Owners of Classic Convertibles have the advantage of hundreds of books and articles written about their cars on just about every aspect of restoring a Convertible. One area that has never been reviewed in detail is the disassembly, restoration and reassembly of the Convertible top frame itself. Convertible owners are often forced to install “any old bolt” in place of a missing or badly deteriorated fastener.

This month we are introducing a complete hardware kit that allows you to replace every bolt, screw, nut, bushing, grommet, etc. in your original top frame! This kit will save you many hours you would have spent looking for the right fasteners, by providing every piece needed. Each kit contains separately bagged and labeled parts for easy to understand installation (Photo #1). All of the hardware is nickel plated, just like the originals, and will fit all three years. It may be installed with a completely disassembled frame as described in the article; but it can just as easily be installed, one fastener at a time in a complete car with the Convertible top already installed! This new hardware kit can be ordered as **P/N 39-25**.

Photo #1

Original Convertibles with standard white or black (except 1955s) fabric tops always had semi-gloss black top frames. The painting and assembly procedure will be covered in the article. We believe that the original cars with colored fabric tops such as beige tops, blue tops, green tops and so on, also had corresponding top frame colors. For example, a 1955 with a beige Convertible top would also have had a beige top frame. Similarly, a Larkspur Blue 1957 with the optional light blue top would have had a Harbor Blue, not black, top frame. This is supported by our disassembly of many Convertibles and their top frames and noting the original color of the metal top frames. For example, we disassembled both a Harbor Blue and Highland Green 1957 Convertible during the course of the article. The blue ’57 originally had a light blue top and Harbor Blue top bows! The green ’57 originally had a medium green top and Highland Green bows! It is important that the owners of cars with colored tops carefully inspect the top frame and determine its original color. The original dealer albums contain the top color options that correspond with a particular color car. More will be covered on this subject in a future article of *Classic Chevy International*.

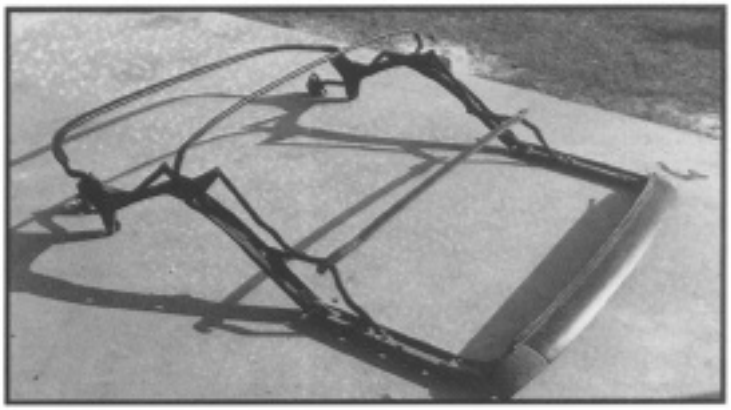


Photo #2

1) If you are installing the fastener kit in a car that has already been assembled, install the fasteners at each point, one at a time. If you are completely restoring the top frame, disassemble the entire frame (Photos #2 & #3). Remove all fasteners that can be removed with simple hand tools, but do not remove any original rivets or spot welds. You should have a total of 12 separate main pieces including the header bow, first and second center bows, rear bow, two front side frames, two center side frames, two side scissor assemblies and two rear side frames. Pay close attention to how these pieces were assembled as this will aid you greatly when reassembly time comes. Be sure not to destroy any original tack strips that are in good shape, particularly in the rear bow because it is difficult to replace.

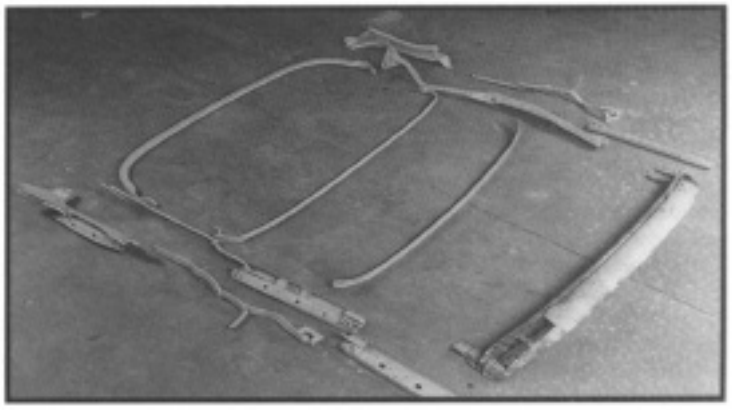


Photo #3

2) Bead blast or sand blast each main piece to remove all original paint and rust. (Don’t forget to protect the tack strips!) The area that usually deteriorates most is the header bow. Make an assessment of yours to determine whether it needs to be repaired or replaced. A great deal of rust can be repaired using standard sheet metal and bodywork techniques. Ours was quite rusty, so the rust was cut out and welded (Photos #4 & #5). Substantially

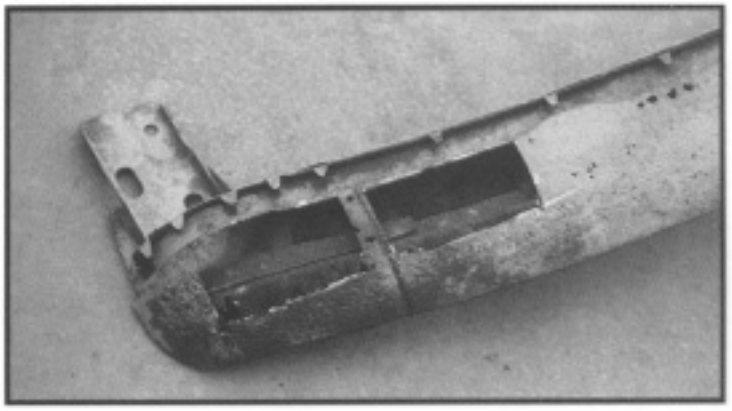


Photo #4

weakened headers should be replaced. New reproduction headers are available as **P/N 39-21**.

