

1958 to 1962 Dashpad Installation Procedure

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[Link to thread at NCRS TDB](#)

Here is a description of my Dashpad installation process.

For those with determination to do this themselves hopefully this will help. If you feel uncomfortable about doing this, I suggest you have a shop do it for you. This process assumes the old pad and windshield is removed. Refer to the ST-12 Service Manual for windshield removal.

I use Al Knoch Interiors pads exclusively as they have the correct grain. Some of their pads that I've done over the years require some additional work for proper fit but to me it is worth the extra effort as I like the finished product.

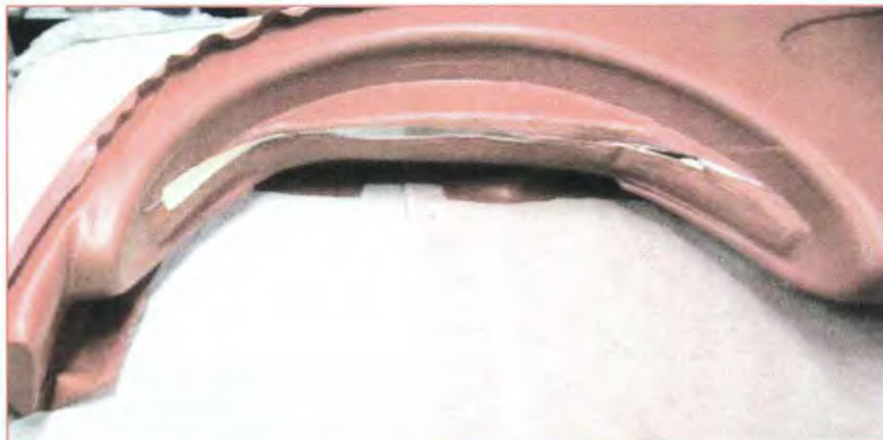


I will also show my process to restore the Passenger Side Dash Insert aluminum "CORVETTE" trim, and the nuances of installing the assembly into the dash.

Firstly, when you open the box inspect the pad carefully. In my experiences I have had a few problem pads out of the box and AK has always recognized my quality expectations and have accommodated me when I've had issues.

Check the overall surfaces for any shipping damage or problems. The forward flap may have much foam at the edge. This will be discussed later.

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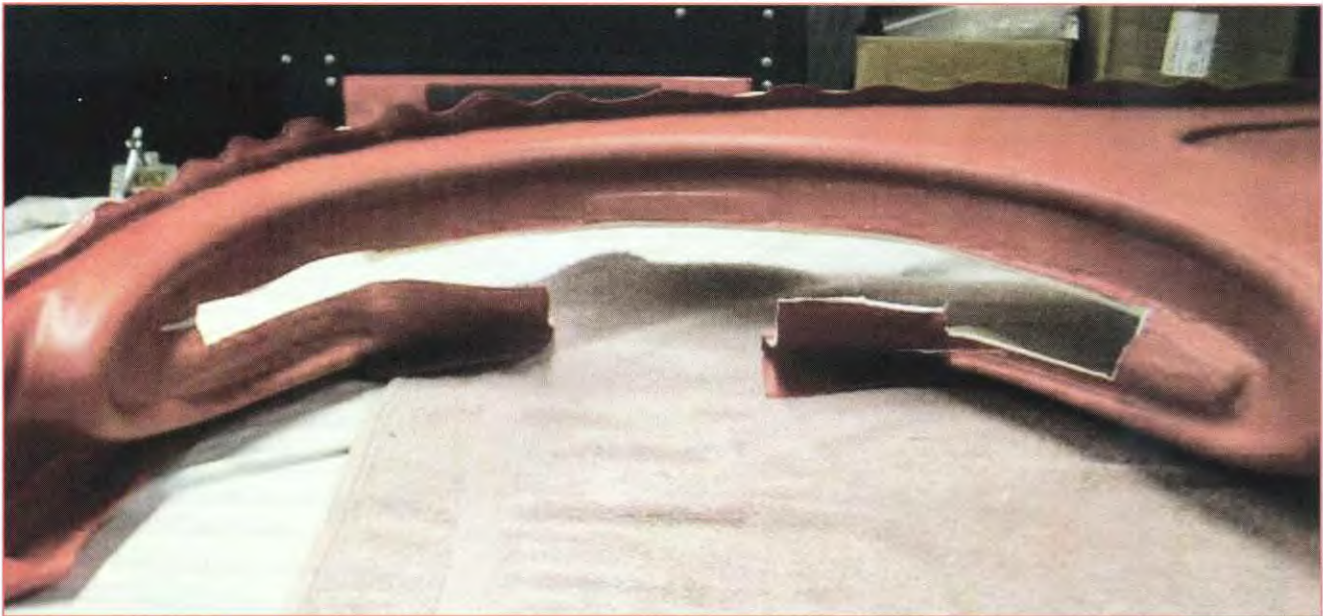
Ensure the foam to the left of the Instrument Cluster curve is adequate(screwdriver handle pointer). It should be hard when you press it with your thumb. Also check the Passenger side area too.

Check the backside foam area of the left cluster corner and ensure no large air "bubbles" can be seen or felt in these areas. If there are, the pad may wrinkle after the cluster and Insert is installed, long after you've trimmed the pad.

Cluster left corner edge as viewed upside down. Note the cutout in the foam which mates to the dash.



The first cut is under the cluster to clear the steering column. Then open the areas for the cluster and the dash insert. Don't cut too much as you will trim slowly once on the car.

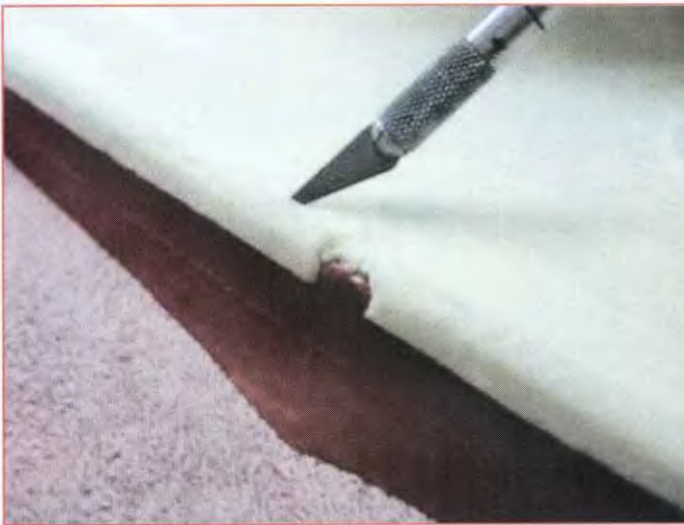


Remove any duct tape from the backside of the Passenger side and trim the foam from the edges. Leave plenty of vinyl near the rearward corners.



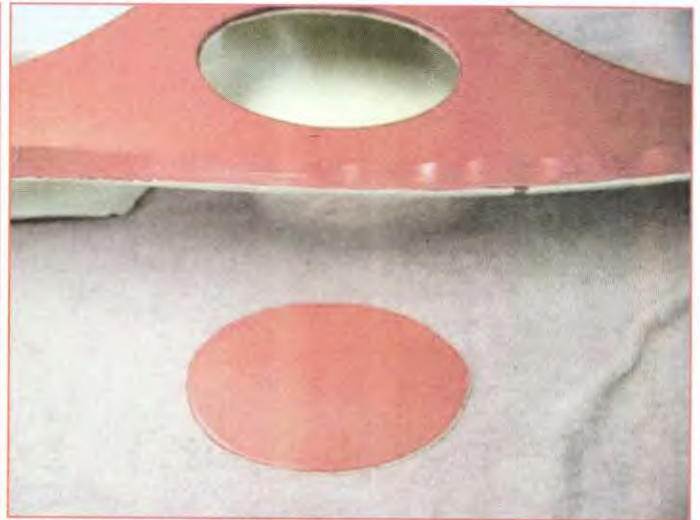
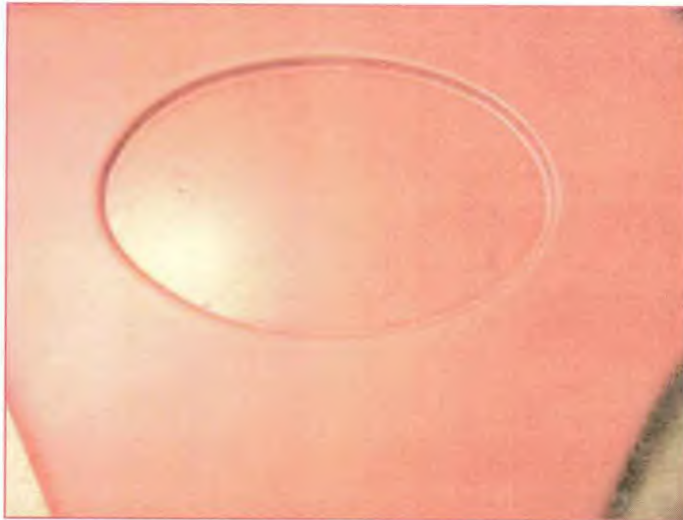
Trim foam from the backside of the cluster area. You need a very thin area where the cluster pushes against on some installations. This can vary based on car assembly.(insert photo later)

Trim any excess foam at the forward full circumference flap area.





Trim the speaker grille area as shown.



After initial trims you will be left with a pile like this.



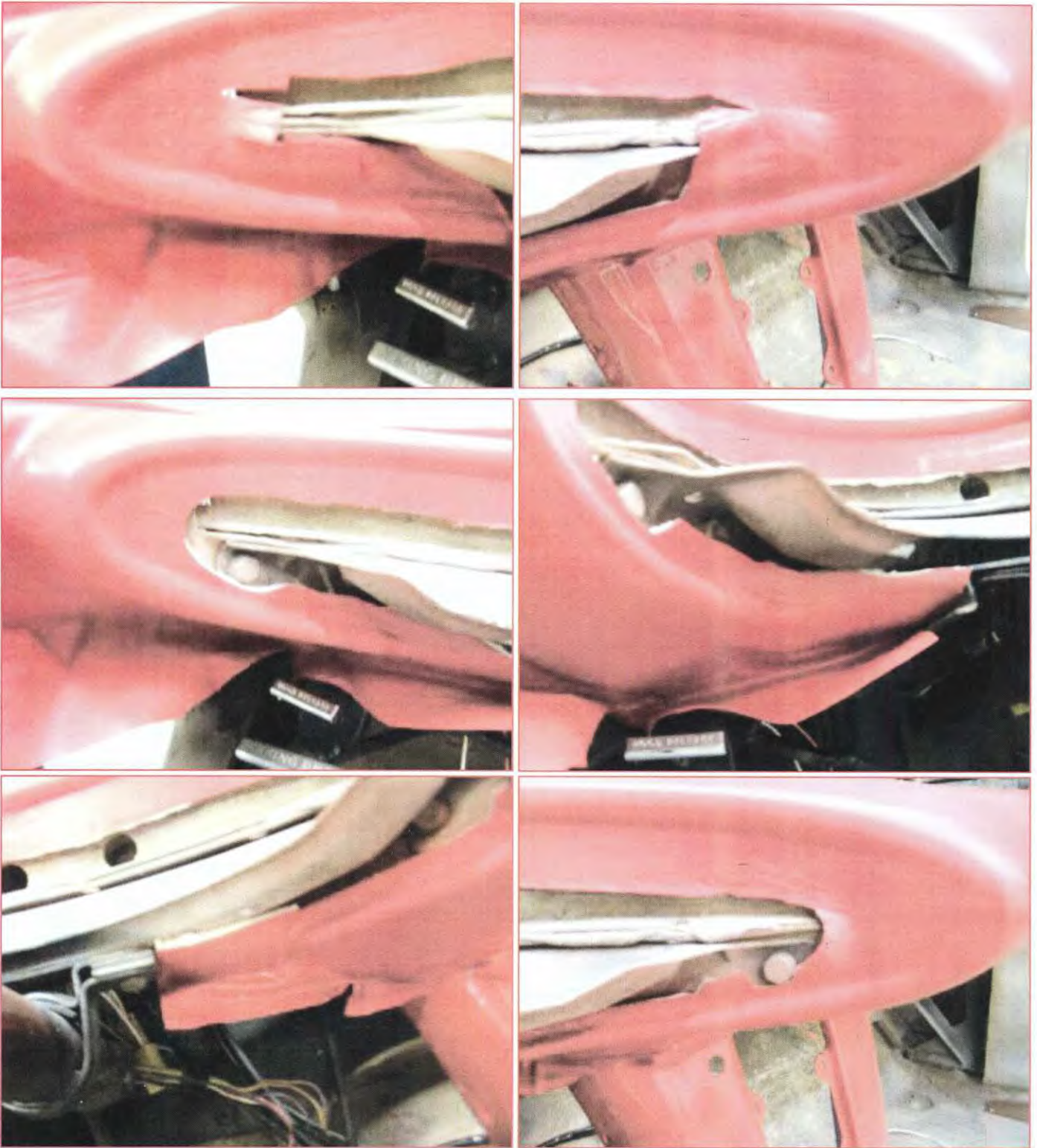
Remove the Grab Bar brackets if installed. Ensure the dash surface is clean and free of heavy glue.



