



Now comes the fun, at least it was fun watching these two giants of the custom world working together. "Just apply the heat right at the base, Dick, while I man the come-along" (note that a steel rod was inserted into each post stub to hook up the come-along). With everything tweaked into perfect alignment, Bill welds 'er up the old-fashioned way... with gas!



Bill then grinds down the welds and cleans them with a rotary file. Back in the old days, when he couldn't afford a file, Bill used broken drill bits — a tech tip worthy of consideration even in today's high-tech world.

The dressed area is then heated up and tinned. Bill prefers an old rag to steel wool for tinning and uses his special blend of lead. As for beeswax on the lead paddle, he doesn't touch the stuff. Only premium motor oil will do.



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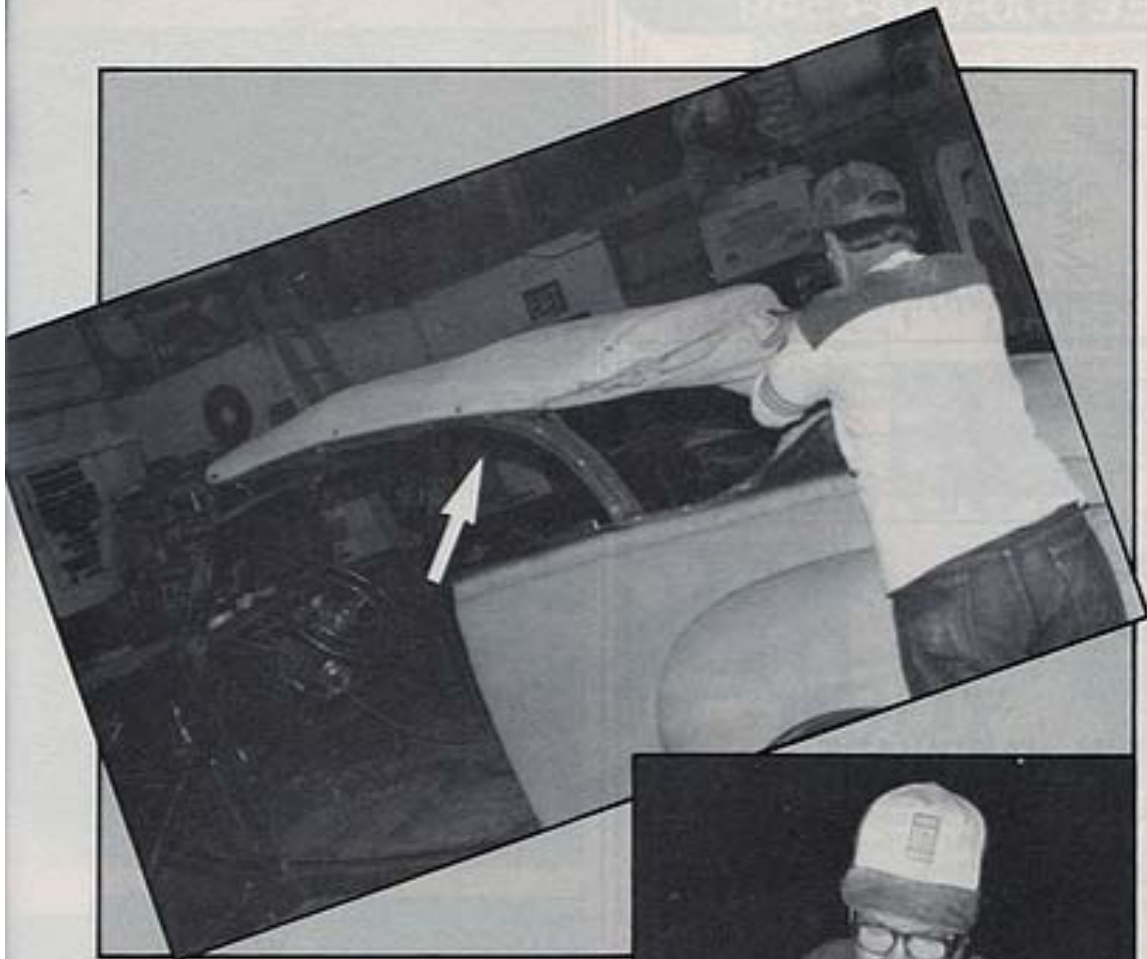
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Bill then shapes the lead with his trusty Vixen file. Dick offered a fresh file, but Bill preferred one of his own, as he always carries a full complement of leading tools (including lead) in the trunk of his car. The work area was then smoothed to perfection with an air sander. The difference between metal and plastic fillers is readily apparent; this two-inch-cut post looks like a freshly minted piece. All of this was done in less than an hour.

