



Neal Gapoff and Ron Carpenter

1951 FORD COUNTRY SQUIRE

FABRICATING A FIREWALL PANEL
by Ron Carpenter

About 10 years ago Mary, my wife, told me be home on Thursday. Now Thursday is my day for going and helping Neal Gapoff but mostly just to get lunch. Well anyway I asked her Why? She said that she bought something and I need to be home to receive it. And when I asked her what I was "receiving" she informed me that she bought a car—a 1951 Ford Country Squire. I asked what the story was here. Mind you she is the one that gets me in trouble and that is why we have the 1941 Packard wagon, she wanted one and she says that I am to blame as I gave her the old car bug. Anyway that is my story and I am sticking to it. I now have a 1951 Ford Country Squire that needs everything.

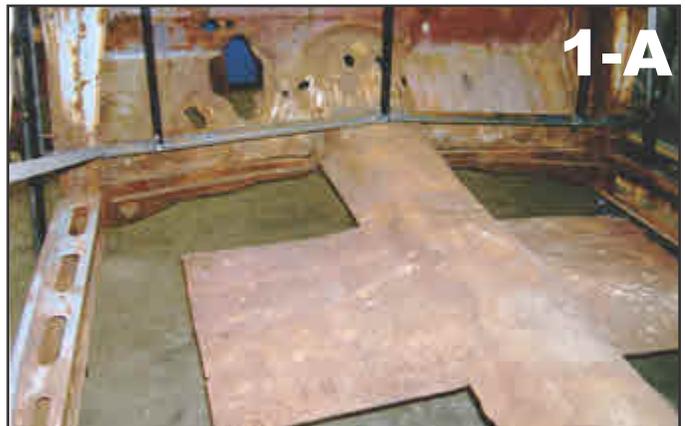
She said it needed "a little work." When it arrived it was in VERY SAD shape and needed everything, nothing that I was already expecting. So we put it in storage for a couple or three years and then I started on the car about 8 years ago. I decided that it needed a front clip rack and pinion disc brakes and a V-8 automatic, you know the usual stuff. The floor boards and the rocker panels were gone—literally, as someone else started to work on the car and began cutting the floor pan and every thing else away.

This article is how I made the Firewall panel because they don't make a panel for a firewall replacement panel with a 3 inch recessed panel and the floor pan modified to cover the bigger transmission hump. So I started from the beginning and made a template and the pictures will tell of how I did it. I had to have the panel installed before I could finish installing the wiring harness and finish all the other dash work that had to be done.



1. This is a picture of the original Ford firewall from the Engine side as it looked before I started on the replacement of the 3 inch recessed firewall.

1 A. This is what I had to start with. You can see that the majority of the floor pan was removed before I even started on the project. I had to replace all the floor boards and the door sills before I could put the transmission hump in after I had the firewall installed. I installed the cross bracing to add support to the body as I had to take out the door jams and rocker panels and the "out rigger" (as I called them) to support the floor.



2. At this point the firewall was installed and I was in progress of installing the transmission hump and tunnel. I modified the transmission cross member to hold the new AOD*.

*Automatic Over Drive Transmission



3. This shows the transmission hump from the inside and just how much I had to do in order to install the engine and transmission in the 1951 Ford. This is one of the reasons that I had to make my own firewall panel.

4. Showing the finished floor pan from the passenger side of the car. I have the door sill area started on and part of the new floor pan.

5. This is the same picture from the drivers side of the car.

6. The recessed firewall came with about two feet of metal on each side of the panel so I cut and spliced it to the rest of the original panel as I was fitting

everything together.

7. Now I am at the heart of this article the making of the interior firewall panel. I started by using panel board material that I get from my buddy Armand, Armand's Auto Upholstery, shop. They use this board when reupholstering and making door panels and such for cars. I cut and spliced it in to sections and started making a pattern of the area. I cut out the holes for the heater control valve, fresh air intake the heater box and the small holes for the heater hoses. It took several attempts to get the pattern to this shape but I had a lot of material to work with. Where the panel had to bend around the side rounded edges of the recessed firewall I "scored the panel" with a sheet rock knife and a straight edge to allow it to bend. Where there was a screw that came from the engine side of the car I punched those holes out at this time. I had to pull the wiring through the hole each time I tested fitting the panel. You will note the line of plastic retainers across the bottom to hold the panel in. I am using an Auveco product called Dashboard retainer and they are available from auto supply and paint stores. The top area in the center where the black is showing will have a piece of board on it and I taped in a new piece there for the final product.



8. Here is a picture from the drivers side and where the wiring harness is coming thru and very visible is the dashboard retainers. These are easily removed as they are plastic and "Barbed" to hold the panel in. The bottom of the panel is cut out to go around the steering column and the fresh air vent. You can see the masking tape to hold one of the sections to the other. Before having it covered I doubled the pattern to make it thicker and more rigid and glued the two pieces together to give it more "body" and I used DOT Fasteners (which are what I use in making my glove boxes) to hold the two pieces together.



9. I have now cleaned up the pattern and taken it to my Upholsterer (Armand's Auto Upholstery in Walnut Creek, CA) and they have covered the complete panel board with black Vinyl and I have used Metal duct tape to secure all the folded edges of the vinyl material to the back of the panel before gluing the Jute insulation to the back of the panel.



10. This is the completed panel showing all the holes that I cut out for the retainers and the jute glued to the back of the panel.



11. This is the completed panel ready to install on the firewall. When I installed the panel on the firewall I used a 3/8 hole saw to add a hole where I needed to run a wire thru the panel and it worked very nicely.

12 This is a picture of why I had to replace the firewall panel. No Flathead for this car! Engine is a 1973 Ford 351 Windsor with a 1990 Mustang with an AOD. I fitted it with a serpentine belt drive modified with a GM alternator adapted to the system.

I hope you enjoyed this '51 Ford Firewall Fabrication article. Look for more in future issues in getting this "Old Squire" back on the road!

