

Hole in the Head

by Marcie Connelly-Lynn

As we entered Luperon Harbor in the Dominican Republic, a voice came over the VHF. It sounded like God telling us to “Anchor to the trades!” Turns out it was Bruce van Sant giving us a heads up on the trade winds and though there was no wind to speak of this early in the morning, we should anchor towards the east. We listened and followed directions accordingly.

A week or two later at sundown as we were sitting in the cockpit enjoying our post-dinner lethargy, we noticed the sky blackening and a squall moving in from the east. It looked like it was going to miss us and it did...the first time through. The storm passed and then because Nature is known to play tricks on presumptuous cruisers, it whipped around and came at us from the west with almost no warning.

This was not just any little blow; we clocked gusts at 60+mph. The anchorage was crowded and the VHF blared with various warnings from cruisers, mostly akin to the fact that the whole fleet seemed to be dragging. Down below, the dirty dinner dishes and pans crashed on the floor and unlatched lockers and drawers emptied their contents on the sole in a grand, uproarious fashion. The contents of the dink went with the blow and we watched as gas tank, oars, PDFs and bailer flew out and hit the water, quickly disappearing into the now pitch-black night.

An hour or so later, calm was restored weather-wise, but the anchorage was in turmoil. Several boats had dragged and needed to be re-anchored. Dinghies were gone missing, solar showers were in the drink and drying clothes had flown off the lifelines. It was moonless and except for emergency maneuvering, it was pointless to try to recover anything in the dark. We'd all wait till morning.

Everyone was on edge and with the first light, cruisers ventured out and began combing the mangroved nooks and crannies of the harbor, rounding up lost gear and consolidating it in one location for owner identification and retrieval.

Midst all of the ruckus and afterwards, we felt we were pretty fortunate. We recovered all of our lost dinghy items. Only a couple of dishes broke and once the sole was washed down, the boat seemed fairly shipshape again. That is until David went to the forward head to take care of some “business”.

He had left a stubborn outboard engine lock soaking in oil on the forward head counter. We hadn't had occasion to use the head since the blow and hadn't really given it much thought. As he sat down, he noticed the lock laying on the floor in a pool of oil littered with large shards of white porcelain. The type of white porcelain you might find, for instance, in a toilet bowl.

It appears as the boat heeled over during that 60+ mph gust, not only did the dishes fly off the counter, the lock went, too. The lock not only flew, but made a clean entry and exit through the toilet bowl leaving a huge hole in its wake. What to do? There were no new heads available at Luperon Marine. Ever resourceful David managed to glue the pieces back together just as you would a fine vase, except he used 5200 and then covered the damaged area with duct tape. It worked just fine until we were able to order a replacement head in Puerto Rico, but it certainly gave new meaning to the phrase “hole in the head”.



A real hole in the head!