3) Prime all of the main pieces with a self-etching primer such as Variprime. Fill all remaining imperfections with a good high build acrylic or urethane primer. If your original header tack strips are badly deteriorated, reproduction header bow tacking strips are available as **P/N 39-02**. Install the strip with the center punched holes on the underside of the header. These holes line up with the retaining strip thread towers (Photo #6). The remaining strip installs on top of the header with the two notches corresponding with the header shape (Photo #7). You may want to shim this strip slightly because it is slightly thinner than the original strip. Repair all other tack strips with thin strips of cardboard (about the weight of door panel cardboard) laminated together and glued in place. Original top frames used two different types of first center bows (Photo #8). The wide bow in the top of the photo uses a tack strip, so it should be repaired at this time. The round bow at the bottom of the photo is more common and does not use a tack strip.

4) The front and center side frames should be assembled at this time using the contents of **Bag J**. Align the pivot holes in the front and center side frames and install the brass bushing (Photo #9). (Right side assembly shown). Install the nickel plated 3/8-inch hex head bolt from inside the frame assembly. Lock into place using the internal tooth star washer and nut provided (Photo #10). Check for free operation of the pivot point.

5) At this point, all of the frame pieces should be painted before further assembly. This means that all fasteners installed from this point on will remain their natural nickel finish.

6) Install the adjusting bolt, nut, and lock washer contained in **Bag K** at the front of the center side rail (Photo #11).