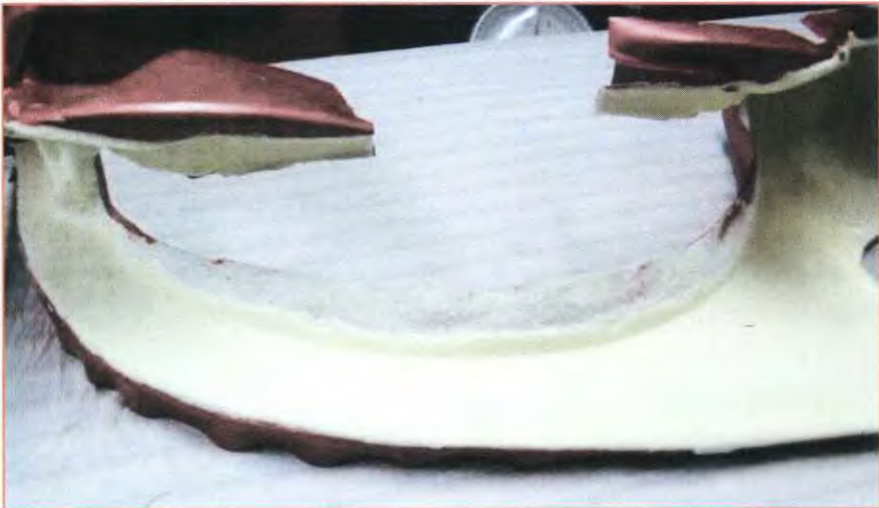
Place the pad over the dash for initial fit. Use the speaker hole as a guide to position properly.



Trim the area of the cluster gradually rearward as shown. Leave plenty of vinyl for the cluster to cover. Trim a bit underneath to allow the edges of the cuts to rest against the pedal support bracket edges.



Prepare the cluster for test fitting. Clean the 5 1/4-20 threaded bosses for ease of installation later. Test fit the cluster and observe the alignment of the screws to the bosses. Trim additional foam from the backside of the cluster flange if needed. **This area is tight and typically needs attention for proper fit.**

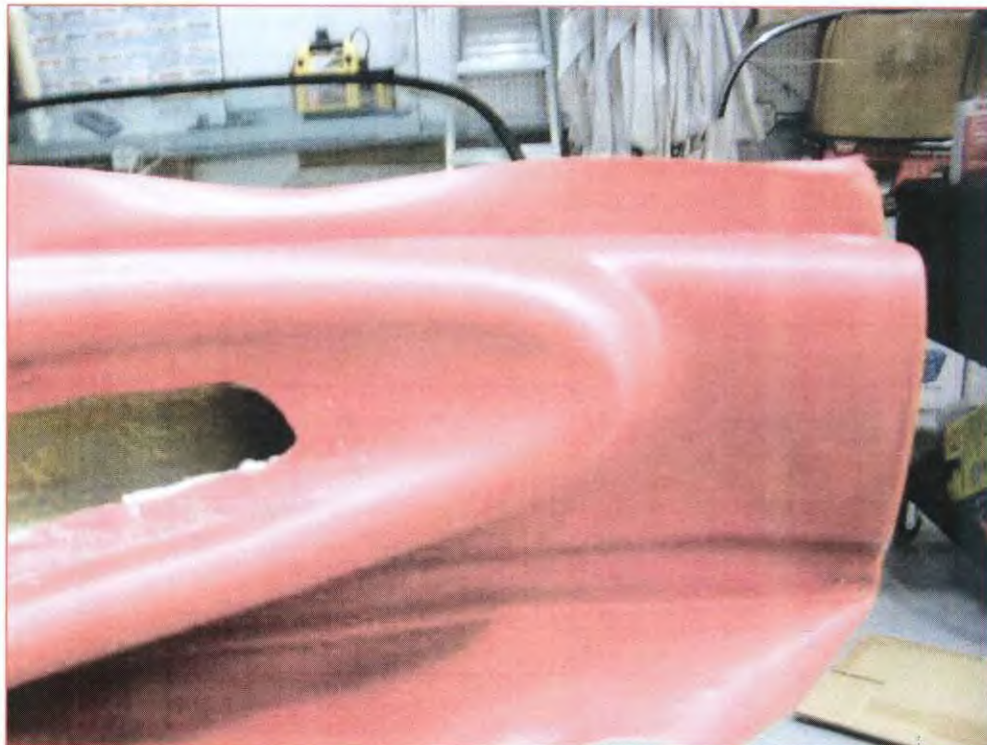


Do NOT push too hard on the cluster bottom half as it is delicate. Use alignment awls to help install screws later.

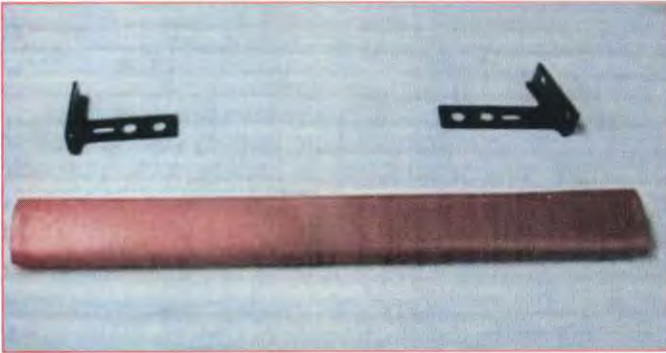




Passenger Side initial cuts. Be VERY careful in this area.



Install the Grab Bar Bracket on the right side. Carefully and slowly trim the vinyl as you push the pad forward into the bracket edge until the right side dash end cap area is flush with the dash. Make a rounded cut just as the bracket touches the pad. DO NOT cut any further.



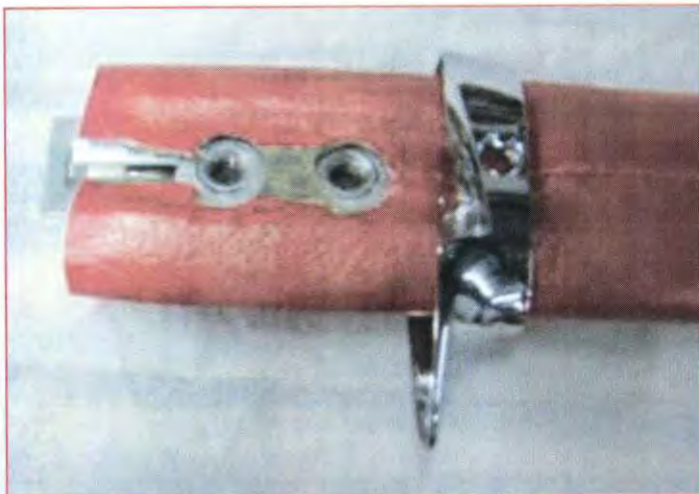
To ease installation of the Left bracket, which must be removed for Dash Insert installation later, round the corners of the bracket mount flange on a grinder. More on this bracket later after the pad is trimmed out.



Remove the dash pad and install the left side Grab Bar bracket. Reinstall the pad to the dash and perform the same careful steps to trim the vinyl rearward to the bracket edge, again ensuring you stop at the bracket rearward edge and finish off with a rounded cut.



Below is a representation of Grab Bar assembly and installation. 5/16-18 Clutch flat head screws were originally used. The nut plate originally was designed with a slot for the underside end cap screw to screw into. **Reproductions do not have this same feature and must be drilled upon installation.**





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Dash Insert

If you are restoring your original Insert, be aware that the aluminum sheet is very delicate. There are several restoration procedures online so I will just summarize here for now.

I use a buffer to polish the 2 stainless trims before removal from the assembly. Take some measurements of the protruding trims with respect to the rear housing ends. Mark each trim TOP and BOTTOM, LEFT and RIGHT for later reference.

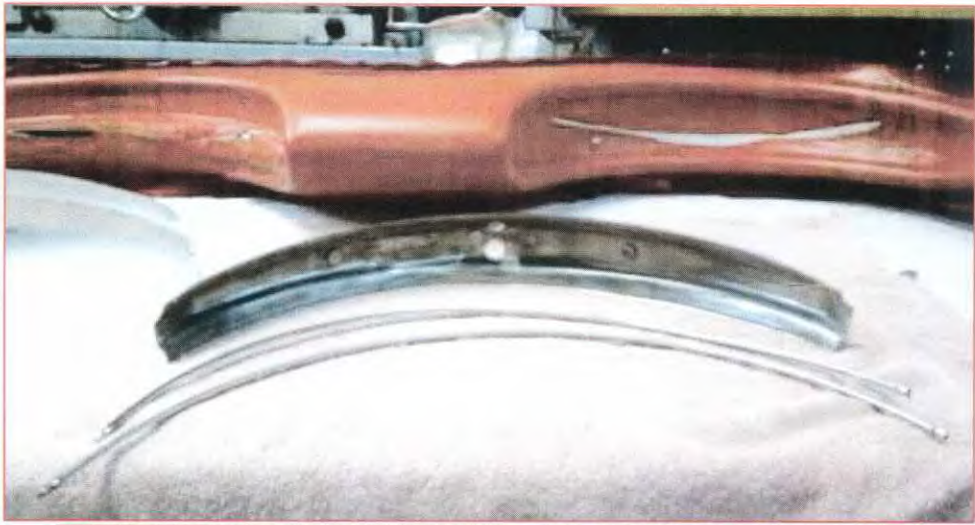
I then use a Dremel cutting disc on the 6 spot welds on the backside. Carefully remove the trims. Remove the old insert and clean the housing and mask the edges before paint. Any added thickness makes it harder to install the trims later. I used clear on this one but any paint will suffice; this guards against future rust.

I use epoxy at the 6 spot weld areas to hold the trims to the housing/aluminum insert assembly. Use rubber bands or tape or string to clamp the assembly and apply the epoxy to the 6 spots. I typically add 4 more epoxy spots for added strength between the center and end spots.

When you clamp the ends, use your bar end caps as a guide to ensure the trims are properly vertically spaced. There are depressions on the backside of the end caps to fit the trim ends. Pics below.

Some Before, During and After photos.

