

Audi C4 Avant Tailgate / Hatch repair

The trim piece on my hatch had the usual squeaks, the sunshade was barely hanging on and the pull down handle had completely broken free. This write up should help with trim disassembly and repair. Some of my write up is copied from other posts. All cardinal directions are as if the hatch is in the closed position.

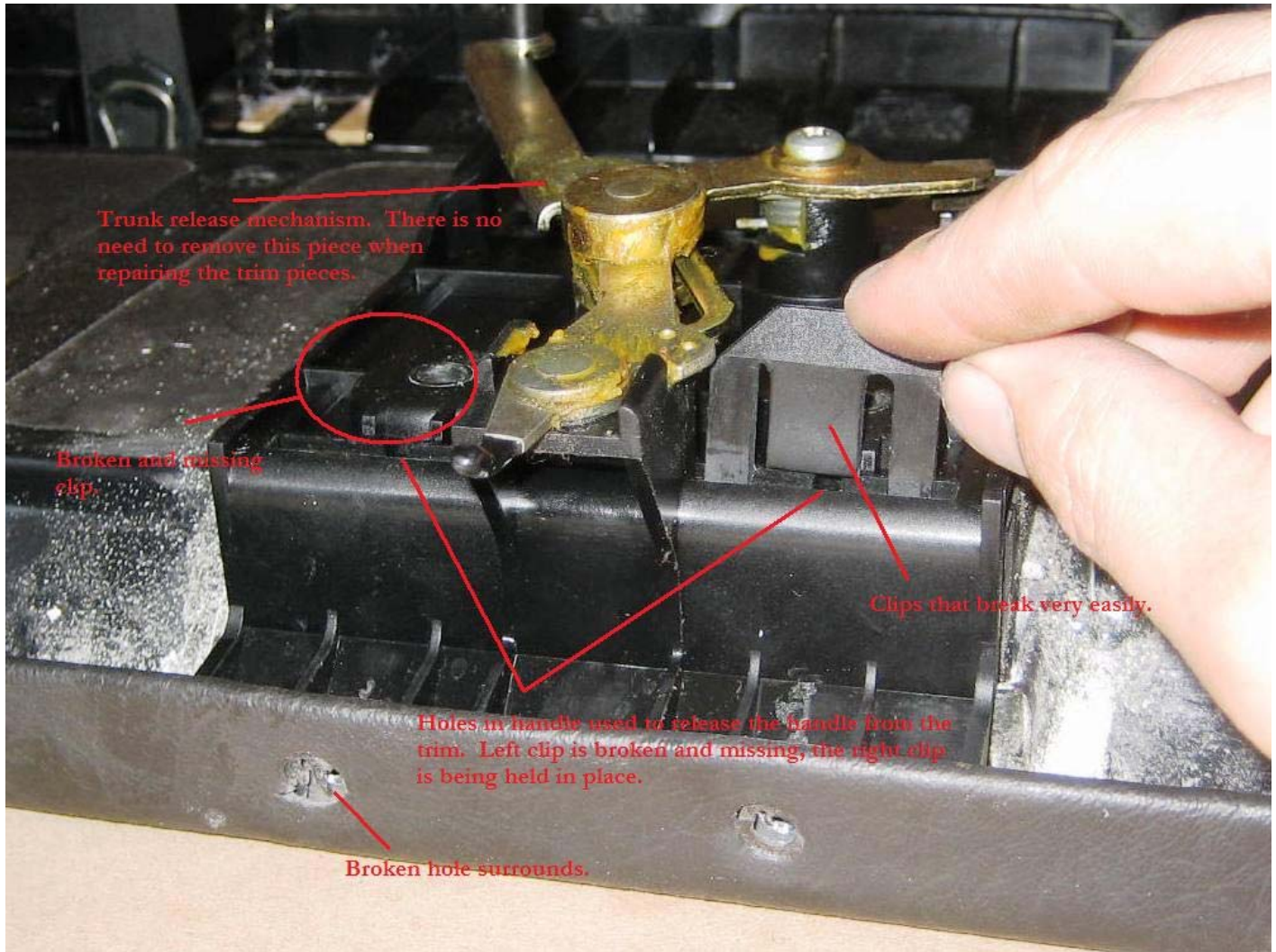
First, remove the two screws holding the two hooks for the sun screen. Then, unsnap the top piece in five locations. Unsnap L and R side plastic pieces by pulling the trim pieces towards center.



The top piece needs to be removed before the side pieces can be removed, and the side pieces need to be removed before the bottom (main) piece can be removed. Remove the 2 black screws underneath the latch and one screw on each side of the bottom panel. Pop out the secret flap type compartments of the lateral parts of the carpeted section with a flat screwdriver. These hidden compartments correspond to an area behind each taillight. Unscrew one hidden screw behind each secret panel (outside upper corner).



Now, at the bottom of the handle trim below the torx screws are two very small holes. Find a thin long object like a nail and push in to the two holes. In the below picture you can just see the holes where the nail will come thru. Use the nail to lever the tab to release the handle trim. YOU DO NOT NEED TO TAKE OUT THE TORX SCREWS IN THE DOOR HANDLE.