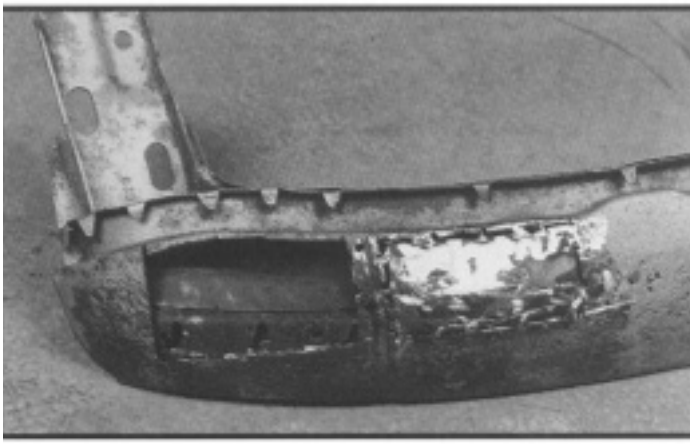


Photo #5

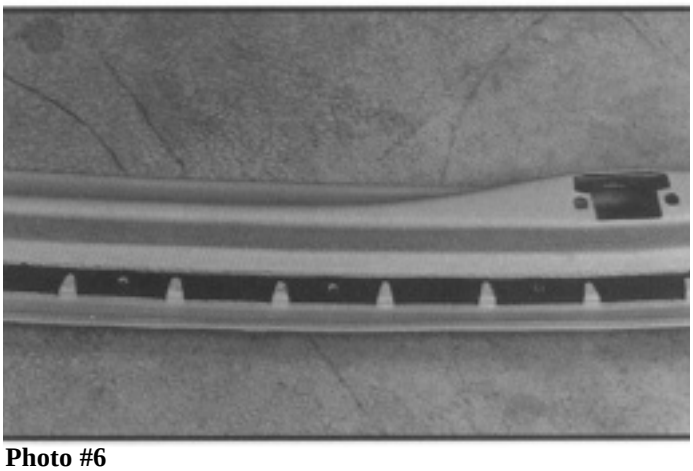


Photo #6

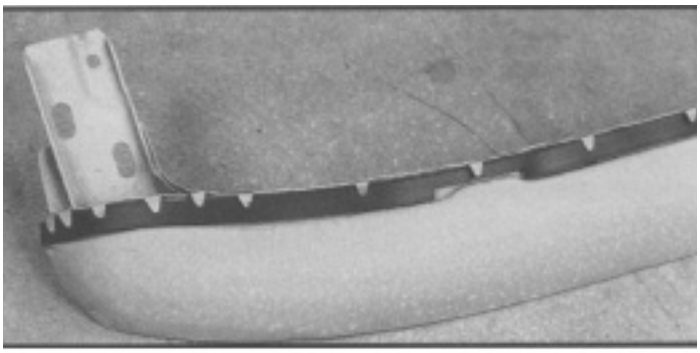


Photo #7

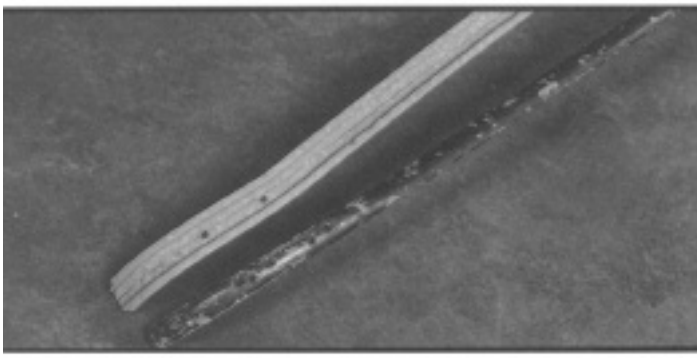


Photo #8

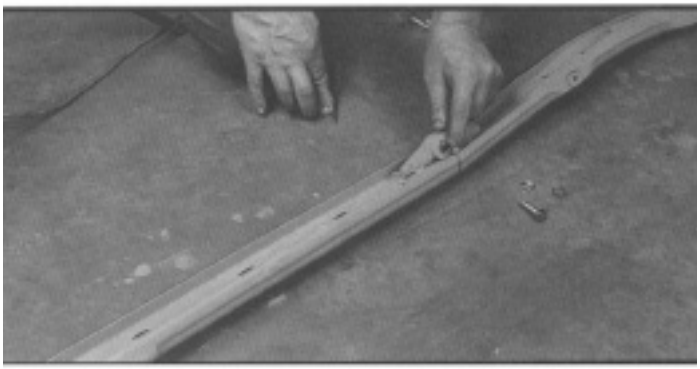


Photo #9

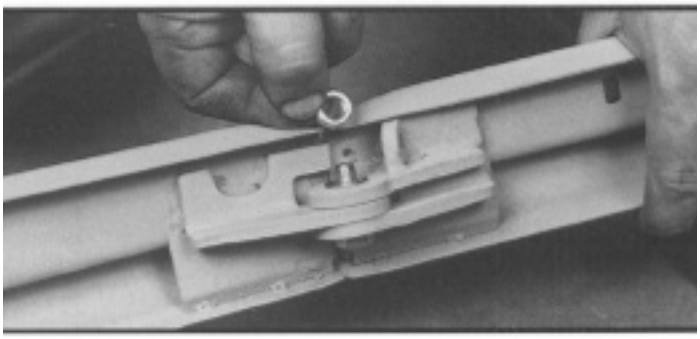


Photo #10

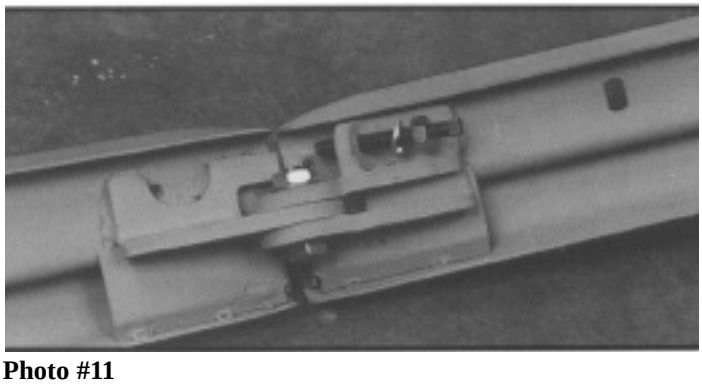


Photo #11

7) The center side frame is attached to the rear side frame using the contents of **Bag T**. Slip the wave washer provided over the special shouldered 3/4-inch head bolt and slip into the pivot hole at the rear of the center side frame (Photo#12). Thread the bolt into the hole in the rear side frame and tighten. Lock in place using the internal tooth star washer and nut provided (Photo #13). Check for free operation of the pivot point.

8) The side scissor assembly is attached to the center side frame using the contents of **Bag N**. Slip the plated slot head machine bolt through the center hole of the scissor assembly. Install the wave washer and brass shoulder bushing as shown in Photo #14. Thread into the center side frame and tighten. Check for free operation. Lock this bolt in place using the Allen set screw provided (Photo #15).

9) Attach the rear of the side scissor assembly to the lead arm on the rear side frame using the contents of **Bag P**. Install all hardware using the same sequence as Step #8 except lock in place using the internal tooth start washer and nut provided (Photo #16). Check for free operation of the pivot point.

10) The side scissor assembly front bracket is attached to the front side frame using the contents of **Bag F**. Install the three counter sunk Phillips machine screws into the counter sunk holes under the center of the front side frame (Photo #17). Slip the side scissor front bracket over the screws from the top and secure using the lock washers and nuts provided (Photo #18).

11) Install the black fiber bumper contained in **Bag O** on the top of the center side frame using the Phillips screw and washer provided (Photo #19). This bumper prevents the side scissor from colliding with the center side frame when the top is "down."