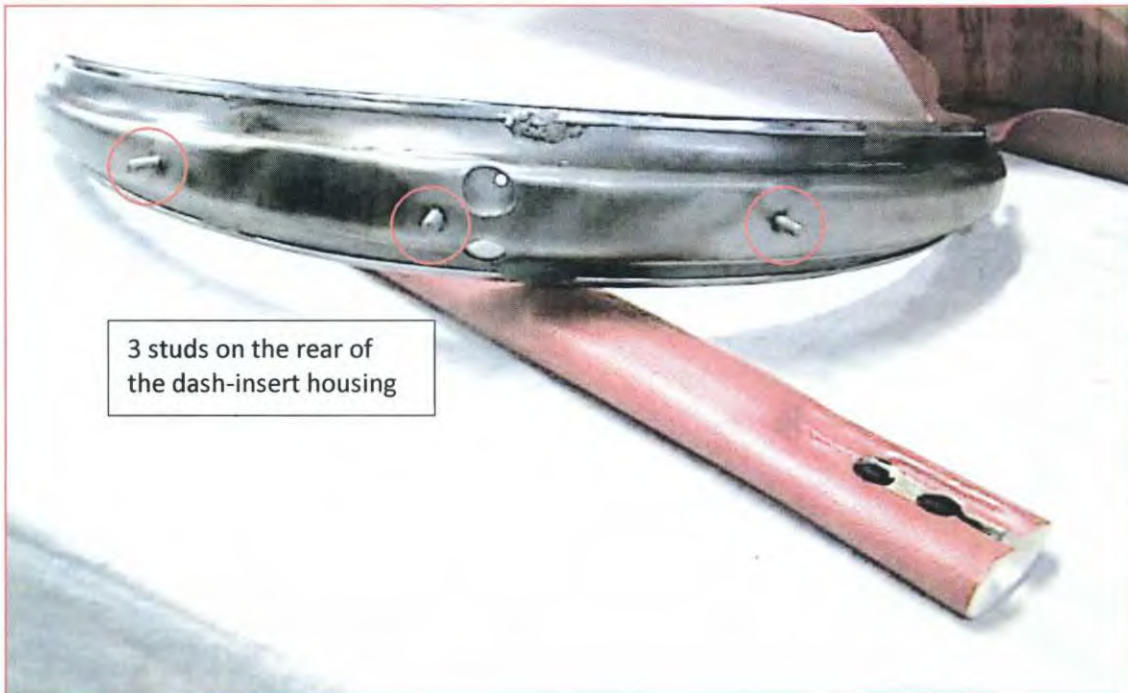




I use a combination of tape and string to hold it together for a overnight epoxy cure. I used epoxy paste on this one which helps reduce sags.



The finished assembly ready for installation later. I will install the Red and Blue Bars (1960 to 1962) before installation into the dash.







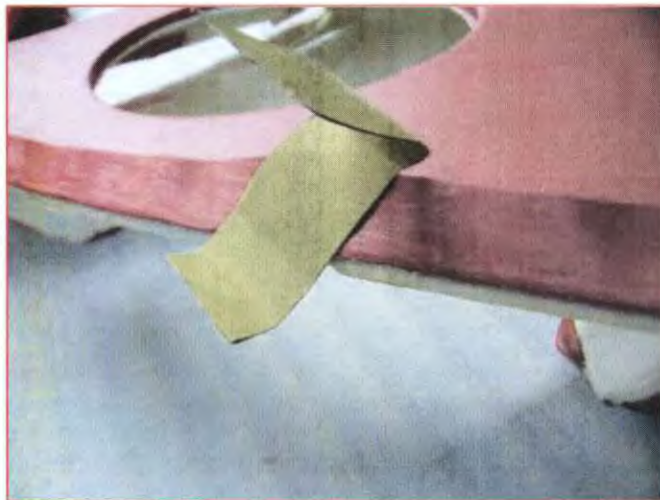




Continued:

After the final trim work of the Dash Insert and Grab Bar End Cap areas, I then remove the pad from the car and prepare several other areas before final installation.

One area is the forward flap which will be eventually glued to the windshield body channel. Use a wax/adhesive remover to clean the flap. Use caution not to damage the grained dash pad visible areas with a solvent of any type. A mold release is used during manufacturing and cleaning of the flap will yield better adhesion. Also scuff the flap after cleaning with course sandpaper to give it some teeth for the glue to adhere to. Dust it off when done.



Next is the Dash End Cap area. 1958 to 1959 uses a flat Stainless Steel end cap.
(File photo of a 1959 past installation)



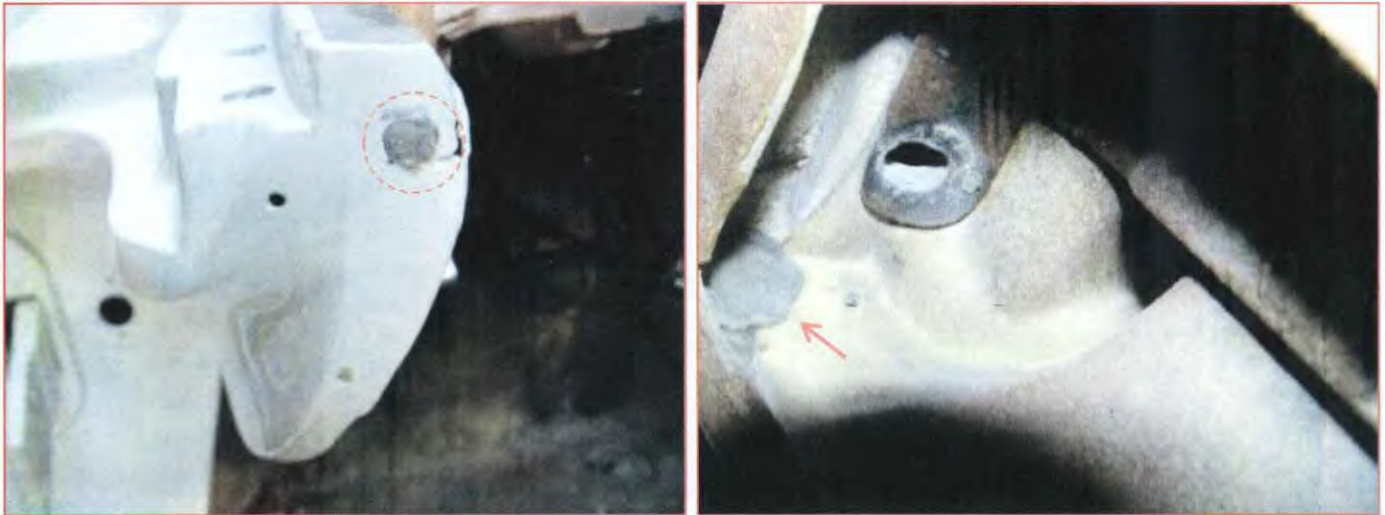
1960 to 1962 uses a Painted Steel 3 sided corner cap.
(File photo of a 1960 past installation)



For either type, remove the foam, if present, from the backside/rearward portion of the pad. For the 1958 and 1959 pads, no further steps are needed until the pad is installed. This will be addressed later.

For the 1960 to 1962 corner caps, remove some foam from the horizontal and vertical areas where the corner cap will rest. I do not remove ALL of the foam, just a small amount to reduce wrinkles after the corners are assembled later. Also note that both types of end caps are held in with chromed trim screws. The holes in the body for the screws are often "sawed" out. Now is the time to repair them. I use epoxy putty and push it in from the backside of the holes, leaving a thick plug at the backside. This will give the screws a deeper cross section to grip.

Hole plugged and view from the backside. This hole was huge on this car.



Dash End Cap profile. Note the gap at the top between the cap and the body. Trim the foam so it will be approximately that thickness in that area and along the vertical.



Backside of end-cap area with foam carefully trimmed out.

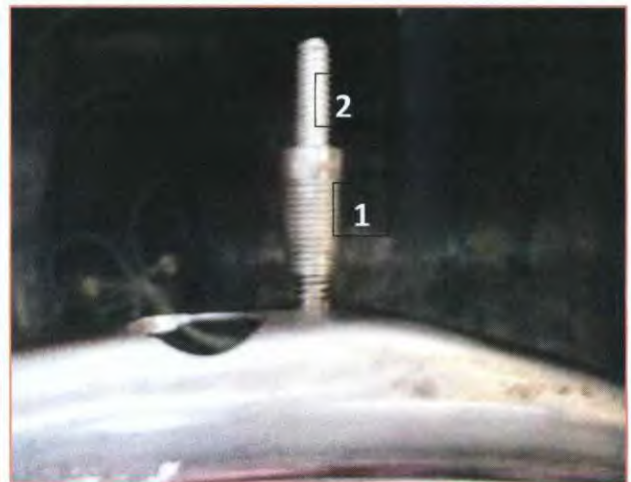


Now the pad can be permanently installed. In my process, I use glue ONLY on the front flap after the pad is held in with the various hard parts. On the 1958 to 1959 pads, where the speaker grille does not use a bezel to hold the pad down, some glue on the pad area around the grille can be used if desired. However, there is a caveat to doing that which will be discussed later.

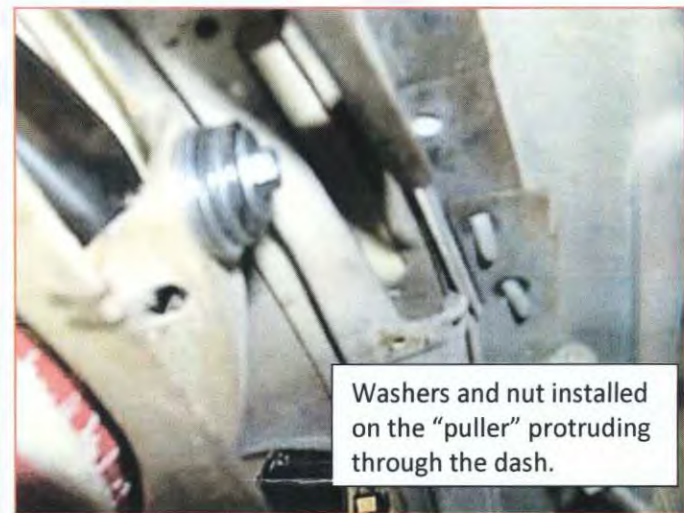
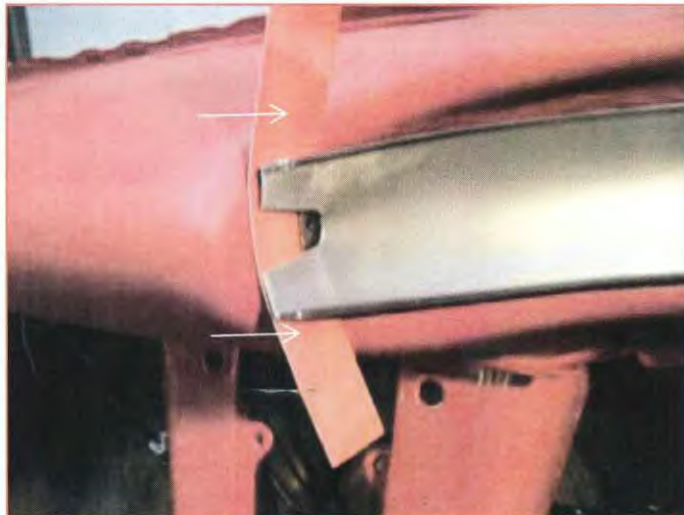
My first area to install is always the **Dash Insert** then the **Grab Bar**. These are difficult and time consuming items to install.

The Right-side Grab Bar bracket should be installed at this point, but not the Left side. Place the pad over the dash. Dash Insert will be installed now. In order to install the insert, I used a hand fabricated "puller" tool. This allows the Insert to be pulled into the dash at the center stud to then allow the outer studs to have their fasteners installed. You can also use a 1/4-20 coupler nut but you will have to grind the edges so it will fit in the hole of the dash fiberglass center position.

