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Installing nautical ceilings on your hull sides

One of our summer projects has been to remove much of the original foam backed fabrics from Quivira. You really don't want to know what's lurking behind that stuff --- and when you do you'll be ripping it out too. We have installed varnished ash battens to cover the hullsides --- very nautical looking. We just finished up the v-berth and quarter berth areas and here are some photos and tips.



Scraping out the old foam

First you need to prepare the batten material. Rip some white ash into about 1&1/2" by 3/8" strips. They will need to be at least 82" long and clear without any knots. You will require about 55-60 pieces to do the just the V-berth and quarter berth from the bunk flat to the shelf above. Run them through a router table to bull nose two edges. Then sand seal and varnish (3 coats minimum) on both sides. It's important to seal the back sides since any condensation will cause the ash to blacken. We used Interlux clear acrylic sealer (2 coats) and 3 coats of Epithanes wood finish (available in gloss or rubbed effect). The wood finish product does not need sanding between coats, which saves a lot of time. Do sand between the sealer and first coat of Epithanes. With the sealer, we varnished full strength on all coats.

Meanwhile make up the furring strips 3/4" x 3/4" which will give you something to attach the battens to. Pine, spruce or fir is fine. You will need 10 pieces roughly 24" long for the V-berth and Quarterberth. Then, kerf them with sawcuts about 1/2" deep across one side at 1/2" intervals". This will make them very flexible and easier to mate to the hull.

Now begin to tear out the old Fabric. You will see that there are some teak trim pieces that hold the fabric at the edges, pry these up and remove the teak trim from around the area. Be gentle, most of these will go right back in place to trim up your final job. You will see that the foam extends right up into the cabinet or under the shelf above. Use a razor knife and cut it where it disappears above.

The foam will probably be well adhered to the bare hull sides. We used sharp 1" wood chisels and merely scraped away by hand. Wear a particle mask since a lot of mold and foam bits will fly. After scraping as much glue away as possible, we used a DA sander w/60 grit to clean up the hull sides. If you leave too much glue it will clog the 60 grit very quickly.

Mark the bare hull side for the furring strips which will make the ribs to attach the battens. Locate one at each end, and then 24" in from each end. I also came in just enough from the bulkheads to make each rib a true vertical using a carpenter's square. That will make the rows of exposed screws more pleasing to the eye. In the V berth you will find that the forward bulkhead is considerably angled at the bottom. I placed one rib vertical and then another directly against the bulkhead forming a little triangle since I was concerned about the battens warping if several inches of the end were left unsecured. After marking grind the fiberglass hullside absolutely clean where the furring strips will be attached with a 20 grit mini grinder. This will assure good adhesion. Remark the hull to locate the furring strips and dry fit them for final glueing.