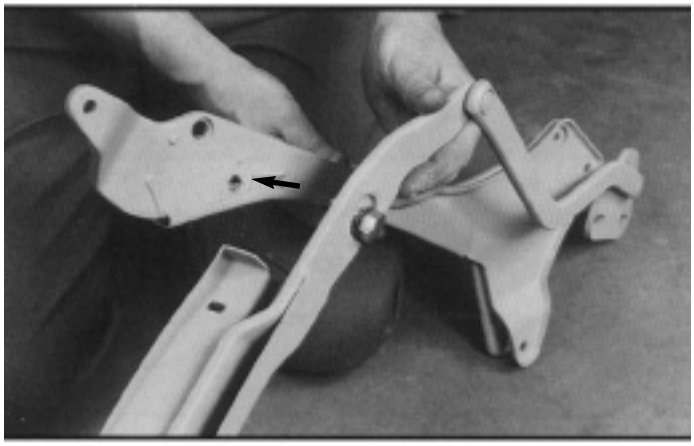


Photo #12

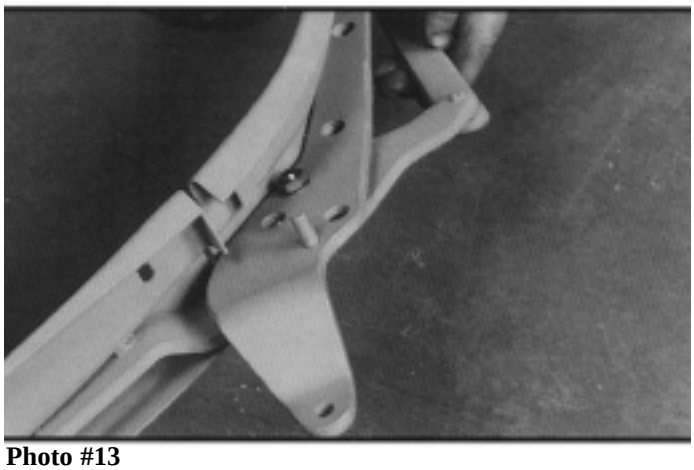


Photo #13

Photo #14

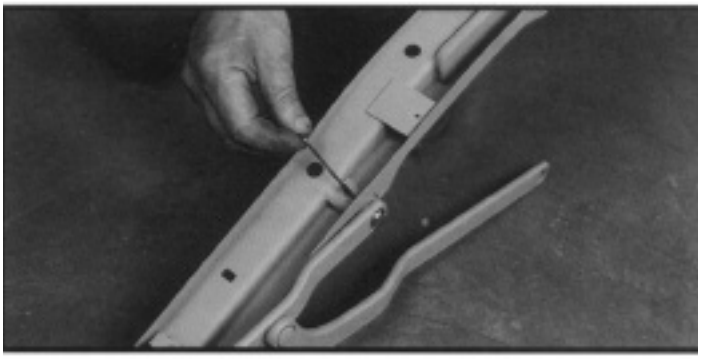


Photo #15

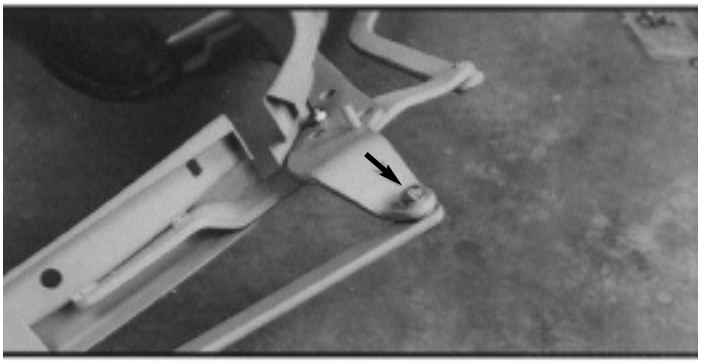


Photo #16

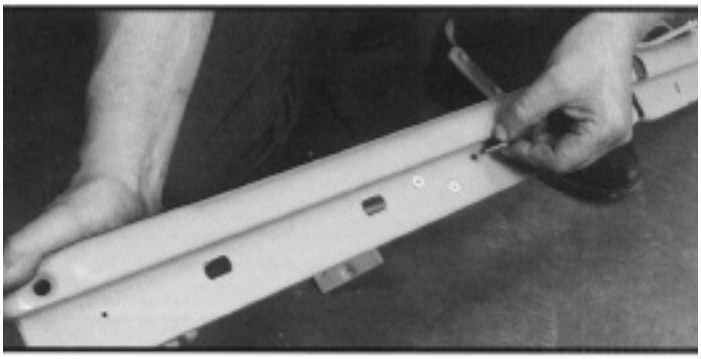


Photo #17

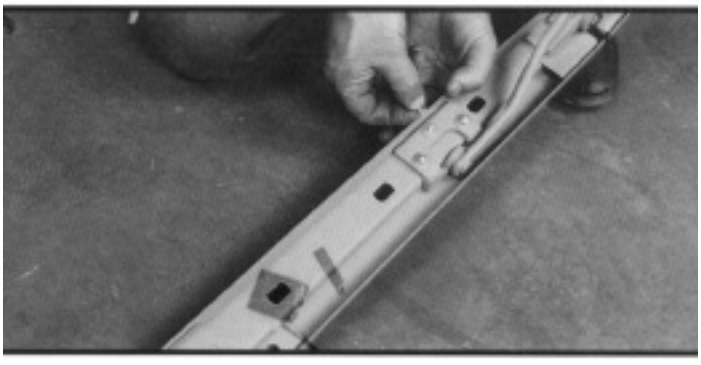


Photo #18

12) The rubber seals contained in **Bag Q** form a water seal between the center and rear side frames. Slip the seal into place at the front of the rear side frame and secure in place by gently tapping on the metal bracket on the side frame. You may also wish to use a little 3M Weather stripping Adhesive, **P/N 49-06**, to help hold the seal in place (Photo #20). The screws contained in **Bag Q** will be installed in the roof rail weather stripping later on.

13) Your completed side frame assembly should look like ours does in Photo #21. (Right side shown). Repeat the assembly procedure for the other side and check for free operation of all pivot points.

14) Position the lower angle bracket and face plate inside the rear inner quarter area of the car body (Photo #22). Using the contents of **Bag Y**, secure the lower bracket with four 3/8-inch fine thread bolts and lock washers. Install the upper pivot bracket using four 3/8-inch fine thread bolts, lock washers and flat washers (Photo #23). All of the components and fasteners installed in this step should be painted body color or have body color over-spray.

15) **Bag X** contains all of the hardware needed to attach the side frame assemblies to the body pivots just installed. Install one of the wave washers in **Bag X** under the nylon bushing flange and install into the body pivot (Photo #24). Slide the rear of the side frame assembly over the body pivot and bushing. Align the holes and install the special 3/8-inch bolt from the inside (Photo #25). Install the fine thread 3/8-inch nut from the backside and tighten (Photo #26). Check for free rotation of the side frame.

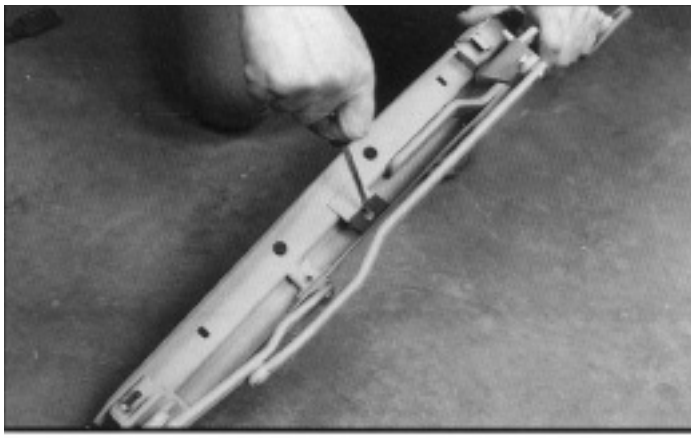
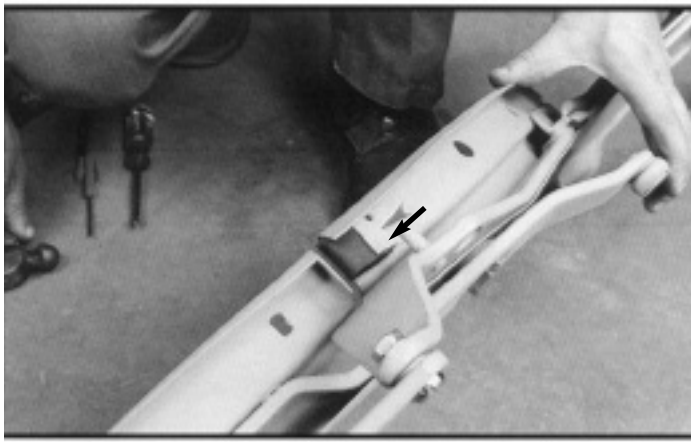