I made this "puller" years ago from an old brake-line fitting (1) by drilling and tapping the hole to 1/4-20 then grinding the nut edges. It threads over the insert housing stud, and then a short 1/4-20 stud (2) is threaded into the opposite end. Large backup washers with the ID larger than the puller coupler are used with the tool.

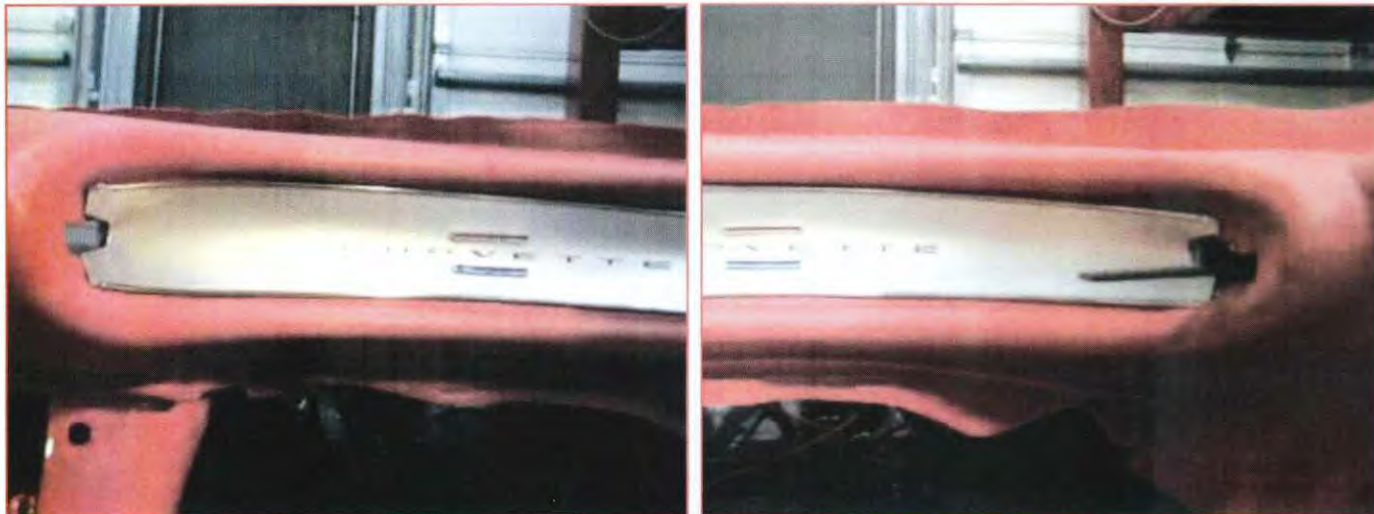


Set the Insert so that it rests on the right side of the pad just forward of the Grab Bar bracket. Use a thin soft plastic "protector" on the pad on the left side (arrows). This prevents the housing backside and trims from marring the pad left corner. Carefully push the Insert into position, **NEVER touching the delicate aluminum face**. ALWAYS push on the trim surface/housing areas. Push it in until the puller coupler is aligned with the dash hole. Place the large washers over the coupler and a nut. Begin to pull the insert into the dash until the 2 outer Insert housing rear studs protrude through their holes. Use the Grab Bar end caps as a guide with respect to the Insert trim ends to ensure alignment. **You may have to move the Insert toward one side or the other for proper fit.**

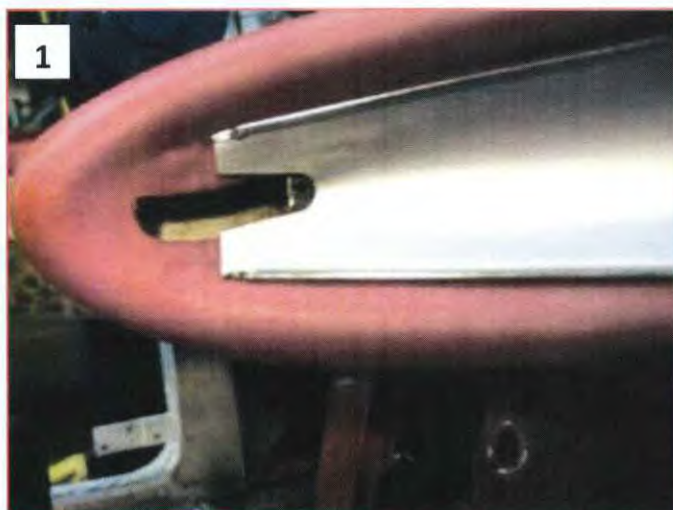


Washers and nut installed on the "puller" protruding through the dash.

Once it is aligned to satisfaction, install the washers and nuts on the outer housing studs. Tighten them and remove your "puller" coupler at the center stud and replace it with washers and nut. Tighten all 3 nuts securely while ensuring the Dash pad upper and lower sections above and below the Insert are pulled into the dash behind the upper and lower Insert trim edges.



Now you can prepare for Grab Bar installation. As you can see, the hole for the left bracket is small as it must be covered by the Grab Bar End Cap. Take your "modified/round-cornered" left bracket and insert it in the hole from right (forward) to left (rearward) (Figures 3 and 4 below). The rounded corners ease installation of the bracket and protect the vinyl from tearing. You will see that the most rearward hole for the bracket screw is very hard to get at to install and tighten. **You must be VERY cautious here as if you tear the vinyl it may not be covered by the End Cap.** I often replace the original Clutch Head bracket bolts with an Allen head bolt. I learned this from a friend years ago. This allows use of an Allen Ball Driver to get that difficult bolt installed. I use it on both holes for ease of assembly (Figures 8 and 9).



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Insert the bracket with the rounded corners in this manner.



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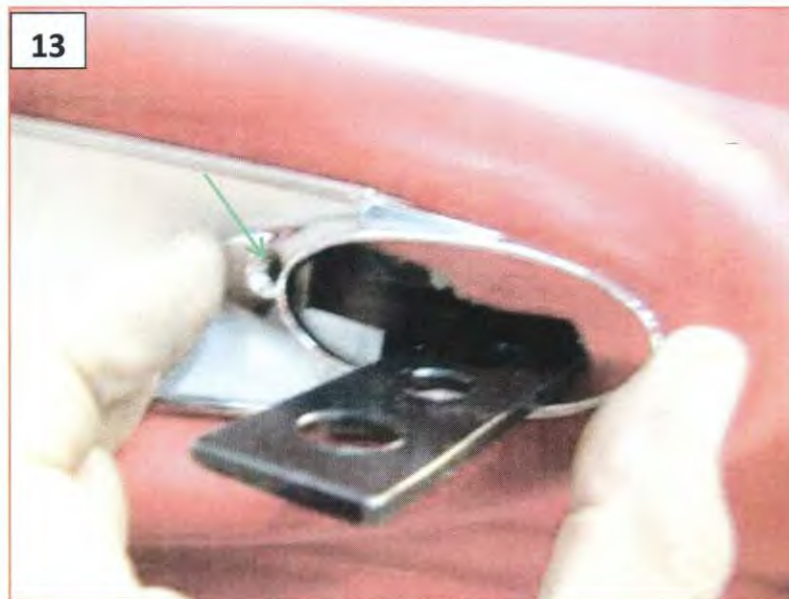
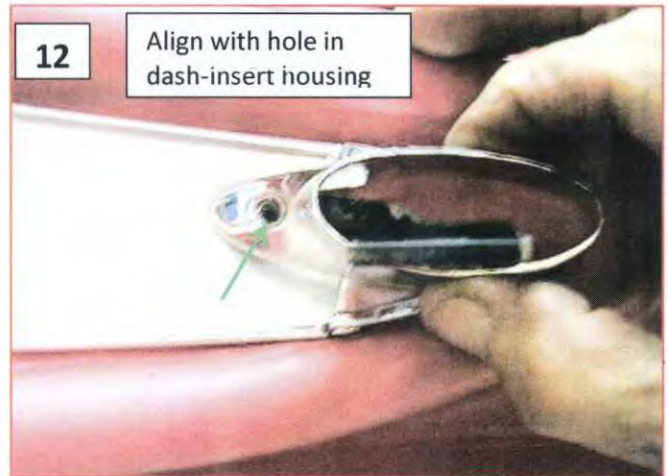


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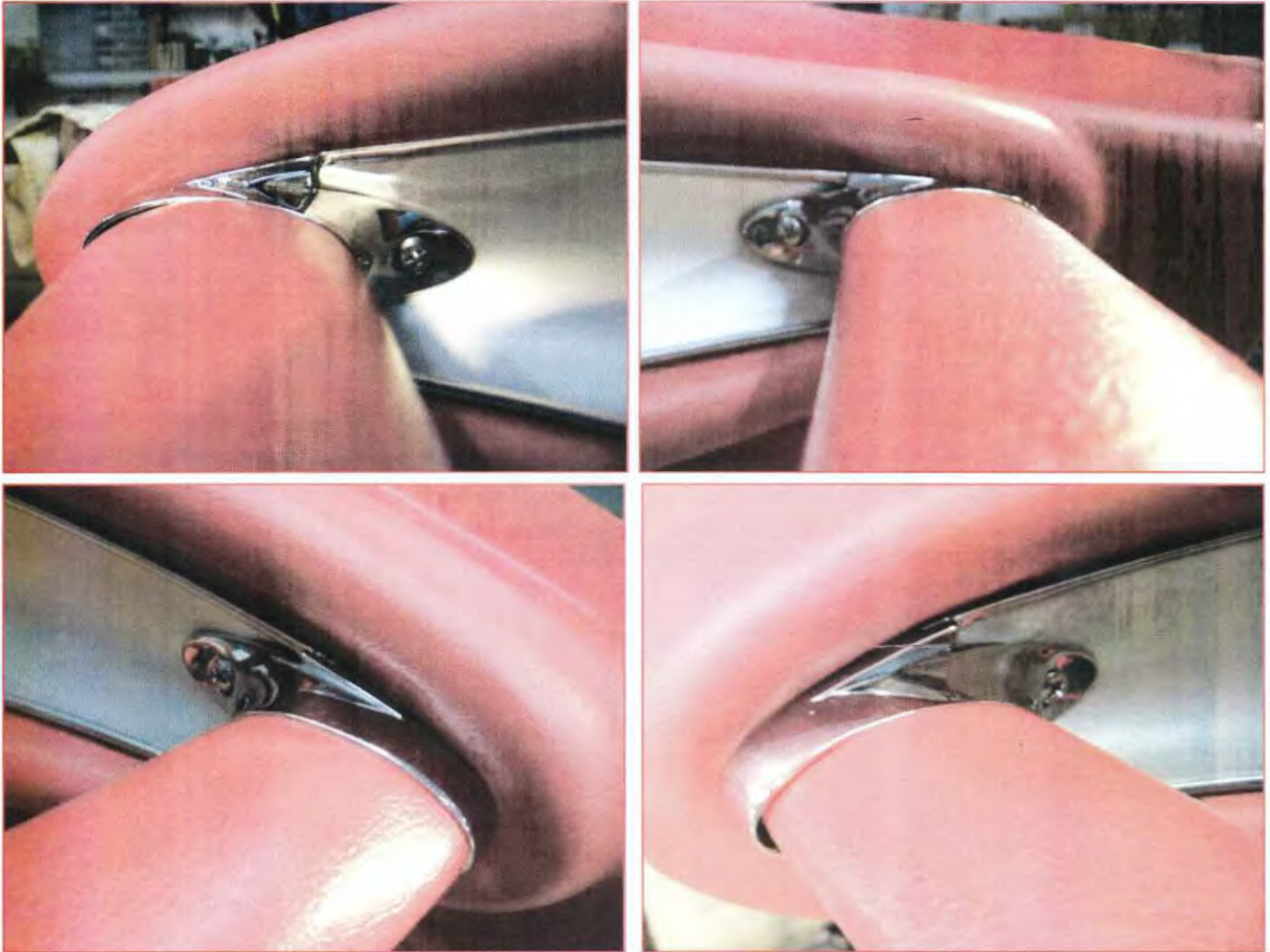




Use your End Caps as guides for alignment. You may have to loosen and wiggle the brackets a bit and retighten for better alignment.



