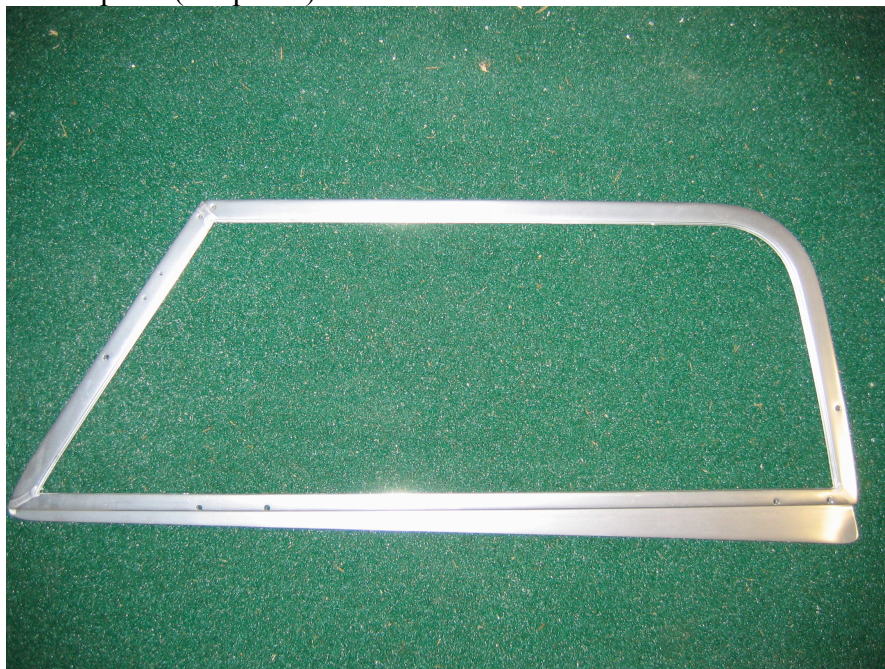


RESTORATION OF MGA ALUMINUM SIDECURTAINS

Obviously, the first step is to disassemble the sidecurtains. The bottom aluminum “L” section that secures the rubber weatherstripping at the bottom of the sidecurtain is easily removed, and the rubber can then be removed. The brackets can then be removed as well, as they are secured with screws.

The next step is to remove the old rubber weatherstripping from the top and front channels. You will find that this comes out easily, although it will be hard as rock, and tends to come out in small pieces. The acrylic windows can then be removed by simply bowing them out with hand pressure, allowing them to pop out of the window channels. The front portion was secured by the factory by hammering dimples into the front window section, essentially locking the plastic into place with pressure. You may or may not be able to remove the front plastic sections in one piece, but save the bits for later use to make a pattern for the new windows. I was able to remove these without breakage, by first wedging a sharp knife between the dimples and the plastic and then bending the dimples back by tapping on the back of the knife blade with a small hammer. Once the plastic has been removed, position the sidecurtain on a flat wood surface, and using a flat piece of steel about 1/8” thick, flatten the dimples back out to the plane of the rest of the channel. An alternative method is to use a very sharp chisel, and by shaving the inner dimple surface, you can eventually create a “firm” fit of a piece of scrap 1/8” thick plastic, used to check this clearance. This will allow you to slide the new plastic into place during reassembly, and will allow the front plastic window to be secure, without recreating those dimples.

These “*Weathershield*” sidecurtains were originally polished then anodized using a clear coat. Do not try to polish out scratches or dings at this point---they must be de-anodized first. I chose to send my sidecurtains to “King of Trim” (kingoftrim@gmail.com), in Los Angeles, as they had done MGA as well as other English automobile sidecurtains in the past. The cost was \$150 per sidecurtain, which included removal of scratches, dings and polishing, followed by re-anodizing. The results were superb. (see photo)

