

Do your own Dash

By Joe Parlanti

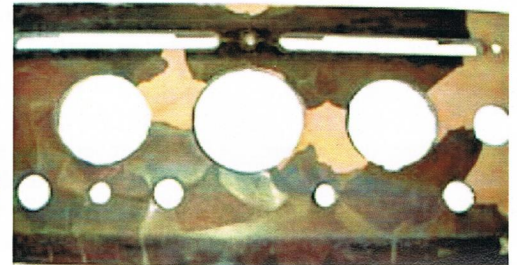
Overview

The materials experts who chose the clear finish used on the Tiger dash apparently assumed it would never be exposed to sunlight because virtually every original dash probably exhibits some cracking of the finish, or worse. A more likely explanation is simply the fact that the finishes used in the mid-'60s were not nearly as UV tolerant as contemporary types.

Depending on the damage to your dash you may decide to replace it with one of the fine solid walnut types that can be purchased through your favorite supplier or restore the one you have. I actually had one of the solid walnut dash's that came with my car but decided to restore the original because I wanted a more authentic looking dash.

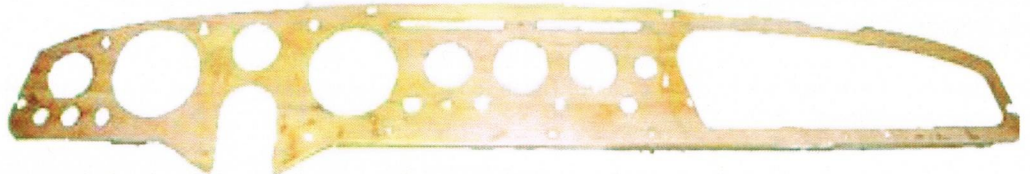
Restoring the dash primarily consists of re-veneering and refinishing. It takes a lot of work but with proper care and time it can look as good or better than the original and last much longer.

Here's a "before" photo of the dash from my car. I had already started to remove some of the veneer as can be seen in the photo. I've never seen a dash that did not have some damage to the veneer and could simply be refinished. Generally stripping the veneer is required.



Stripping the old finish and Veneer

I found that most of the contact cement used by the factory to glue down the veneer had dried and failed on my dash, so it was very easy to chip off of the veneer. If you have to use a wood chisel to get some of the stubborn veneer off, be careful to not gouge the plywood surface. After you've got everything off, give the dash a light sanding to smooth everything out. Here's a shot of the cleaned-up dash.



Acquiring the veneer

The Tiger dash was covered with a burl walnut veneer. There are many types, colors, and styles of veneer available, but I chose the original burl walnut.

One of the best places to get the proper veneer is a mail-order woodworking supplier named Constantine's. Constantine's has a full-fledged catalog available on-line by following this link (www.constantines.com). Burl veneer has virtually no grain and so it has to be backed by either another grained-type of thin veneer or paper. The veneer I used had the paper backing which simplified things considerably. You'll also need good veneer glue or contact cement, cheap foam brush, and a roller to get out the air bubbles.

Veneering the dash

Cut the veneer (scissors work fine) leaving a few inches of clearance all around the dash. Do not attempt to cut any of the holes at this time. Brush the veneer glue onto the dash and the veneer and wait the amount of time specified on the can. Carefully lay the veneer on the dash and work the bubbles out using the veneer roller. Significant pressure should be applied to insure a good bond and no bubbles. Be careful around the edges of the holes to prevent cracking of the veneer. *Continued on page 8...*