Once satisfied with fit, attach the Grab Bar. Insert the nut plates and push the End Caps over the Bar ends. Install the large flat head screws from underneath to hold the Bar to the brackets. Install the 2 screws at each End Cap, one into the insert and the other from underneath. Align the Caps so they fit snugly to the Dash pad ends and Insert aluminum face areas. **Use caution with the screwdriver on the Insert Faces as the angle of the screw is awkward to install.**



Completed Passenger Side.



Up next will be installation of the Speaker Grille /Bezel, Defroster Vents, Instrument Cluster, and then gluing of the Front Flap; then finally the Dash End Caps. I glue the front flap as a last step just in case the pad needs to be removed before final steps.

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Continued:

1958 to 1959 Speaker Grille

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Next up can be the speaker grille and bezel if on a 1960 to 1962 or the Defroster vents.

I will defer that process for now and discuss the 1958 and 1959 speaker screen. Those years require a completely different overall assembly and process step. The grille **MUST** be installed **BEFORE** the pad is glued or attached permanently (Cluster or the Dash Insert).

1958 to 1959 used no Bezel ring around the speaker cutout. The grille is unique in that it is not flat, as it has "raised" side walls and a mounting flange with 4 holes.



This grille was designed to be positioned UNDER the dash, then with the speaker, both held in place by 4 nuts threaded onto 4 T-Bolts which were bonded to depressions in the dash. However, using today's reproduction Dash pads, which are often thicker than originals; requires the grille to fit UNDER the dash pad on TOP of the Dash. There has been much discussion regarding this in our NCRS Archives.

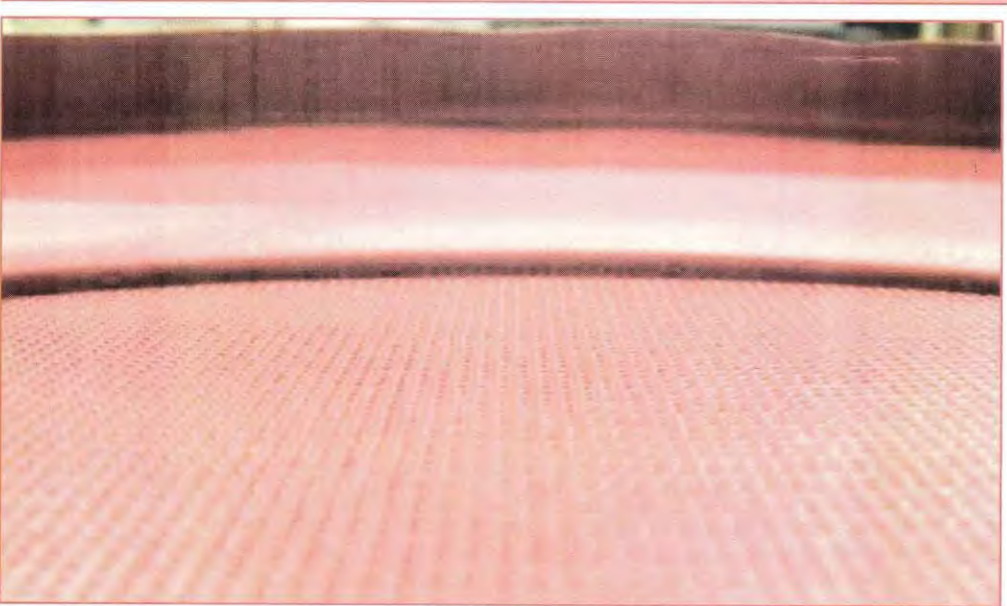
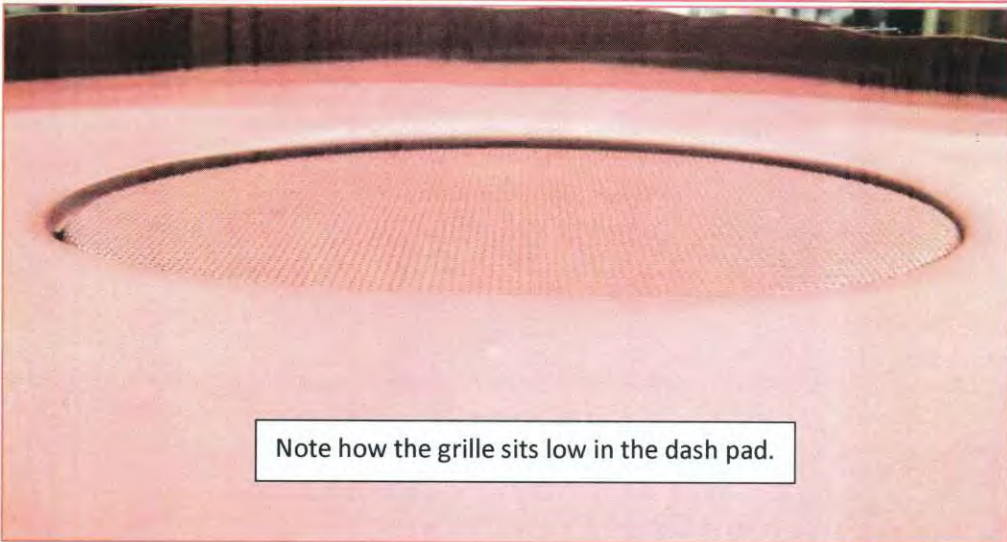
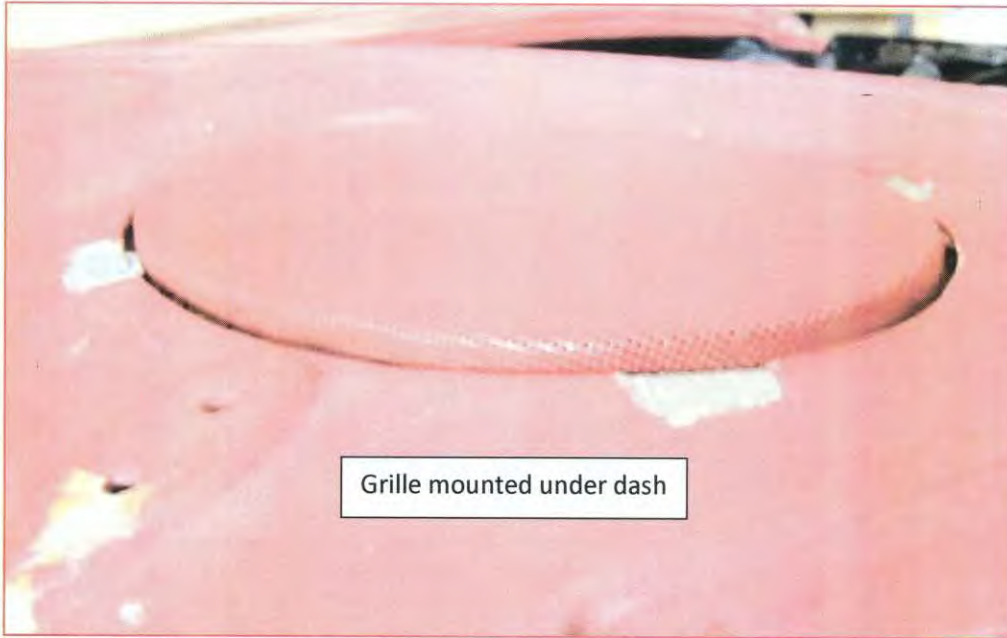
The T-Bolts bonded to the depression.



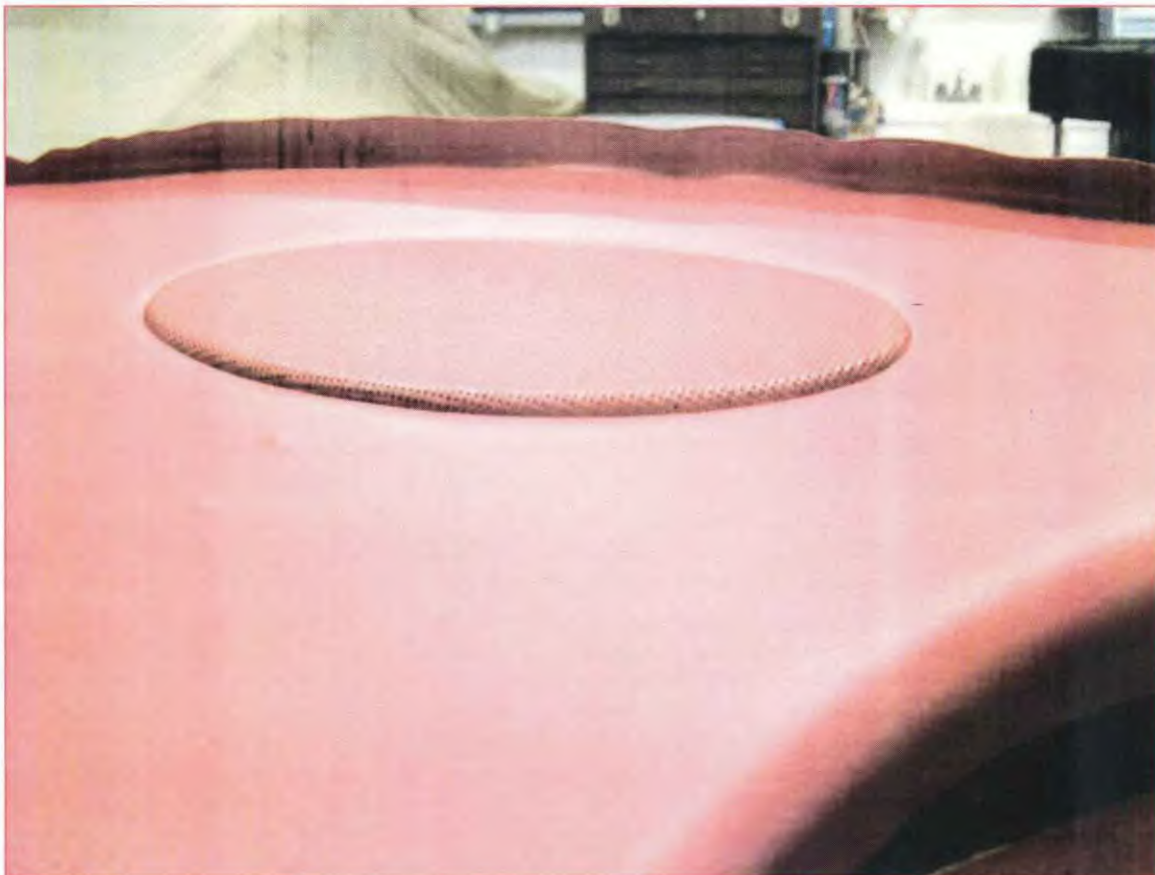
Bonding adhesive/filler was applied into the 4 depressions (inset) to flatten the dash areas and to hold the T-bolts.



If the grille is placed, by design, UNDER the dash, it will sit too low with the new thicker Dash pad installed as shown here.