Photo #19



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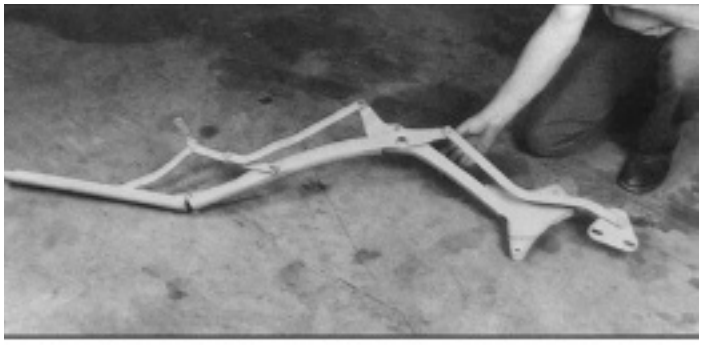


Photo #21

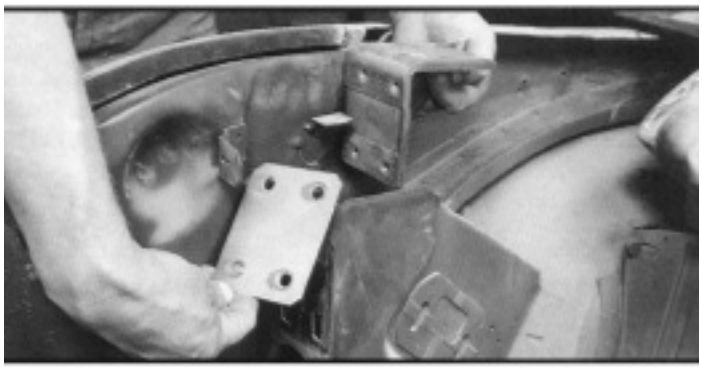


Photo #22

Photo #23

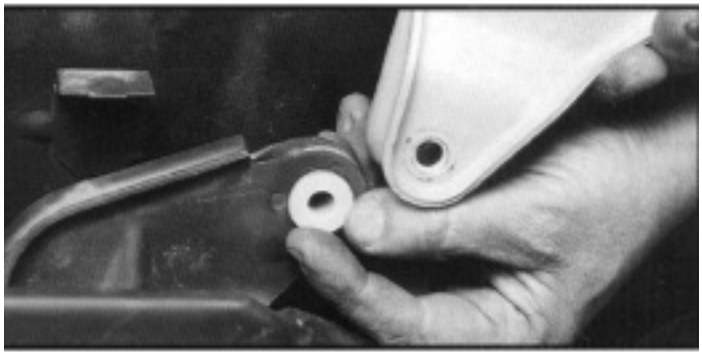


Photo #24

Photo #25

16) The rear extension arm and triangle adjusting plate is attached to the body using the contents of **Bag Z**. From inside the quarter support area, slip the two carriage bolts through the triangular adjusting bracket. Secure using the flat washers, internal tooth star washers and nuts provided (Photo #27).

17) Once both side frame assemblies are installed, the header bow may be installed. Position the header bow at the front of the side frame assemblies and install the Phillips head machine screws and integral star washers contained in **Bag B** from the bottom (Photo #28). From the top, install two flat washers and the $^{5}/_{16}$-inch nut (Photo #29).

18) Continue securing the header using the $^{5}/_{16}$-inch fine thread bolts and star washers provided in **Bag B** (Photo #30).

19) Install the first center bow by attaching to the side scissor extension arms using the contents of **Bag I**. Install the Phillips head machine screws and star washers through the extension arm and into the bow (Photo #31).

20) The second center bow is attached to the rear side frame extension using the contents of **Bag S**. Slip the slot head machine bolt through from the inside of the rear side frame extension. From the outside, install the wave washer and shouldered nylon bushing with the shoulder facing in (Photo #32). Hold the second center bow in position and thread the machine bolt in until snug. Lock in place using the internal tooth star washer and nut provided (Photo #33). Check for free rotation of the bow.

21) The rear bow is secured to the rear of the side frame assemblies using the contents of **Bag V**. Install the slot head machine bolt from inside the rear side frame. Slip the nylon shouldered bushing over the bolt from the outside with the