With the top in Up position, Bill ponders his next move. As you can see, the top needs to come forward and down.

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Now it's time to strip off the old (actually in pretty good shape) canvas top and padding. Watch out for upholstery nails popping out of the tack strip and wooden bows. Metal strips that hold weather stripping under the edge must be removed, too (see arrow). Note that a couple of rear screws may be reached only with the top in partially retracted position.

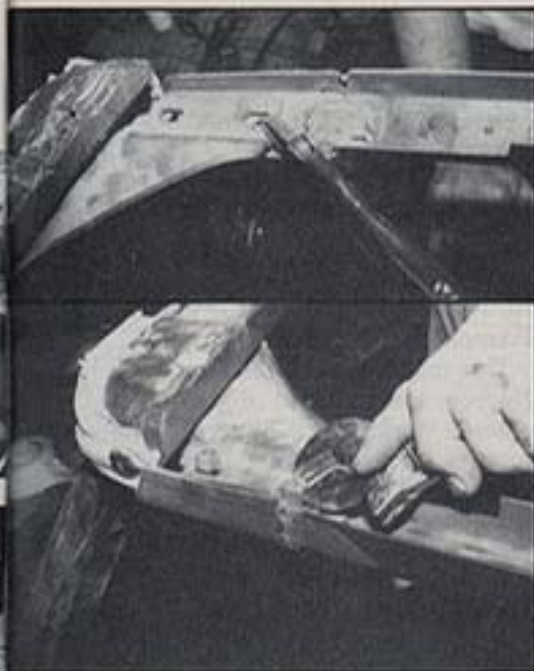


After everything is removed including bows, Dick uses a power hacksaw to sever the partially disassembled mechanism in the lower quarter window area. Bill holds up the passenger side to check lofting, then marks and cuts off the required amount (see arrow).

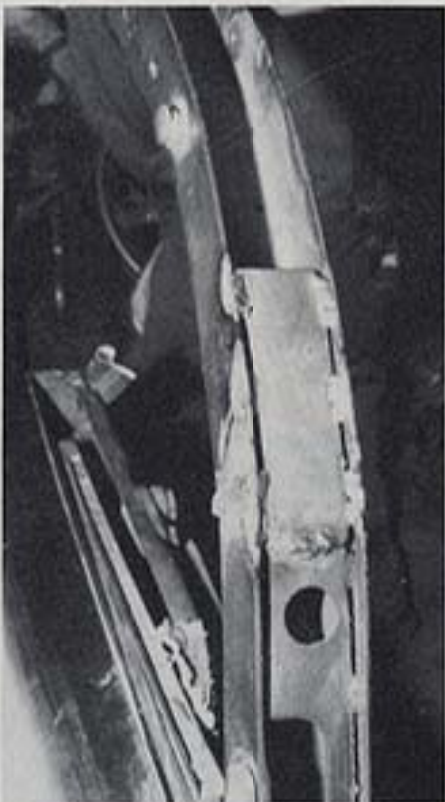


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The leading edge as seen from the passenger side. The triangular bracket mounts the hold-down clamp that bolts to the side header. To make it fit, around four inches of metal was added (note the reinforced joint) and attachment holes drilled. The side headers are then bolted back into place, here being done on the driver's side.



The severed sections after welding back together (note the precaution taken by boxing the weld joint). The boxing plate is on top and won't show, and the exposed welds will be finished off and painted before a new top is installed. The mechanism is then rolled back to check if everything works. Being satisfied with mechanical functions, the leading edge is then clamped to the windshield header bracket (driver's side shown) to determine the amount of stretch necessary.

