

channel. It should be noted that this repair is more involved on Convertible Bugs. The heater channel in a Convertible is sandwiched between a reinforcement rail and the rest of the body structure. This '67 is a typical repair, the rocker panel on the right side of the car is almost completely missing. The metal that is left is badly pitted and ready to let go the next time the car goes over a railroad crossing.

After carefully checking the door gap alignment, the body jig is set in place. The car in the accompanying photos needed a little adjustment before the jig could be welded in place. To achieve proper door gap alignment, a floor jack and a block of wood were used to place pressure under the front post and spread the load. With the door opened about an inch, the car was jacked up until proper alignment was obtained. This tweak brought the door gap alignment back to factory tolerances. The jig was then welded in, locking the body alignment in the right position. A MIG welder is used to weld the jig in place. It is attached at two places on the chassis, two spots on the front post, and two more locations on the rear quarter panel—all inside the car. Now when the heater channel is cut, the door opening is fully supported and installation of the new part is much easier.

Another helpful tip is to make sure the door striker plate is properly aligned with the latch. This will make getting the door gap right much easier. Pop the door open just enough so that the striker and the latch are not engaged. Then slowly close the door while watching both the body line and the top edge of the door near the drip rail. If the door rides up, the striker post is too high, if it drops down, the striker is too low. Adjust accordingly. This is also a good time to check the condition of both the striker and the latch mechanism.

VW Restorations also replaced both floor pans in this car, so the interior is already gutted and ready to go. Naturally, this will be the first step in most heater channel repairs, you should remove most of the interior to prevent damage and allow easy access. Remember to remove the headliner at the bottom post so it doesn't get torched.

We've included an extensive photo and caption sequence to illustrate this story. The one point that VW Restorations stresses over and over is that this repair takes time and the process shouldn't be rushed. For technical advice, Suplezio is always willing to lend his expertise over the phone. If you are at all hesitant about tackling this one yourself (who wouldn't be) it might be wise to leave the job to a professional shop like VW Restorations and Customs.

Heater channel repair is major surgery. With proper technique a rusty heater channel doesn't have to be a fatal condition for your VW. ●