Windsor-Detroit MG Club
Top Fitting Tech Session
September 15, 2018

Thanks to Roxanne and Mike Fontana for letting us use their home for the purposes of this Tech Session and to Gene Johnson who was instrumental in organizing it.

The task was to fit a new top to Dan Sokolowski's newly acquired 1977 MGB, Dan chose to replace the old vinyl top with a fabric top. On Mike's advice, he chose one from Robbins, which in Mike's experience, have proven to be well made and fit well.

Roxanne and Mike's home is on a corner with garages linked to one another on each road. That provided plenty of room to work and for attendees to park.

The day prior, the old top was removed. This allowed inspection, cleaning and paint touch-up of the frame. The rear bow, which supports the top just above the rear window, was removed at this time.

The next day, the rear bow that was previously removed was put in place and wrapped and glued into place in the top. This is much more easily done when the top and bow are off the car.

Fortunately, it was a sunny day and that allowed Mike to warm the top in the sun, with the aim of making it more supple. This is more important with a vinyl top that changes its stiffness much more with temperature.

The top was brought to the car and the rear bow refitted.

The center of the top was marked with chalk, using the windshield center stay as a guide.

This top’s has pre-fitted snaps proved accurately placed and, being hidden, give a very smart appearance.

The cloth top required a lot of manpower to ensure it was fully stretched over the frame.

That many men have twice as many hands . This allowed Gene to start drawing a chalk line at the front edge of the header.

The chalk mark was extended across the full width.

The center of the header was marked, again using the windshield center stay as a guide.

To protect the windshield frame from adhesive, masking tape was placed along its top edge.

Gene applies contact adhesive to the header. Dan had taken advice from Robbins on the best adhesive to use.

The chalk mark on the outside of the top was transferred to the inside.

A second chalk mark was applied below the first, at a distance equal to the height of the header.

The two chalk lines completed.

Adhesive was applied between the chalk lines.

Once the contact adhesive had dried, foil was applied to help place the top on the header without the adhesive grabbing before it was aligned.

The foil was removed as the top was applied to the header.

To check for accuracy of the last operation, the front edge of the top was temporarily folded under.

The top has tabs that strengthen fitment at the corners. One of these is screwed in place and so an awl was used to make the necessary hole.