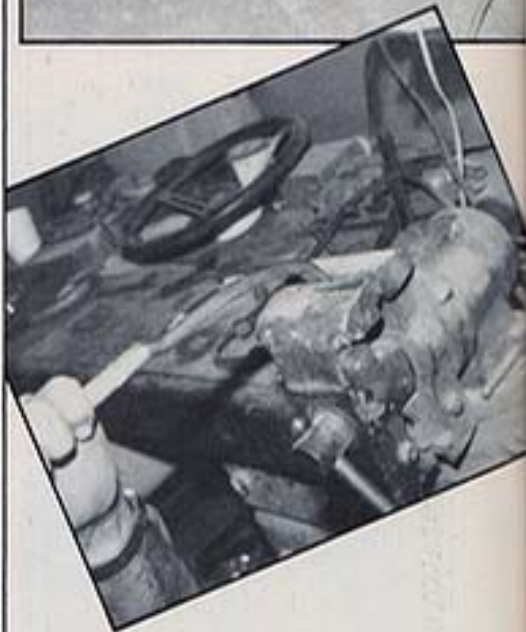


Bill marks the rear arm for cutting and re-drilling, as it's now a couple of inches too long. After cutting and drilling, the end is dressed on a belt sander.

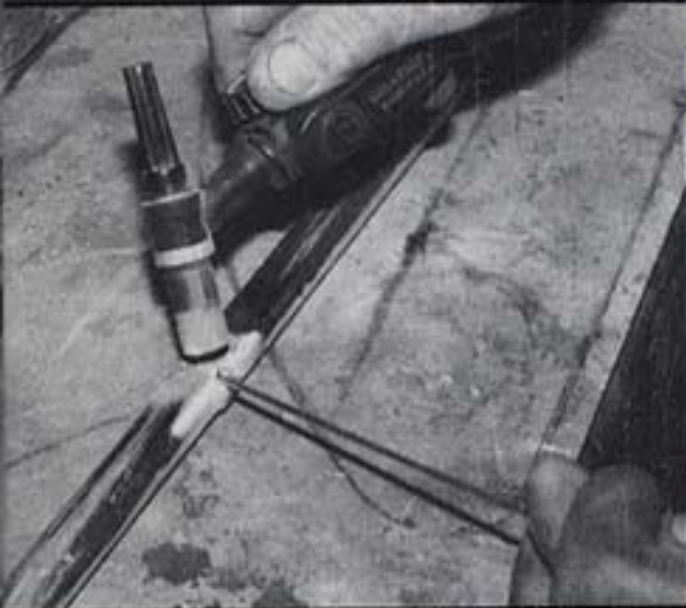
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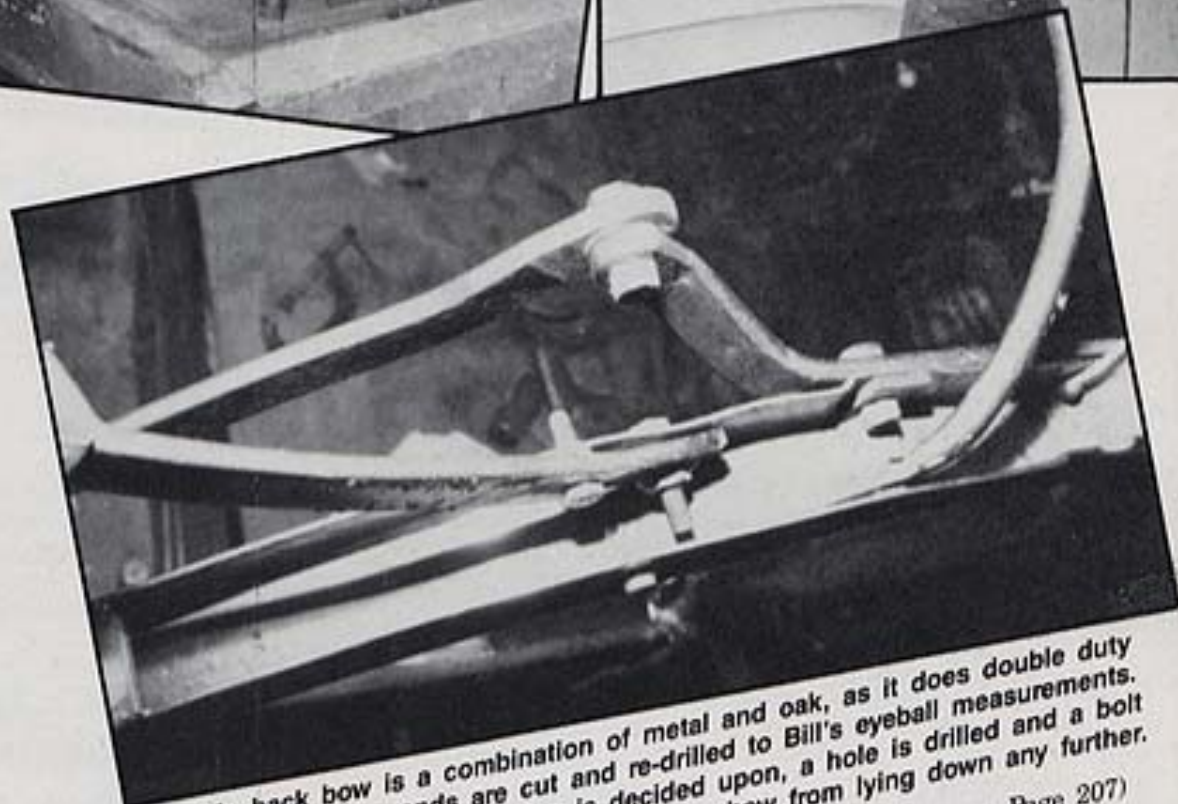
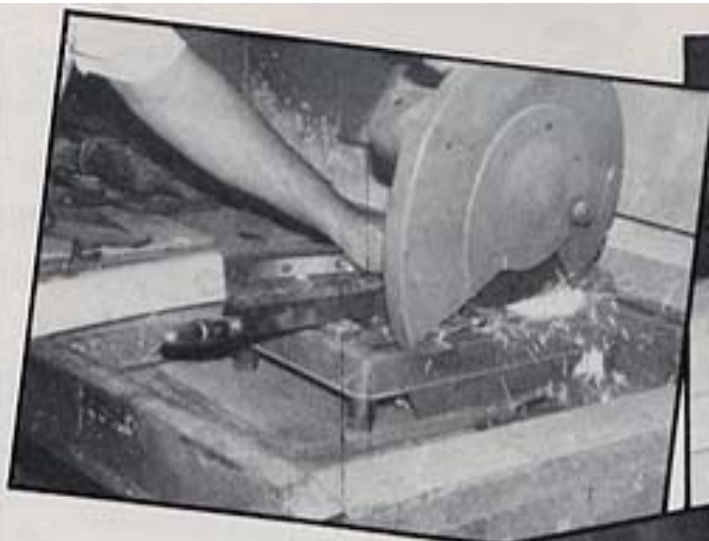
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It takes a good eye and body English to reshape top bows. This is done to lower the crown, in effect giving the top a double chop. Bill has years of experience in this and quickly eyeballs the desired shape. The novice, however, might want to give this step some serious thought, or even confer with his upholsterer. The ends also may be cut, bent, and re-drilled, depending on how flat you want your top.



The middle bow needed to be narrowed after the ends were flattened so it was severed in the middle and marked accordingly. The bow is an aluminum extrusion, so it had to be heliarced back together.



That big back bow is a combination of metal and oak, as it does double duty as a tack strip. The ends are cut and re-drilled to Bill's eyeball measurements. When the just-right up position is decided upon, a hole is drilled and a bolt installed as a limiter (see arrow) to keep the bow from lying down any further.

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Well, that she be! Everything's cut and reassembled, and it still fits in the top well. A little overhead hoist, and she goes up like a charm. Tom doesn't want to keep the hydraulic cylinders, so the top will remain manual.



Tom (left) dropped by just in time to find his new lower-profile top finished and folding. Another satisfied customer!