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Cruiser "Head" Aches

Mary came home from shopping around noon, and found me sitting naked on the floor of the head. Yup. I was working it. No matter how much fresh water you flush down before you start, there's still some smelly stuff that leaks out across the floor as you disassemble the head to install a rebuild kit. And, you're sitting on the floor to have access. The practical solution is to work naked so you don't ruin your clothes.

I stood up. Mary giggled. Talk about a hit to my self-esteem....

With boat mechanics getting \$75 and hour, cruisers usually do as much maintenance themselves as they can. When the head stops working, or gets temperamental, then it's time for a rebuild. Sometimes it just gets plugged up, and you have to remove the flange and the joker valve to clear it. Joker valve... there's a joke! It's a three sided rubber check valve at the outlet, and it's usually the focal point for any obstructions. I think the Joker is whoever designed this monstrosity!

Are you "Head" smart?

What's the loneliest maintenance job on a boat? Rebuilding the head. It's guaranteed, because everyone leaves the boat! At least this removes any concern about dress codes. What do you find inside? Not what you think, unless you're working on a blockage problem. You find a buildup of bad smelling scale. With time, the scale blocks the flow through valves and hoses and creates problems. The scale can sometimes be dissolved with vinegar or muriatic acid. You can find information at <http://www.boatus.com/boattech/casey/04.htm>.

Some financial analysis.

West Marine prices: A Jabsco rebuild kit is \$65.99, and it takes 2 to 4 hours of very messy work to install. A replacement pump is \$135, and it can be installed quicker and easier and with less mess. An entire new manual head is only \$149; you just bolt it down and connect two hoses. Here's one case where even the tightest skinflint may see the value of going with the higher priced solution! However, many cruisers still carry a rebuild kit as part of their emergency spares. You never know when you'll have a "Head" ache!

There are no photos with this article, for obvious reasons. Just use your imagination....



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