In order for the grille to appear "near" flush with the dash, it must be placed on top of the dash, and then the thicker pad will lie over the grille flange to hold it in place. You could add some shim stock around the grille flange to raise the pad slightly for better flush appearance. **If you do that you must glue the shims in place to the dash.**



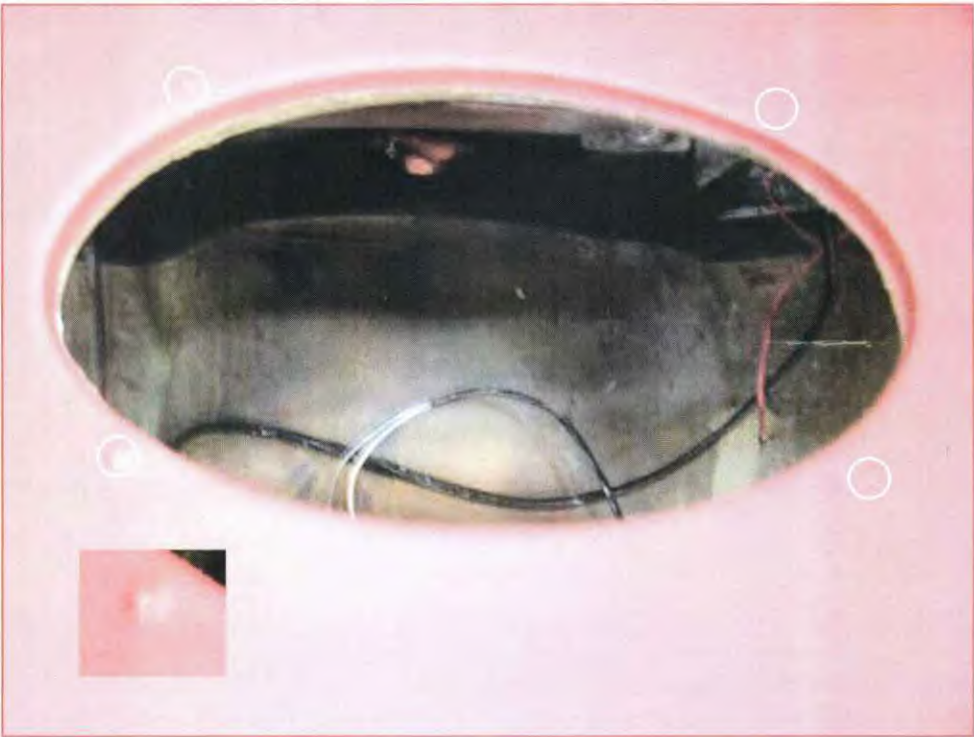
Note: If your Dash pad is not too thick, then using the original design approach with the grille UNDER the dash may be the method to use.

1960 to 1962 Speaker Grille and Bezel:

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This is my process for installation for the 1960 to 1962 designs which use the Grille Bezel.

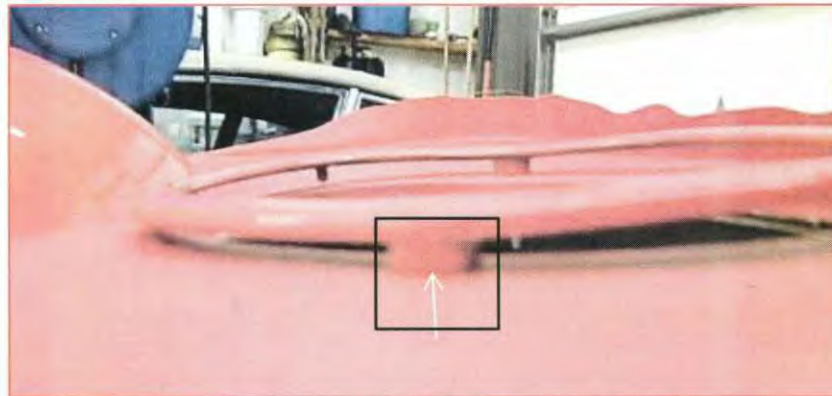
From below the dash, use an awl and locate the 4 holes for the bezel studs. Put a slight depression upward into the underside of the vinyl. **DO NOT punch through yet.**



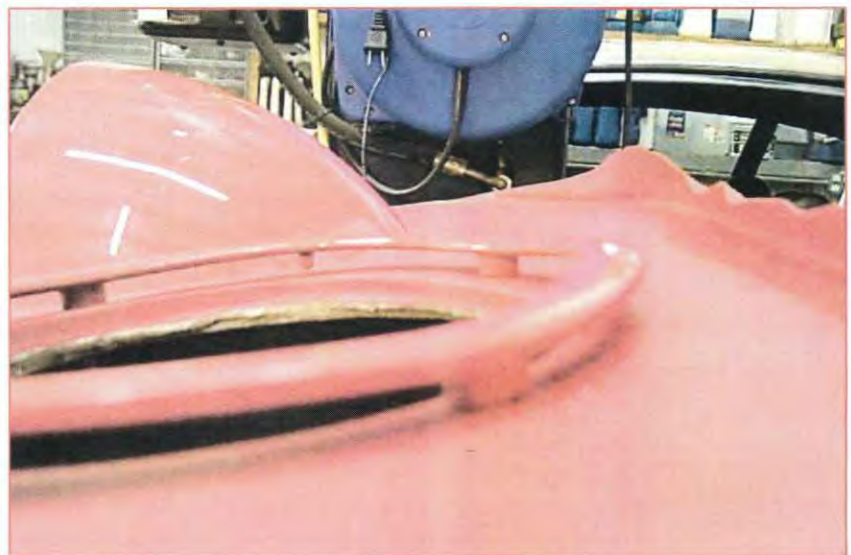
Take your bezel and lay the 4 studs over the "nubs" that you created in the vinyl. Align and adjust the 4 spots for proper alignment **with respect to the inner edge of the dash pad grille hole**. Then punch down using the awl to start the holes. Use your sharp knife tip and open the holes slightly.



Push the bezel down into the pad so the rectangular bosses (inset) of the bezel stud are flat to the pad. Use a sharp pencil and outline the vinyl where the bosses rest.



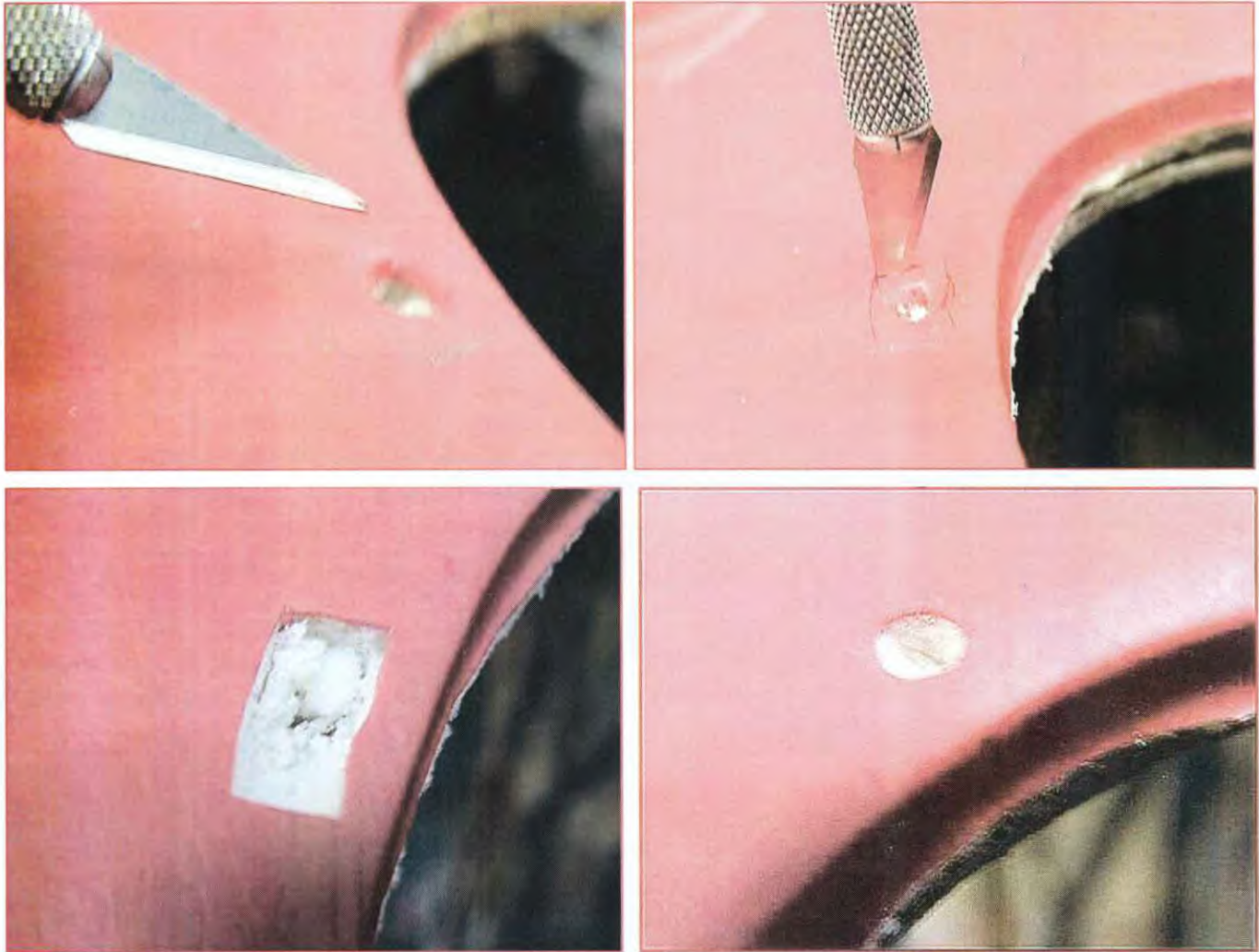
'60-'62 Speaker grille bezel
Courtesy of Corvette Central



Also note the nub at the driver side under the bezel. Pencil mark that on the vinyl also. Remove the bezel.



Use your blade to cut out the 4 rectangles. **Be very careful not to enlarge them outward.** Dig out a bit of foam from each area for the bosses to clear. Also cut a small round hole for the bezel nub that you outlined and remove a bit of foam.



