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## **Mariners' Museum's new exhibition opens – in its restrooms**

NEWPORT NEWS, Va. – The Mariners' Museum's latest exhibition, *A Head of Its Time*, could only be approached with humor. Its subject matter, after all, is the history of bathrooms – or the lack of them – on ships. And so, the appropriate exhibition space was evident: The Museum's eight public restrooms.

*A Head of Its Time* opened Nov. 8, 2013, a look at “going at sea,” in a time before flushing toilets on board ships. The panels are posted on restroom walls, above urinals and even on the doors of stalls.

*A Head of Its Time* features panels exploring aspects of making do at sea. Topics include why the facilities – or lack thereof – were called “the head”; the wisdom of keeping tabs on wind direction and how sailors improvised before toilet paper. To illustrate the panels in a manner that complemented the tone of the storytelling, The Mariners' turned to Hampton Roads cartoonist Walt Taylor.

“I knew there wouldn't be a lot of visual references for these scenarios – at least I hope there aren't,” said Taylor, who is the political cartoonist for *The Virginian-Pilot* newspaper in Norfolk. “So I knew a cartoon-y drawing style would work best, as opposed to a more detailed and realistic illustration style.”

The exhibition's genesis was about eight years ago. The late Mariners' Museum President John Hightower came up with the exhibition concept and title years ago as a joke. Anna Holloway, now the Museum's collections and programs chief, called his bluff by submitting a formal proposal. “There is a certain experience that cuts across time, space, age and ethnicity, though not necessarily across genders,” her proposal began.

The exhibition was tabled for several years, for budget reasons, but has finally been realized.

“The most important thing about teaching history in a museum setting is making it relevant to your guests,” Holloway said. “I think we can all agree that the need for a toilet is a universal experience. This is just our way of coaxing people into exposing themselves to maritime history - and hope that they have fun and learn something while doing it.”

The Mariners' Museum, an educational, non-profit institution accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, preserves and interprets maritime history through an international collection of ship models, figureheads, paintings and other maritime artifacts. It is home to the USS *Monitor* Center, which is the official repository for artifacts recovered from the Civil War ironclad ship. It is situated in the midst of the 550-acre Mariners' Museum Park, the largest privately owned and maintained park free and open to the public in the United States. For hours and information, visit [www.MarinersMuseum.org](http://www.MarinersMuseum.org), call (757) 596-2222 or write to The Mariners' Museum, 100 Museum Drive, Newport News, VA 23606.