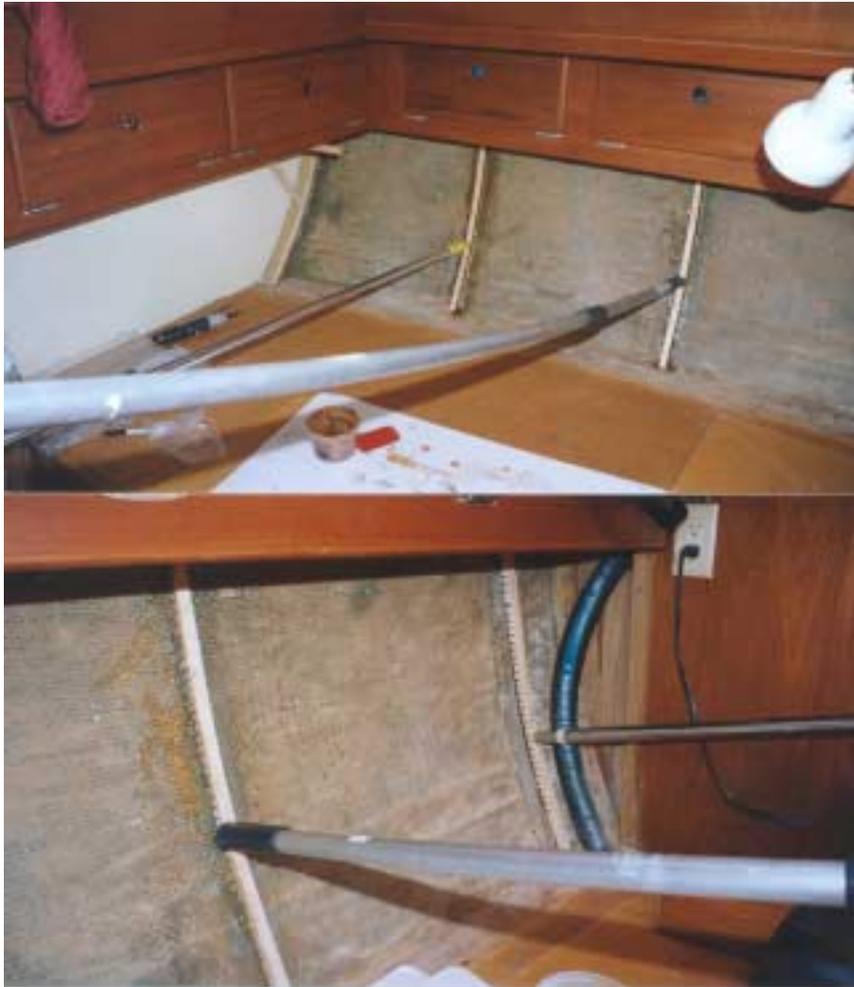
Cleaned and marked for furring strips.

Make up some epoxy paste. Use West or MAS system high viscosity epoxy with a slow or medium cure hardener--- mix according to instructions and add some wood flour to make a thick paste. Wipe down the hull with acetone. Spread the paste on the furring strip and stick in place. I held them in place during cure with telescoping boat hooks as shown in the photo. Meanwhile lay a fillet of epoxy paste up each side and radius with a tongue depressor. Let the epoxy go off overnight.

At this point we added 3/4" foam insulation board between the ribs. We used just household foam board with an R factor of 4.0 -- "the Pink Panther stuff". This real simple --- just cut to fit with a razor knife. Stuff little pieces in wherever needed. Since

we live aboard all-year round this will cut the sweating problem dramatically, as well as reduce our heat and A/C costs.

Now it is a simple matter to cut the battens and install. Start at the top. Hold in place and scribe the angle for one end, and cut. Then measure the length of the upper edge scribe the angle at the other end and cut to length. The accuracy is not really critical since the trim will cover little sins at the bulkhead. Dab a little sealer on each raw end before screwing the batten in place. For fasteners we used #4 x 3/4" oval head SS screws. Be extremely careful that your screws are in a perfectly vertical line --- otherwise it will look like Al Capone visited your boat! Work your way down to the berth flat with additional battens butted right up to the one above. The last batten will need to be trimmed to fit neatly. Or otherwise you can make up a 2.5" wide by 1/4" thick special batten to fasten on top of the final one to trim up your job. None of this really is terribly important since it will be hidden under the cushion anyway.



Epoxy curing--- note check your deck drain hose this is a good time to replace it!

You will find that the old teak trim pieces you removed at the beginning will fit the curve of the battens without any modification. Just reattach them. That's it! The finished

product is really very classy and traditional looking. Certainly it will add lots of value to your Pearson when you sell it.. Gone too are a lot of the smoky, doggy odors Quivira was cursed with when we bought her.

The book shelves in the main saloon can be treated the same way. Inside the lockers we are also insulating and adding plywood backing. We are now enclosing the shelves over the V berth with teak dropdown doors and replacing the rest of the foam/fabric with closed-cell insulation as well. The hanging lockers are getting the same treatment but we are using aromatic cedar for battens. We'll send some photos when that's done.



Foam insulation and finished product.



PS here is another project. We have the original L shape galley so more counter space is desirable. We removed our forward ladder and constructed a teak cabinet with countertop for added galley workspace in its place. The microwave is built in underneath, along with a sizable cabinet for storage. What you don't see pictured here is the drop-in counter which fills in between the settee and the new cabinet making a 24" wide work counter in front of the locker door so that we can still use the hanging locker.