Place the grille over the dash pad then insert the bezel down into the pad. Secure the bezel from below using Palnuts with 3 or 4 flat washers to hold it in place until later, or install the speaker if needed at this time. **Do not over tighten the Palnuts as the studs are integrated to the bezel pot metal and delicate.**

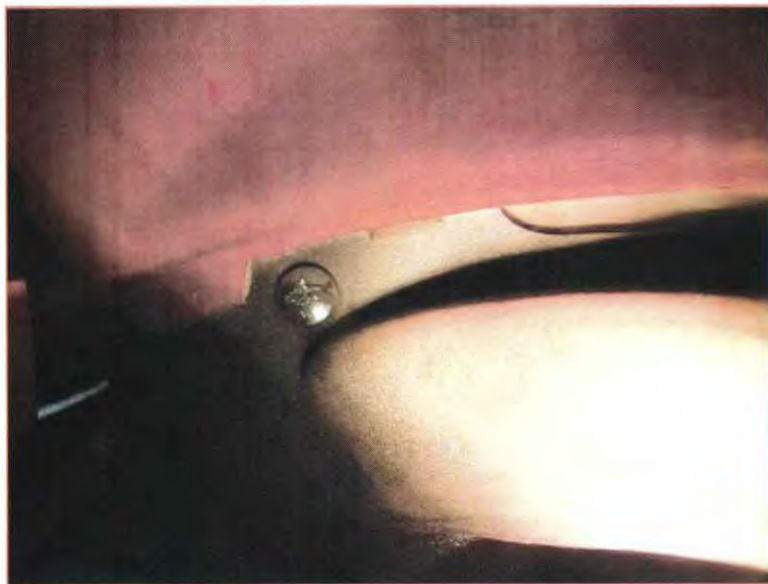
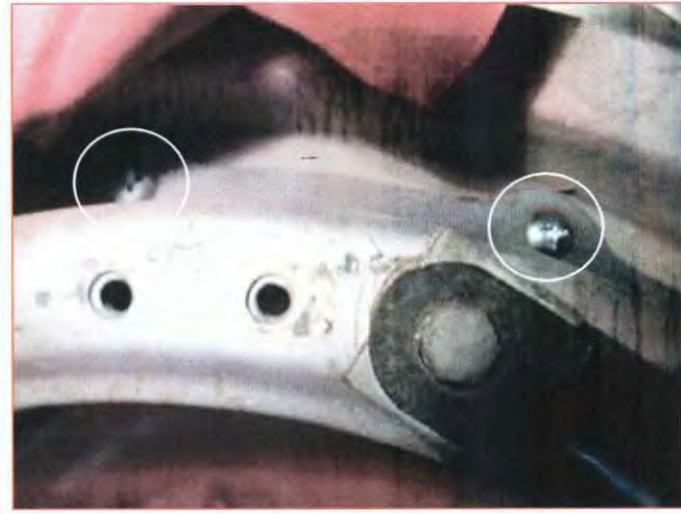
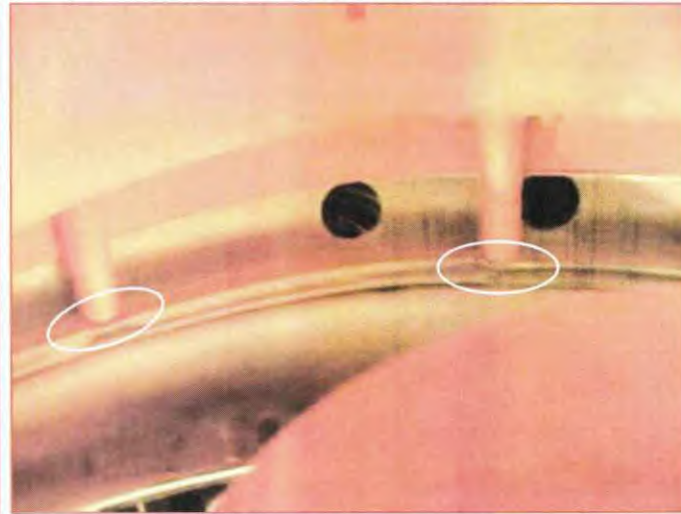
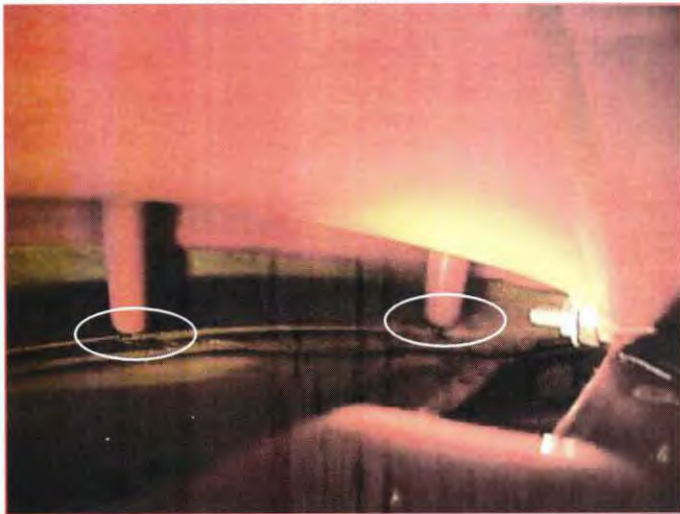


Instrument Cluster:

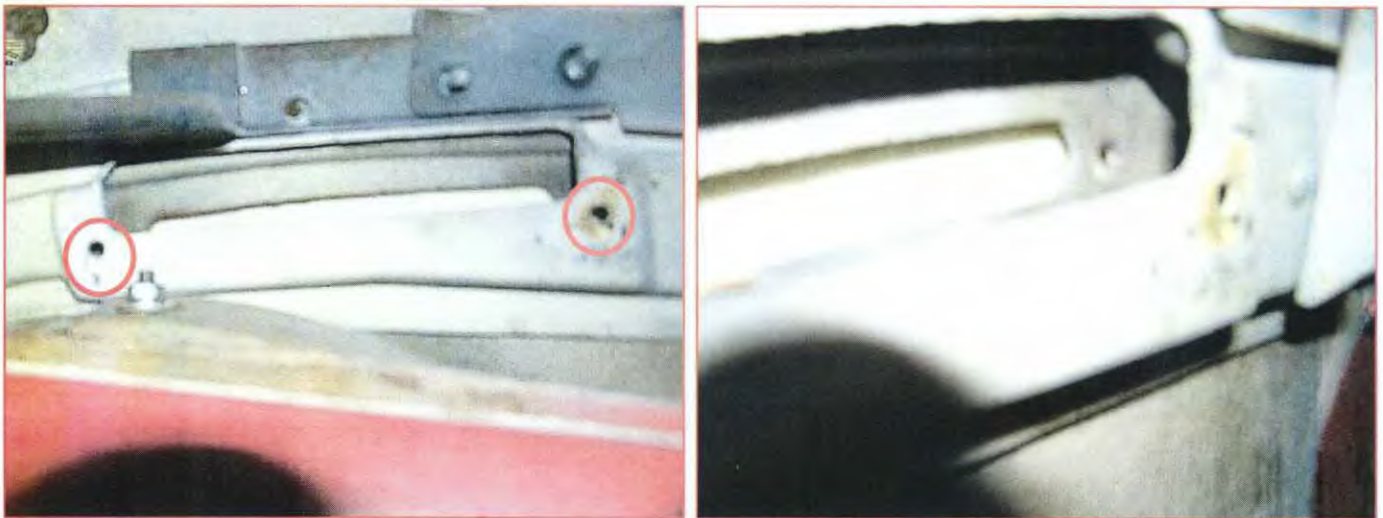
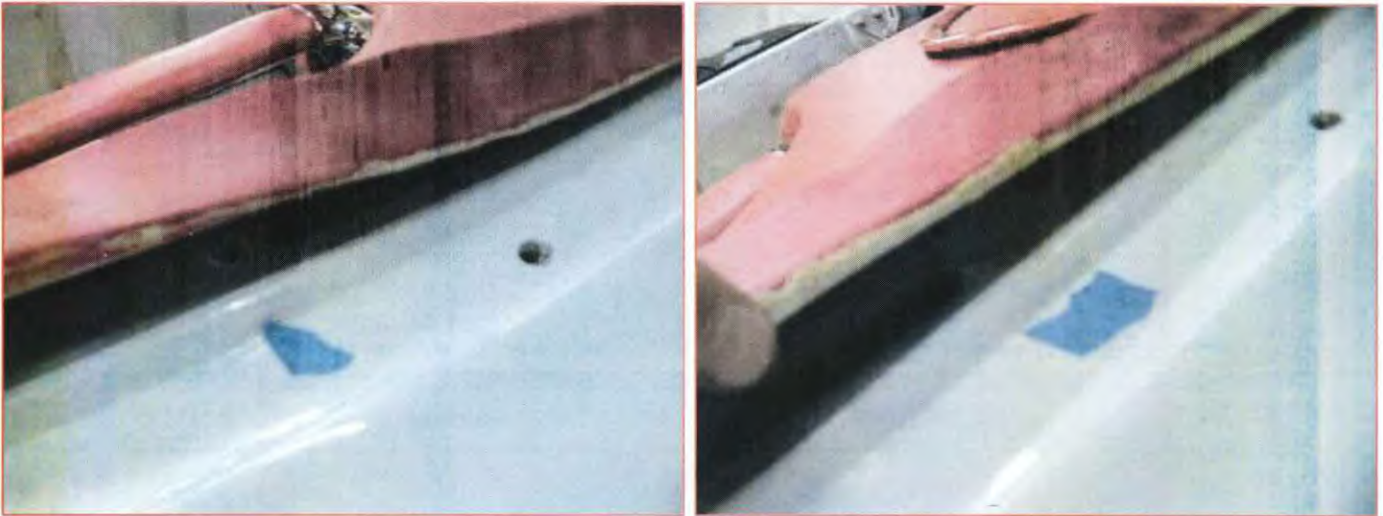
The Cluster can be problematic to install. Cover the steering column with rags to protect the paint on both column and cluster. Have some awls and probe tools to help. I use 1/4"-20 Phillips head screws as placeholders until final assembly with original bolts.



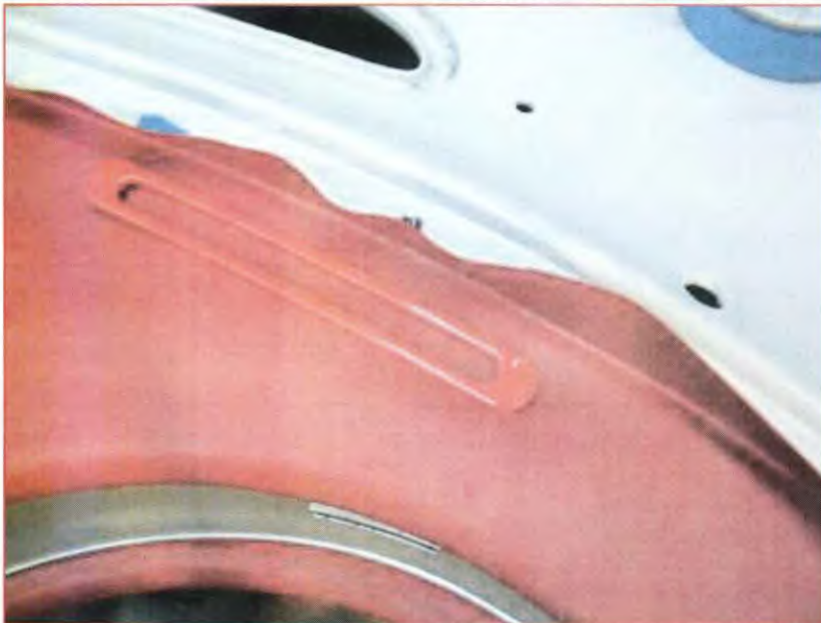
Place the cluster in position. You may see now why I remove the foam from behind the vinyl where the rear of the cluster rests. Using the awls and probe tools from underneath, capture a few of the cluster screw bosses and attach screws to the open positions. Don't overly force the bosses as they can break. Use caution when pushing the cluster top section. **Do not push the lower cluster half except lightly into the pad rearward horizontal corners.** These views are without the gauges installed. If they are installed your only view is from under the dash.



