

No *FEAR* with new *Veneer*

BY ERIC SCHMID

PART I IN A SERIES

I have always been fascinated by how old cars are brought to new glamor by specialists and have always had such respect and admiration for such people. My dream was to be like that too! One day, a friend came back from the States and he told me about a car meet that he had attended in Las Vegas. When I saw his photos, I instantly fell in love with a midnight blue Buick Riviera built in 1965. I knew this was exactly what I had to own and I started my search. I must emphasize that in Switzerland, where I live, such cars are very rare (as well as in this color)! I was fortunate to find a '65 Riviera being sold by the widow of the original owner (Fig. 1). In memory of her late husband, she would sell the car only to someone who promised to restore it to its original condition. As an absolute "newbie" in this area, I gave my promise and bought the car at a good price. I was as happy as I had been for many years.

In this restoration series, I will take you through the many steps it took to bring this car back to its original condition. I initially dedicated myself to the interior by restoring the faded and stained wood veneer, recovering the vinyl on the door panels, reupholstering the worn and soiled seats (Fig. 2) with original cloth and vinyl material and new carpet throughout. Here, I will start with a two-part article on removing and replacing the wood veneer. All of these other projects will be covered in future issues. I hope you find the articles informative and inspiring.

Much of this was new to me, but I gained the knowledge through intensive research on the internet and relevant forums, especially the ROA Forum! My motto was always: Google is your best friend and do not break anything!




PREPARATIONS FOR REPLACING THE VENEER

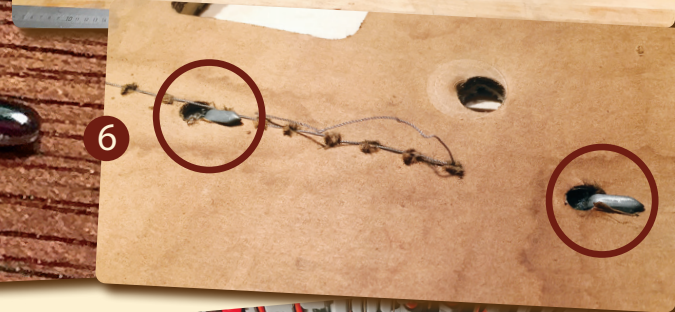
The procedure is quite simple and there is no need for fear. If I could do it, anyone can! The first step is to remove everything with veneer. This includes the inner door panels (Fig. 3), rear side trim (Fig. 4), and the center console (Fig. 5). Although the radio trim was originally covered in black on the '65, I intended to cover it with the veneer. With the help of your service manual and suitable tools, the removal is simple. Make sure that you put all the screws, nuts, and other small parts from the panels in small plastic bags with labels. If possible, use your mobile phone to take photos before and after removal. This will make it much easier to reassemble correctly. For additional help, I printed out the shots and added them to the appropriate plastic bag.

The panels on the door and rear trim are fastened with little hooks (Fig. 6). They must be cautiously curved backwards to free the veneer trim panels. I heated the hooks with a hair dryer, which reduced the possibility of breakage. I had access to an industrial dryer which was helpful. Repeat the procedure carefully for each trim panel.

Once removed, the aluminum frames must be removed. Although they may look different, all veneer panels are attached the same way. The outer trim consists of eight separate pieces as shown in Fig. 7. To remove the trim, I started with the end piece marked as A. Slightly raise the inner edge with a small screwdriver until it jumps out of the locking hooks as shown within the circles (Fig. 8). Once released from the hooks, piece A can be slid out to the side (Fig 9). Repeat this with pieces B and H. The long top and bottom trims, marked as C and G, will then slide out. Free the trim pieces at the other end marked D, E and F using the same unlocking method.

Now the old veneer is exposed and can be removed. The veneer is glued and can easily be removed with a hair dryer and a spatula. After removal, clean the panels and remove the heavy glue residue with acetone (Fig. 10). I preferred to use a grinder to obtain a clean surface. 

NEXT ISSUE: Staining and reapplying the wood veneer.



ERIC SCHMID #15093 resides near Berne, the capital of Switzerland, and works as Creative Director in a country-wide revered agency of software development. He can be reached at eric@riviera65.com.