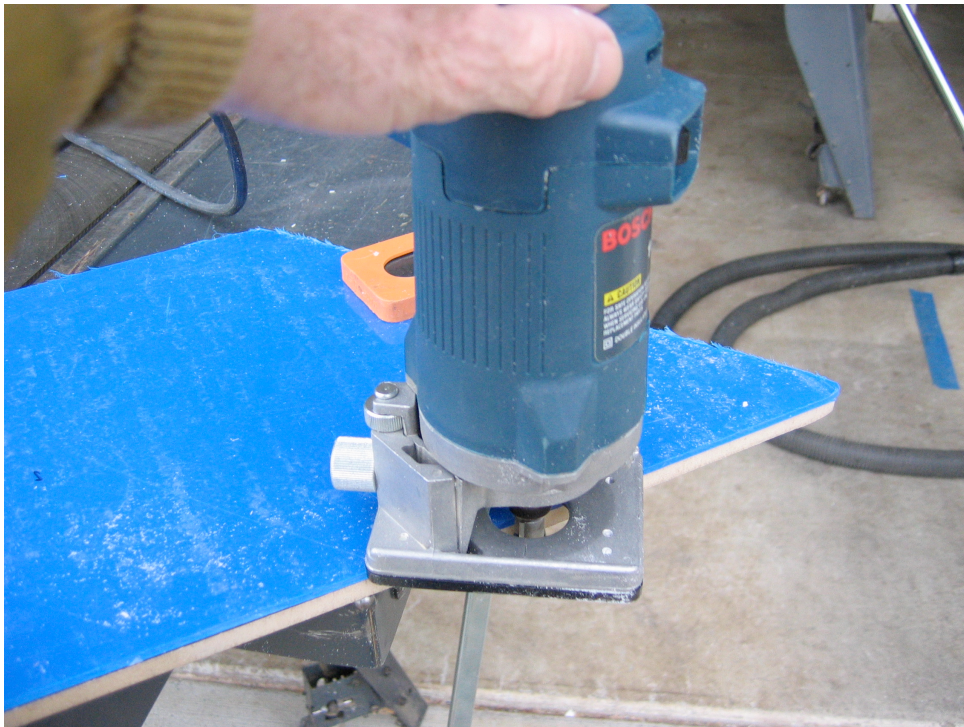


New plastic windows were fabricated out of 1/8” acrylic sheet. You will need a piece 1’x3’ for each sidecurtain. That will give you a little extra, but there is not very much waste. Make a pattern for the windows out of 1/4” masonite or other suitable material, and make sure the edges are smooth as you will be using a router to cut out the acrylic window. Using a straight bit laminate cutter with a roller bearing guide on the

bottom, cutting out the windows is a snap. After cutting out these windows, use a 150 grit sandpaper to smooth out the edges, then polish them using gentle pressure.



Masonite templates
(courtesy of Bill Beatty)



Laminate router cutting out acrylic. Note clamps used to stabilize acrylic sheet against masonite pattern.

The sliding portion of the windows have $\frac{1}{4}$ " thick acrylic blocks (1"x1/2") cemented to the window. I used commercial acrylic cement for this purpose. If you choose to use Lexan for your windows instead of acrylic, those blocks will have to be cemented using epoxy cement. If you are going to do multiple windows, then you might consider making a template to locate these blocks in the same spots each time. Please

note the position of these blocks is vertical, not horizontal. The positions of these blocks actually varied, depending upon whether they were “early” or “late” model aluminum frame sidecurtains or if they were the latest vinyl coated sidecurtains. Your best bet is to make patterns from your old sidecurtains.

The next step was to place the new felt runners into the frames. This can be tricky, but it helps to iron the new felt into a “V” shape first, then when placing the preformed felt runners, use rubber cement in the tracks to secure the felt--but not so secure that you will not be able to remove and reposition it if a need arises during assembly. I found that the Todd Clarke (thick) felt was best placed into the bottom channel, with thinner (typical fabric store black felt) placed into the upper channel. This allowed secure fixation of the plexiglass, but it did not bind the movement of the window after assembly. The windows can then be placed into the bottom channel, bowed with gentle pressure from both hands, and snapped into the upper channels.

The steel brackets which allow mounting of the sidecurtains to the door were probably cadmium plated originally, but since that is nearly impossible to have done now, “flash” chrome plating makes a good substitute. Instruct your plating company to not polish the parts, but to simply clean and plate them. The screws and other mounting hardware can be purchased from Todd Clarke Spares.

Reassembly is simply the reverse of the above, and goes rather quickly and easily. The final result is certainly worth the effort. (see below)



-Steve Woodyard-