Adhesive is applied to the tabs and their mating area with the header

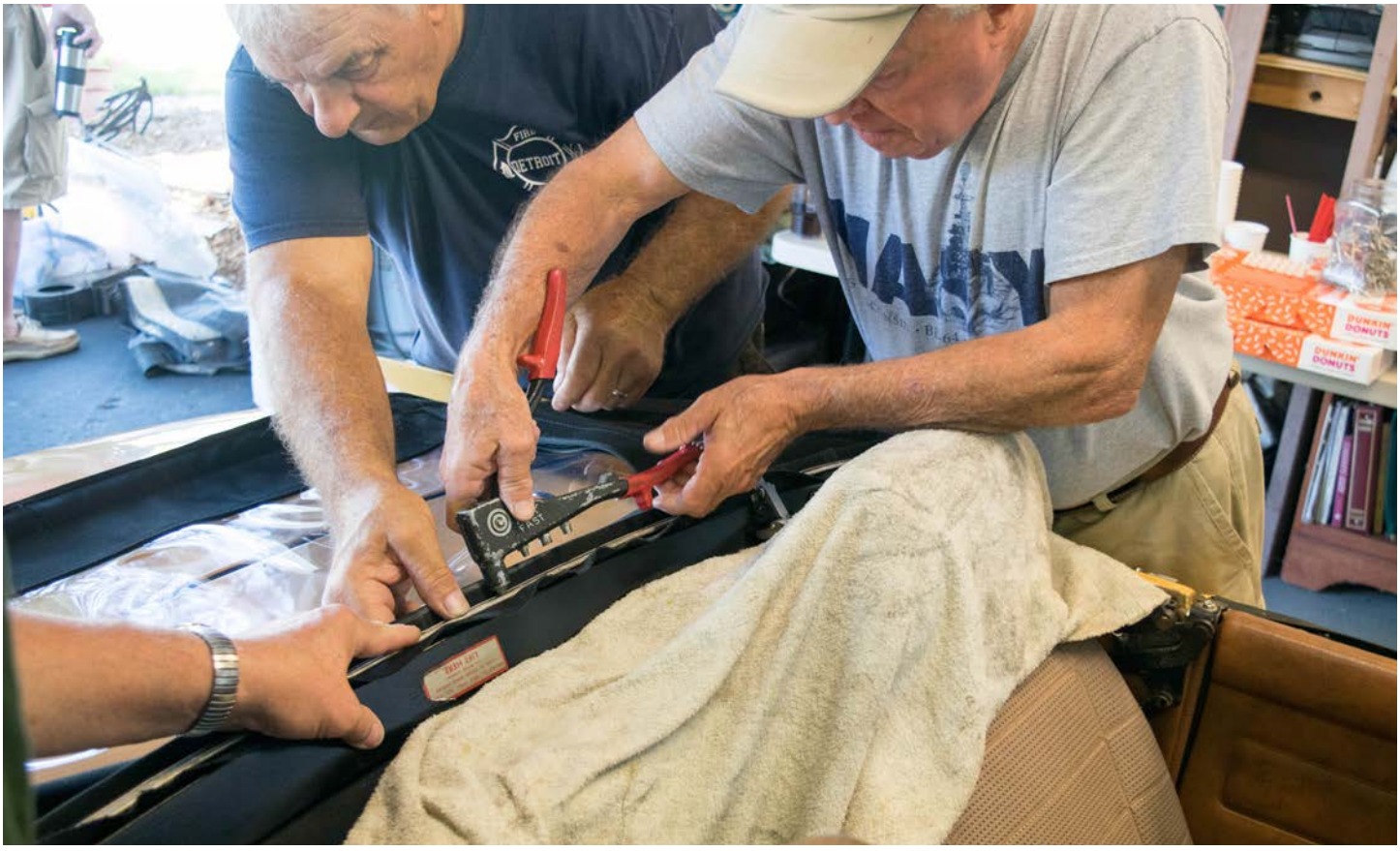
Once the adhesive was tack dry, the tabs were put in place.

A view of the right side tabs before they were fixed down.

Adhesive being applied to the underside of the header and top .

Once the adhesive was tack dry on both sides, the top was folded around the underside of the header.

The rail that carries the header rubber seal was placed on the header and an awl used to center it.



A pop rivet was then inserted to secure the centered rail in position.

With an awl securing and positioning the ends, the holes were made for the rest of the pop rivets. The rest of the pop rivets were then installed

The excess material could then be trimmed in front of the rail.

As it was still in good shape, Dan chose to keep his original seal, but because it had distorted a little, an end had been marked with tape so that it could be inserted in the same direction again.

It was originally planned to push the seal in from one end, lubricating it first with liquid detergent. However, the rail was found to be too distorted and the seal jammed.

Instead of pushing the rail in from one end, one lip was pushed into one side of the rail and a putty knife used to push the other lip into the other edge of the rail inch by inch.

Almost done. The MGB has tabs with snap-on fasteners that attached to mating fasteners buttons on the A pillar of the windshield. These are not pre-fitted, so Gene uses an awl to make a pilot hole in the tab.

Gene uses a hole punch on the tab to accept the fastener.

We were lucky to be able to borrow this tool that allows the fastener to be secured in place, Otherwise, a low cost anvil and die tool is available, but in order to use it, it requires the top to be removed first.

A snap fastener being attached to the tab,

All done. The view from the rear.

And the view of the right quarter.

The top crew. Phil Lyon, Gene Johnson, Tony Kaluzny, Dan Sokolowski, Bill Weakley, Harry Mueller III, Dave DeMilner, John Magee, Mike Fontana and Mick Gedeon. Photos: Rick Astley