped in the marina, it won't hurt a thing." Now these are the people who give liveaboards a bad name. These are also the people who pay others to change the zincs or clean their hulls, because you sure as hell aren't going to get them to go in the water.

Ok, so my plumbing went on the fritz, how did I know? The county pump-out boat pulled up along my starboard side to pump out the holding tank, and it wouldn't pump. Come on, I begged try it again, nothing. Ahhh, crap, actually that's not what I said, although it seemed appropriate at the time. Humor, that's how I'm going to get through this.

How hard can it be, all I have to do is find the blockage, right? Take off a line here, what the heck is this Y shaped thingamajig? And what is that god-awful smell, ooh, ok where's the Vicks (a trick I saw on a CSI episode). You just can't ask someone else to work on something as personal as your holding tank, I mean its your, ah, stuff!

Now, I can ask questions and advice from my neighbor who has seen it all and done it all when it comes to boats. I just refuse to let him near the smelly thing. I also found the macerator pump hooked up to this confusing array of hoses. There also was a line going to a manual pump which I had never used. Somewhere in this mess was a plugged line, I just had to disconnect hoses and see which one was the culprit.

My other task was to put this system back together in

a way I could understand it. That is why buying a used boat is always a learning project. My dream would be to build my own boat. Just think of it, getting to lay every electrical wire and every plumbing line and labeling each one so you would know where everything is. Enough dreaming, back to the nightmare of my plugged plumbing.

So here's what I did, I figured it's in the U shaped thing, somewhere I absolutely cannot reach. I have a shop vac on my boat and I figured I could back blow the obstruction back into the holding tank. I put the hose into the deck opening and turned it on, Holy mother of God!!! I found the vent up on the starboard side of my cockpit.

Once the brown mist settled all over the deck and myself, I ran for the bleach bottle and hoped nobody was filming this, or it would be YouTube viral before I quit cussing and screaming...

By the way, it worked!



My hard-earned pumpout sticker!

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