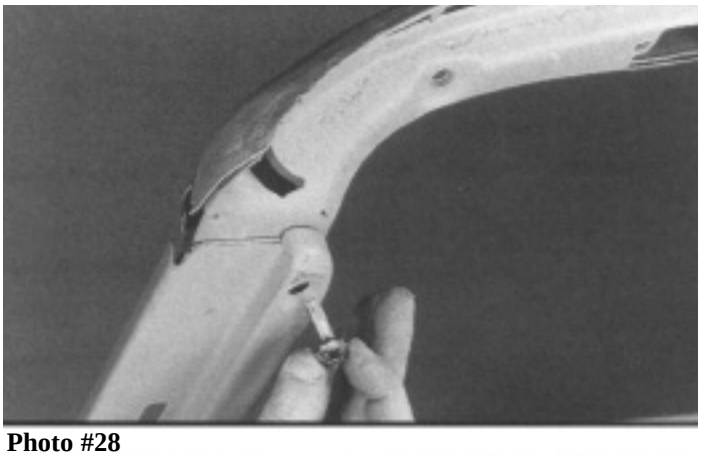


Photo #28

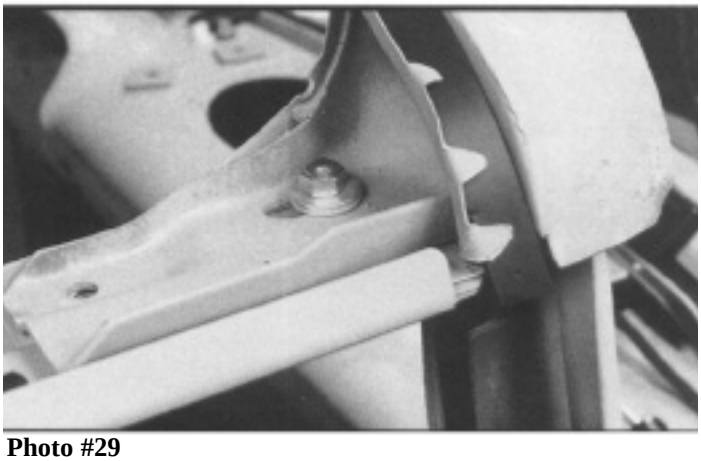


Photo #29

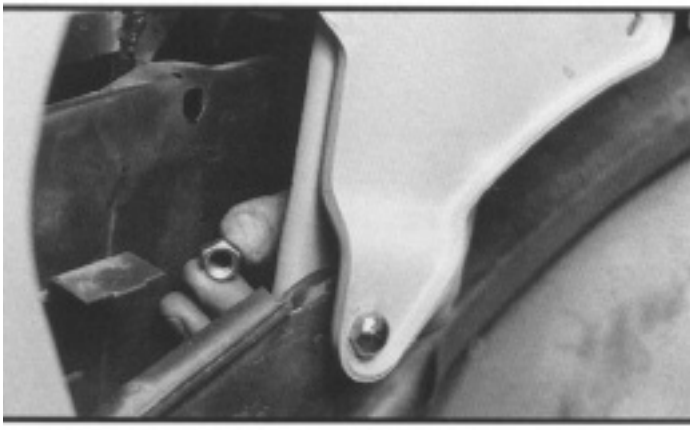


Photo #26

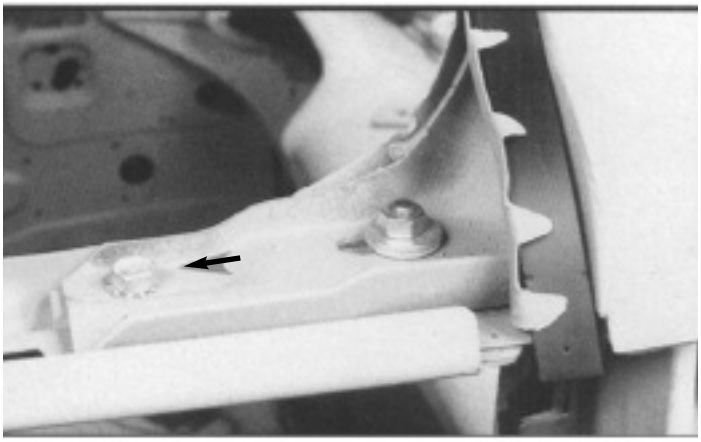


Photo #30

Photo #27

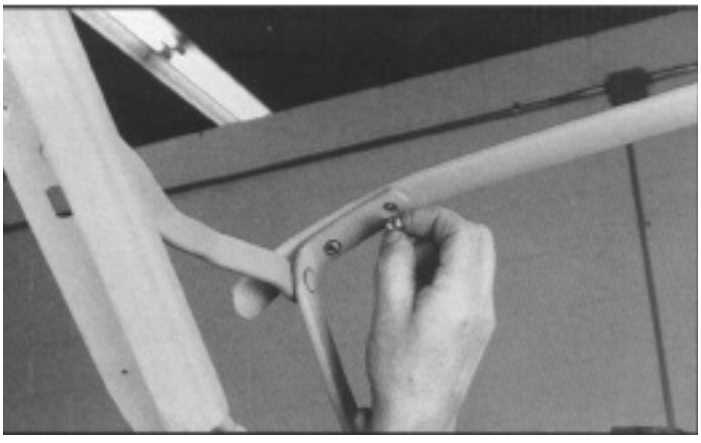


Photo #31

shoulder facing out. Now slip a wave washer over the nylon bushing (Photo #34). Slide the rear bow over the end of the bolt and secure using the internal tooth star washer and nut provided (Photo #35).

22) Attach the lower end of the top cylinders to the floor brackets using the rubber bushings, clevis pins, and cotter pins provided in **Bag 1C** (Photo #36). New top cylinder floor brackets are available as **P/N 39-23 left, P/N 39-24 right**.

23) Secure the top cylinder floor brackets to the inner body quarter using the 3/8-inch fine thread bolts and star washers provided in **Bag 1A** (Photo #37). Secure the brackets to the floor and using the 5/16-inch bolts, star washers and flat washers supplied in **Bag 1B** (Photo #38).

