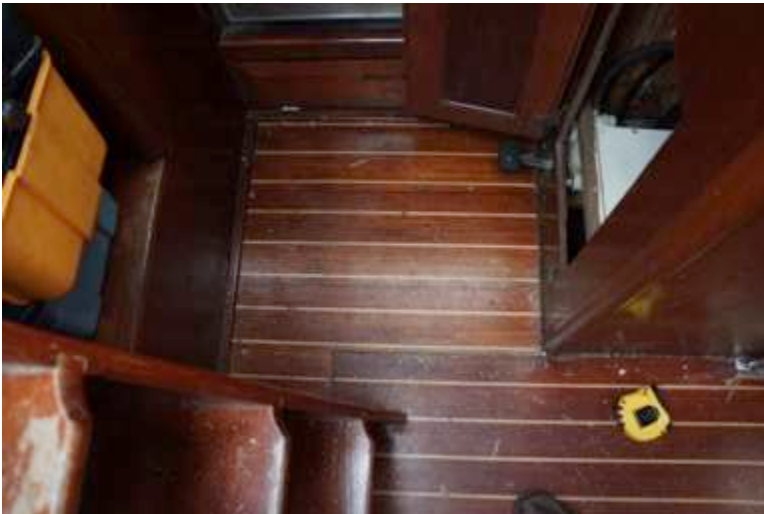


Replacing the cabin sole in my 1981 Ericson 36 Ron Holland

My 34 year old *Glory Days* cabin floor looked awful, smelled like diesel fuel and whatever else used to drip into the bilge over the years and when a friend actually put his foot through it one day last year I decided it was time to make a change.

This boat, now officially 34 years of age, has gone through some serious internal modification by past owners. The guy who sold it to me 15 years ago fancied himself to be a carpenter. He had removed the starboard side settee and replaced it with a dinette table that lowers down to bunk level to create a double berth in the main cabin. Not the greatest workmanship. From a distance it all looked good, but up close it was some of the worst woodworking you can imagine. Over the years I have attempted to fix the sloppy in stuff as well as I was able, but when the floor gave out I realized there was major work to be done.



This is the floor in the galley. Notice two unmatched pieces of teak and holly plywood.



The floor below the chart table... $\frac{1}{4}$ " thick ply that had totally rotted through with the help of a crew member's foot.



To starboard of the keel stepped mast. Totally stained by bilge contents over many years.



With the table removed the obvious evidence of stain, rot and some really lame carpentry.

The first thing I needed to do was remove the adjacent seating furniture and old floor to see what was below. A big surprise was that the teak and holly sole was only a $\frac{1}{4}$ " thick teak and holly plywood sheet that the owner had screwed and glued to the existing $\frac{3}{4}$ " thick mahogany plywood that was the original factory floor in the boat. Removing it revealed more rot and more smell and grime that had invaded the inaccessible parts of the bilge.



Undaunted by the stains in the newly uncovered small area where I removed the floor, I cleaned off much of the grime with Fantastik cleaner and Soft-Scrub and then painted it with Interlux gray Bilgecoat. Already it looked better.



I was relieved to see that the Bilgecoat paint covered all the disgusting residue from an old leaky diesel tank that I had replaced a few years back. Now the rest of the floor had to come up and it revealed equally disgusting muck and debris.



Notice that the $\frac{1}{4}$ " teak and holly veneer was simply glued down on top of the old flooring.



What happens under the chart table stays under the chart table.



Hard to believe but the two compartments up to the mast have actually been thoroughly scrubbed and cleaned. I kept a small vacuum cleaner handy at all times to suck up sawdust and muck. It proved to a very good tactic.



Painted it all looked so much better!



On my way home from Condon's Lumber in Westchester, NY. I had to buy 3 sheets of $\frac{3}{4}$ " thick marine grade plywood. The sheets measured 48" by 98" (not sure why they are 2 inches longer than standard plywood?). This plywood is very expensive and I asked the yard to section cut them for me to my measurements so all I had to cut on my own would be the smaller more manageable pieces. Before I bought the wood I made exact templates of my floor pieces out of some heavy corrugated moving boxes and tried to figure out how I would get them into the boat. The companionway would only allow me to bring in a piece of flooring that was 38" wide. That was my limit on flooring widths.

I worked on the cutting and finishing in my garage. First thing that I did was to seal the lower side of the wood and every exposed edge of the wood with a store brand two part epoxy wood sealer that I bought from Jamestown Distributors www.jamestowndistributors.com/. It went on easily and it will prevent the wood from absorbing anything that happens to drip into the bilge. Note that some of the cuts are at angles that match the existing floor supports. I then used a synthetic varnish also from Jamestown Distributors (not two part) on the teak and holly surface. I didn't stain the wood at all because the varnish made it look great. The hardest part of all of this was making sure that the white lines would line up properly. On This Old House the host Bob Villa used to say, "measure twice, cut once." Because of the cost of this lumber I measured everything four times before I cut.



I used saw guides and a 5 ½" Ryobi circular saw and a hand jigsaw to do all of the cutting. The guides made it relatively sure and easy.

Then I took all of the pieces from home and laid them down in the boat to make sure they would fit. There were a couple of minor adjustments that were needed, but once they were done it was safe to screw everything into place.





I used two drills to save time... One with a bit/countersink and the other with a Phillips head driver. All screw heads are countersunk and bunged with teak plugs. Vacuum up the dust with every hole.



The new galley floor makes the yet-to-be-refinished companionway staircase look even worse!



The new floor under the chart table... no more hole!



The main cabin with all furniture back in place looks new again.