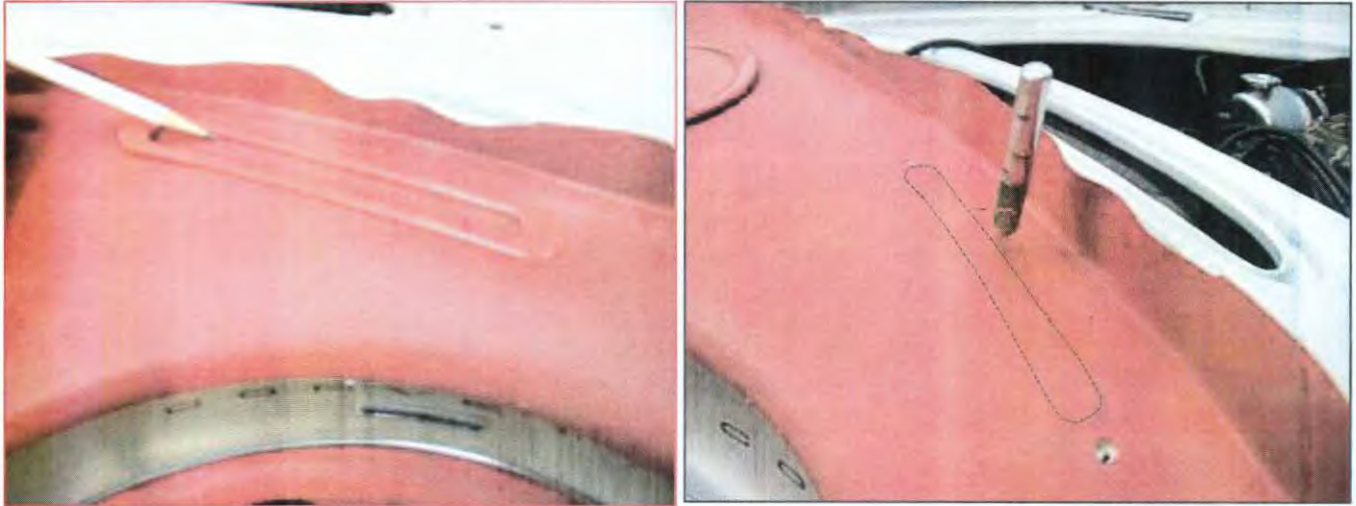
Defroster Bezels, Diffusers: From below, locate the holes for the studs. Note there are 2 holes per side as the body has a channel for the bezels.



Use an awl from below and make a dimple in the vinyl for each hole. Place the bezel studs on top of the vinyl and mark and use your knife tip to open the holes. Install the bezel and push down flush with the vinyl.



Use a pencil and mark the inner hole. Remove the bezel.



Use a permanent marker and black-out the foam edge and below on the diffuser area if needed. This car is white and had overspray there so I added black there too.

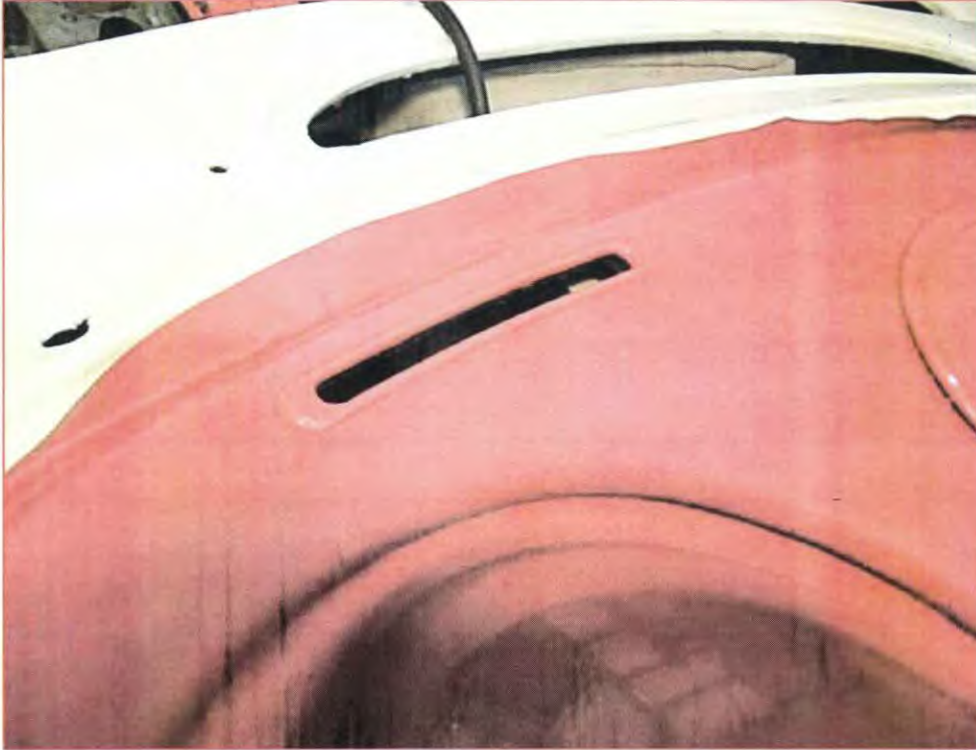


The under dash ducts will be added later but for now use a washer and 10-24 nuts to hold the bezels in place. Do not overtighten. Just snug to depress the vinyl foam slightly.

This is a reproduction bezel.



This one is a restored original. Notice the radiused ends differ from the reproduction.



Gluing the Vinyl front flap:

Protect the dash pad and the body from glue drips. A few minutes here could save a mishap later. If you forgot to scuff the vinyl flap and the body, do it now and clean the areas.



I use Contact Cement from my local stores.



Apply the cement to all contact surfaces, vinyl and body and foam. I also apply to the front horizontal edges of the foam and body dash surface where it can be reached. Follow dry time instructions, usually 15-20 minutes. Apply a second coat and wait another dry time.



Start at center and work your way out to the ends. Tuck the vinyl down into the windshield channel. Use wooden blocks to reach the corners. **Let cure overnight.** You may need to add weight to some areas to retain tension. Cut out holes for the T-Nuts as needed.

Completed Assembly. The Dash End caps will be installed after the windshield is re-installed.



Here I will review some of the differences regarding Dash End Cap installation.

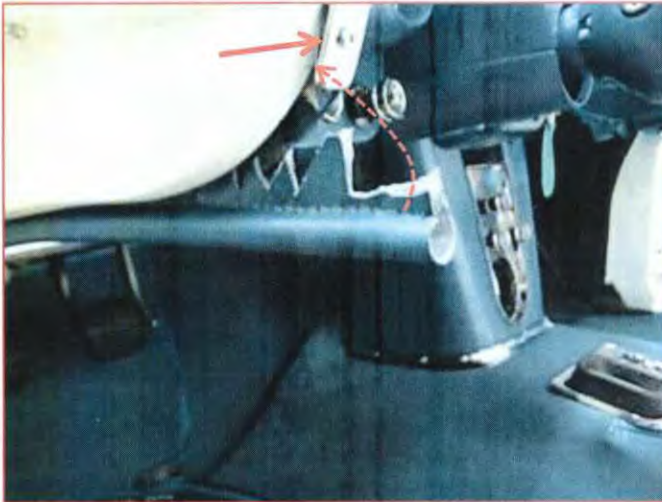
Dash End Caps:

1958 to 1959:

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The 1958 to 1959 uses a flat Stainless Steel Dash End Cap. The dash vinyl must be carefully trimmed to fit the cap. Trim the dash vinyl so it sits just behind the outer vertical edge of the End Cap so the edge of the vinyl cannot be seen. The Kick panel windlace will be attached under the cap. You may need to loosen the rearward upper kick panel attaching screw slightly (green arrow), if installed, for the following steps.

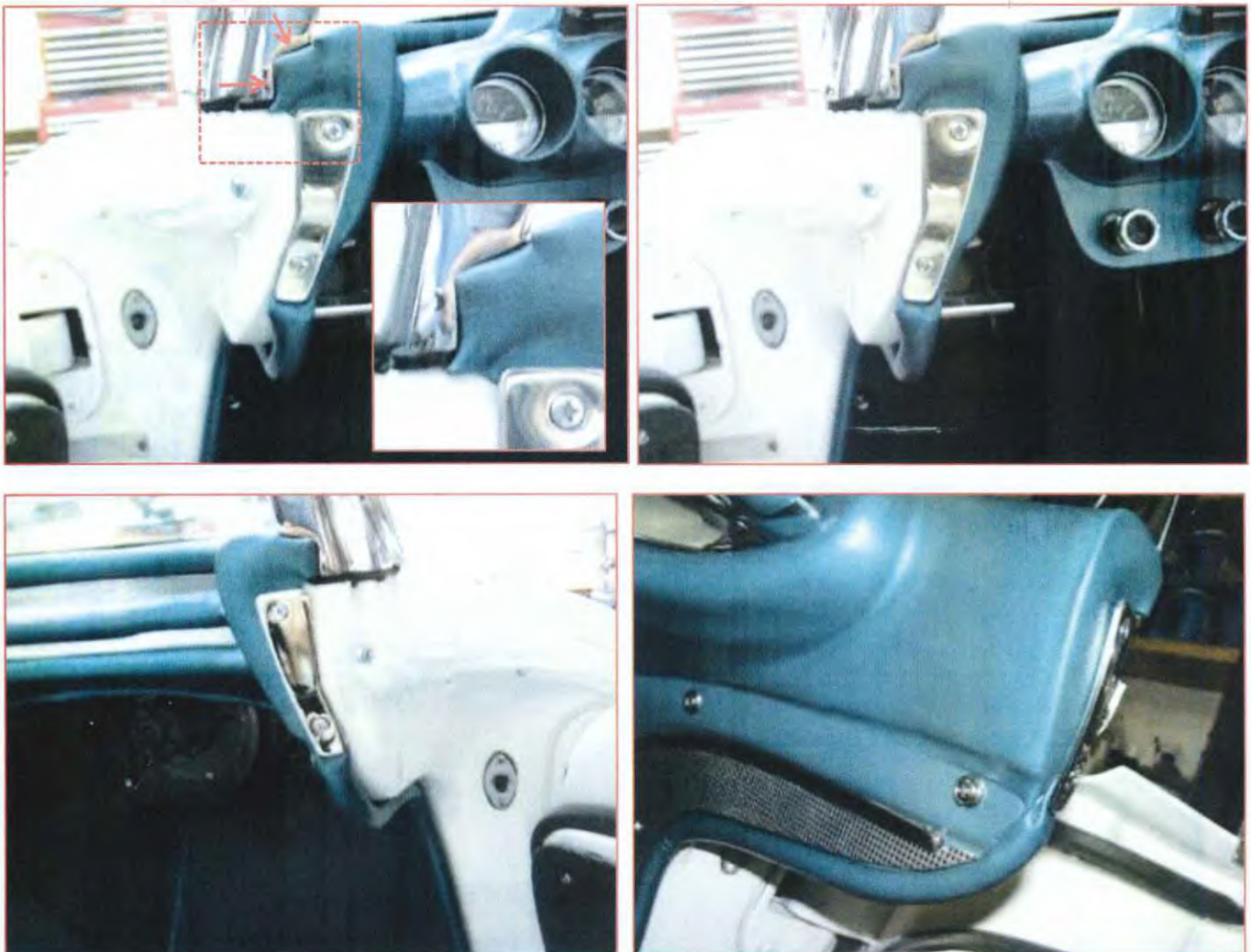
Trim the windlace length so it will be just behind the End Cap lower screw. Remove some foam from the end of the windlace so that just the soft vinyl will be under the cap bottom end, no foam.



Cut the backside stitches of the windlace and fold the 2 pieces over each other to the same width as the lower End Cap dimension. Punch a hole in the windlace 2 layers so that it's in alignment with the lower screw. Tuck the vinyl windlace corner slit flap behind the kick panel upper end and under the bottom end of the End Cap. Install the End Cap screws. This gives it a more finished appearance with the door open.



Trim the Dash pad vinyl by creating 2 flaps to fit in the void just under and inside the Windshield post. This gives it a more finished appearance w



1960 to 1962:

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The 1960 to 1962 Dash End Cap is a larger interior-color painted corner metal piece held in with 2 screws. The Kick panel windlace will be attached under the cap lower edge. Use the same method as for the earlier models to trim the windlace and removal of the foam core. Leave enough windlace vinyl. Place the End Cap over the dash pad end and push down and outward, compressing the trimmed foam from your earlier steps before dash pad installation. Locate the screw holes, tuck the windlace under the lower end and attach End Cap with 2 screws. The upper outer horizontal edge of the End Cap will typically just touch the chrome edge of the windshield post.

File Photos