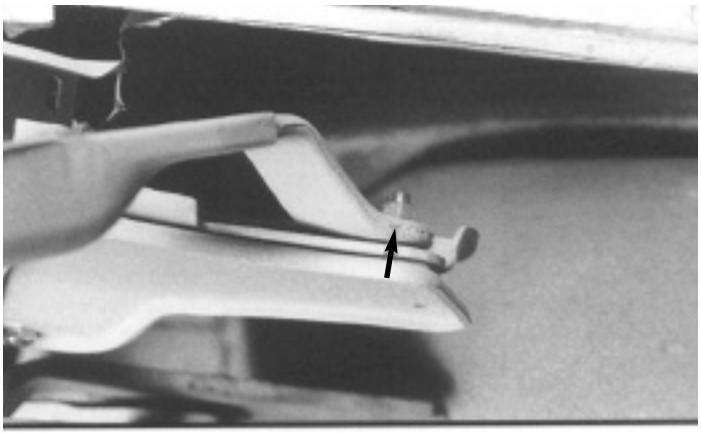


Photo #35

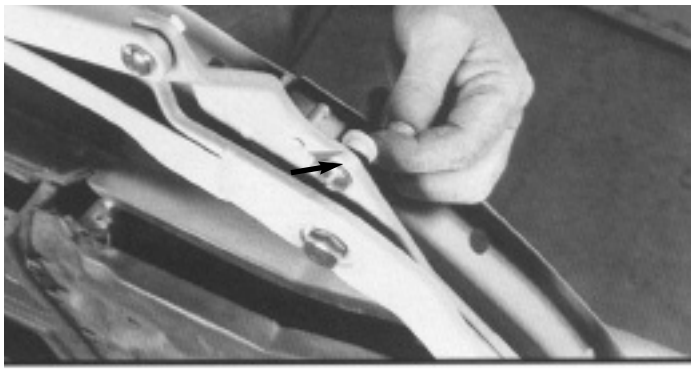


Photo #32

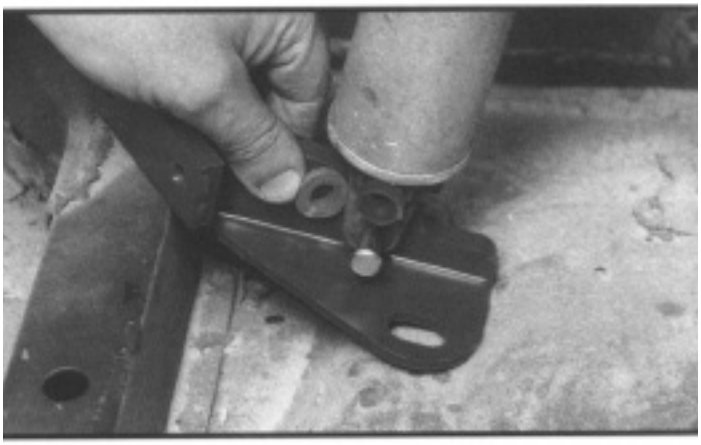


Photo #36

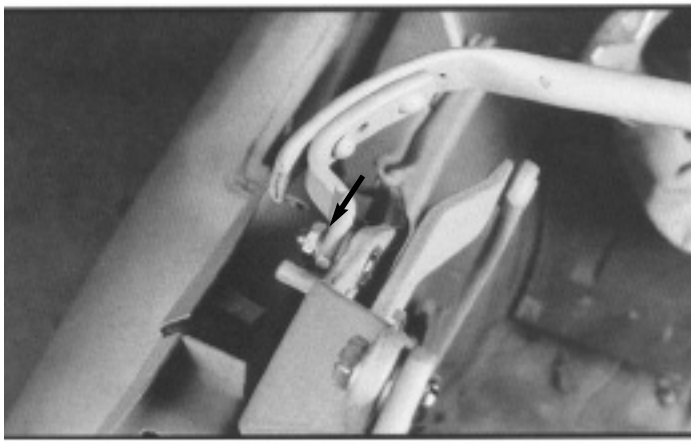


Photo #33

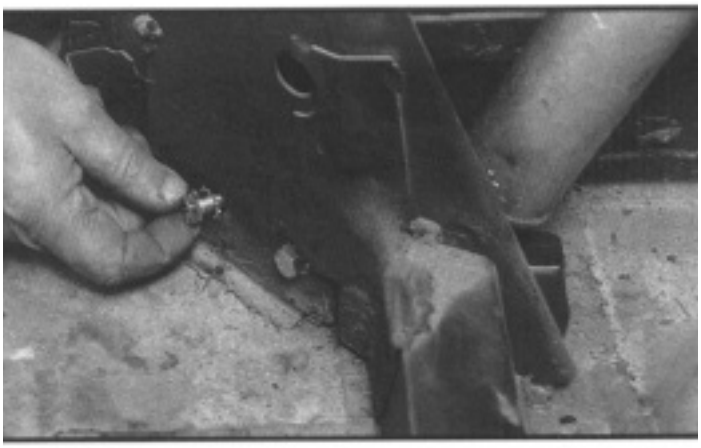


Photo #37

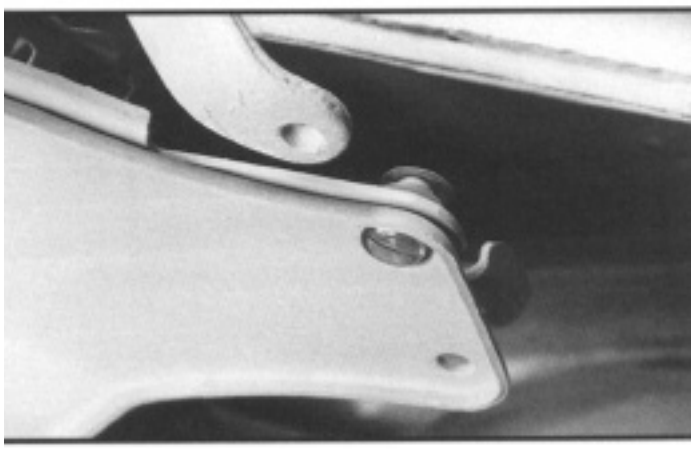


Photo #34

Photo #38

24) Install two of the nylon bushings provided in **Bag W** in the upper eyelet of each top cylinder rod after slipping a wave washer over the shoulder of each bushing (Photo #39). Align the rod with the rear side frame and install the bolt from inside of the frame. Secure using the nut provided (Photo #40).

25) Attach the top hoses, pump, etc. and get the top frame in working order. Adjust using the procedures outlined in *The Shop Manual* for your car and the *Body by Fisher Manual* for 1955's, **P/N 17-76**. Although this manual is for 1955's, the Convertible information it contains applies to all three years. Now it's time to take the car to the top shop and install the top pads and top. **Bag H** contains the Phillips head machine screws and finishing washers needed to secure the top pads to the first center bow. (Round style bows only.) The top pads are secured to the second center bow using the screws and washers provided in **Bag R**.

