

HEAD HATCH

Rick Lucas: *Ping*



When I bought Ping, a PO had already installed a 10" Bomar hatch in the head that was of the same type that Pearson installed at the yard. It doesn't leak so I assume that the bedding was done properly. The only problem was that the installation below decks was, shall we say, inelegant. There was a rudely cut hole in the liner above the head that exposed the gap between the liner and the fiberglass deck. Yeah it worked, but it wasn't pretty. Since Ping is a labor of love, I wanted to repair this open sore and extend the attractive woodwork Pearson designed into the boat to this modification.

I never looked into what Bomar might have in the way of interior collars that might work for this because I like wood, especially below decks where it doesn't need annual maintenance. I thought that I could use wood strips to build a frame that would fit into the opening in the liner. I had no delusions that my woodworking skills could yield a snug fit between the frame and the fiberglass roof so I didn't try to do that. I simply made a square frame that would fit the hole and rely on something else to fill the last few fractions of an inch to close the gap.

I luckily stumbled across some long strips of teak at a marine salvage outlet that looked like the right size. Actually, that's a lie. I'm always on the lookout for cheap teak because I figure that I can find a use for it somewhere on the boat. The strips were 1" x 1/2" in various lengths. Turns out that this batch of wood was perfect for this project.



Working with a hatch inner dimension of 9 7/8", I used a miter box to cut the four strips that make up the bottom frame pieces. Once I got those squared up, I cut four more pieces that would sit on top of the first four and extend vertically into the opening in the shell. Although I'm not sure if it's up to Norm Abrams' standards, my multiple measurement yielded eight pieces of bevel-cornered teak that made a square frame with an "L-shaped" flange that extended up through the headliner and out parallel to it.

With the help of four cheap corner clamps I found at my local Ace Hardware, I first glued the bottom four boards together with Pro-Bond glue. Then glued the top four. Once they'd all set up, I laid the two assemblies together and was very surprised when I found the sizes really close and all the corners square. Using C-clamps and glue, I bonded the two wooden squares together. Once firmly bonded, I used my orbital sander to smooth out the joints and prepare the wood for finishing.

Applying the same wood finishing techniques that I used on the rest of the cabin (see [Cabin Refinishing](#)), I applied four coats of Minwax Spar urethane to the exposed surface, and also lapped a couple of coats on the back side of the glued joints to provide protection against moisture. (Pro-Bond is, I think, water-based glue that would probably not take kindly to a lot of water.) It looked good on my workbench, but would it fit?

The rough hole in the liner needed to be made larger. Using the frame as a template, I drew a pencil line around the wood strips. A Dremel cutting wheel cut the hole to size and a Dremel grinding wheel opened the spots that were still a little too close. **Note:** I put a small shop vac on deck with the nozzle by the wheel to keep the nasty dust out of the boat. You don't want to breathe this stuff.



I screwed and glued two small pieces of scrap wood above the liner on the starboard and port side of the opening. To these I screwed the frame from inside the opening. It fit perfectly... almost. What remained was a gap between the top of the frame and deck above. A trip back to Ace Hardware found some thick and wide closed cell adhesive weather stripping that I stuck to the bottom of the decking. This closed the gap above the frame and completed the job.

Things I'd do differently: Own big power tools. An electric bench saw would have probably gotten the cuts a bit more precise. The frame wasn't completely square as it only fit into the hole one way. But that's alright. I don't think anyone's going to measure it now.

Cost: US\$7.50 for salvaged teak strips and US\$1.50 for pipe insulation.

Time: 4 hours