26) Once the Convertible top is installed, the roof rail weather stripping **P/N 13-07** may be installed. The front side frame weather stripping may be installed using the flat washers, star washers, and nuts provided in **Bag E**. The center side frame weather stripping can be installed using the star washers and nuts contained in **Bag M**. **Bag U** contains the nuts and washers needed to attach the rear side frame weather stripping.

27) Once the roof rail weather stripping is in place and adjusted for proper fit, there are several supplemental screws that are installed to hold it in place. All of these screws were installed in original cars. The Phillips head screws and cup washers contained in **Bags C**, **D**, and **G** are installed through the bottom of the roof rail weather stripping and into the top frame at the locations shown in Photo #41. The screws and washers contained in **Bags L** and **Q** secure the roof rail weather stripping at the points shown in Photo #42.

28) The header to windshield seals should be installed using the retaining strip and screws, as shown in Photo #43. Notice the "fat" seals goes to the rear, skinny edge next to the top header and the "thin" seal goes to the front. Both seals are secured in place with the metal retaining strip. Install the latch mechanisms and latch plates (Photo #44). New latch plates with screws are available as **P/N 39-22**. These plates should be painted the same color as the top frame itself.

29) Install all remaining hardware such as the latches, striker pins and hold down strap loop. Once completed, check for smooth and proper operation and make any additional needed adjustments. Additional parts related to your Convertible top are available in the latest *Parts and Accessories Catalog*.

You now have a brand new, correctly restored Convertible top frame!

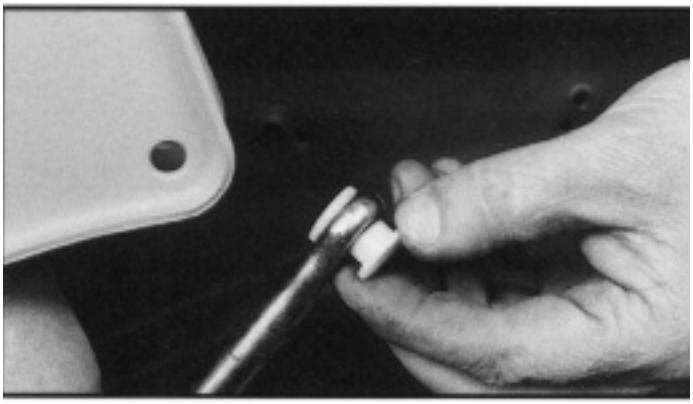
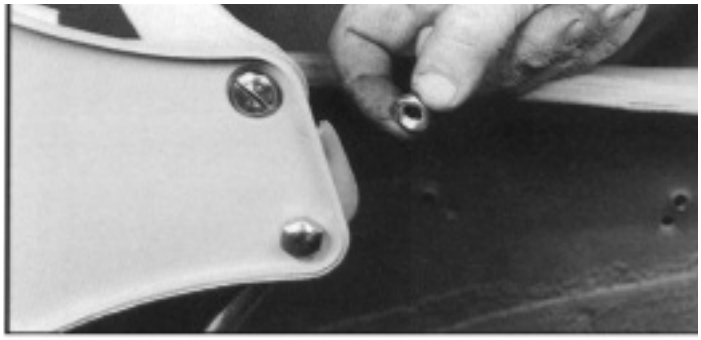


Photo #39



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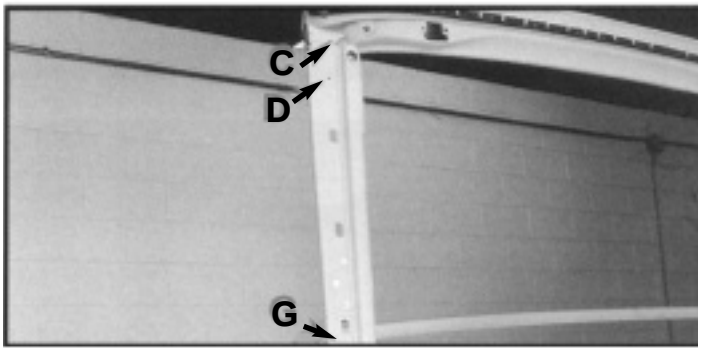

Photo #41

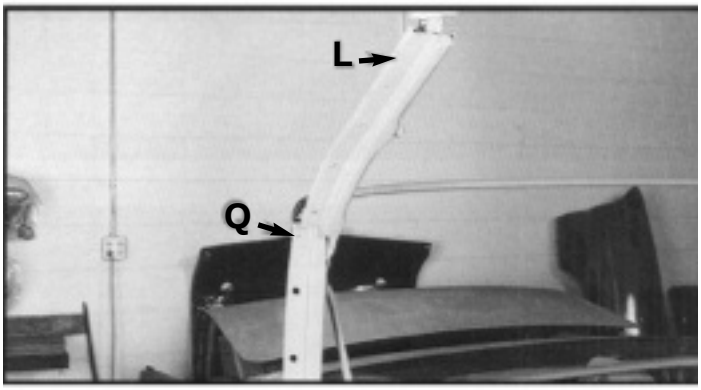

Photo #42

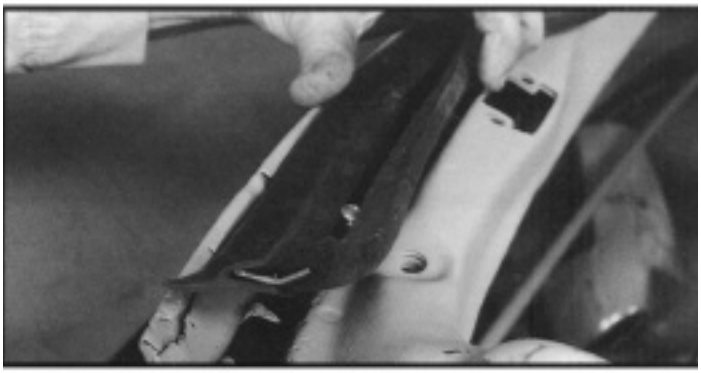

Photo #43

Photo #44