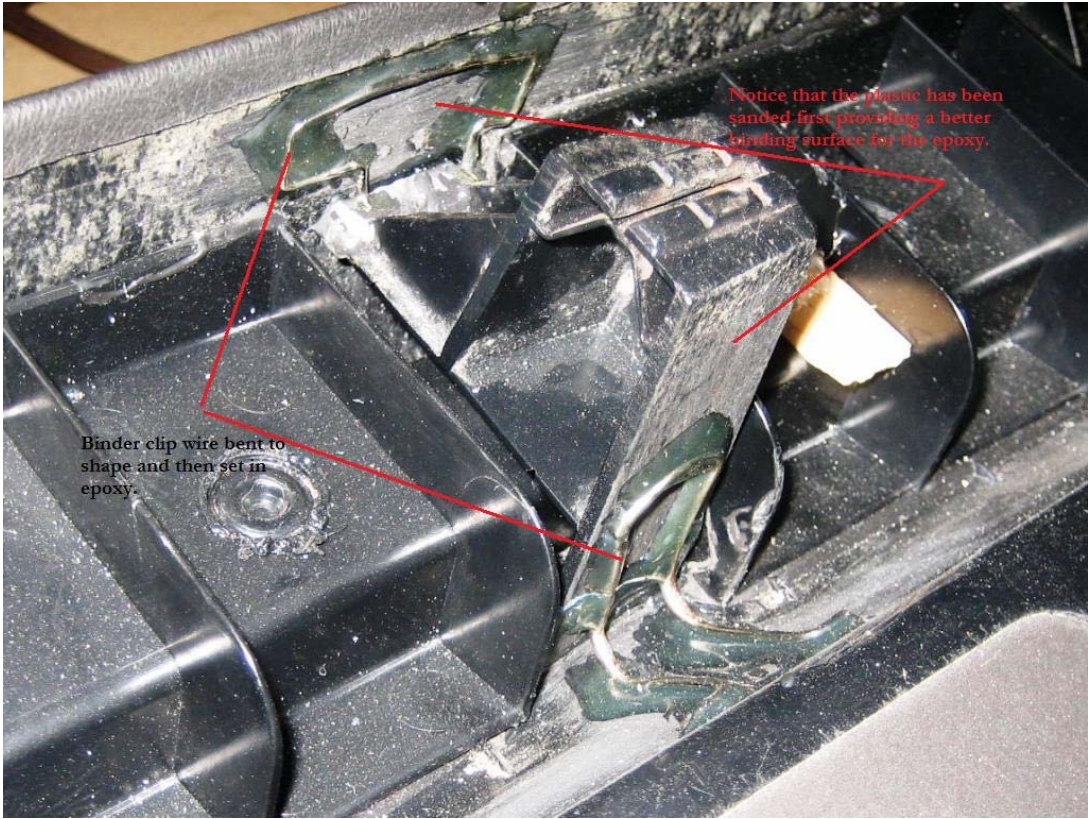


For the final removal I would have a friend help. You can reach into behind the trim through the secret panel and squeeze the clips while pulling on the panel. I would do one side a time. Have your buddy/girlfriend/neighbor hold the side you just freed as you work the other side. Once its all released you can maneuver the piece free from the hatch. Be careful to not damage the outside upper corners that are nearest the glass. Place the trim on a bench and start counting how many clips, tabs, and whatnot you broke in the process.

After careful inspection I found quite a few cracks in the plastic as well as the above mention broken clips and tabs. Instead of just gluing the pieces back together, I decided to reinforce the broken pieces as best I could. I chose the metal wire from paper clips and various sized binder clips to act like rebar in concrete. I also found some plastic epoxy, as opposed to all purpose epoxy. I used fine grit sandpaper to prep the plastic.

Since the epoxy runs, I would glue one area, let it dry, and then flip the piece and glue the other plane.







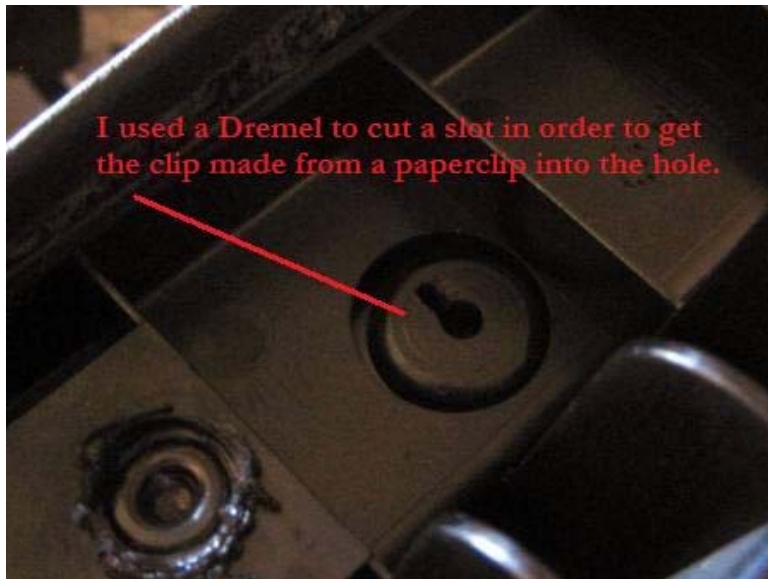
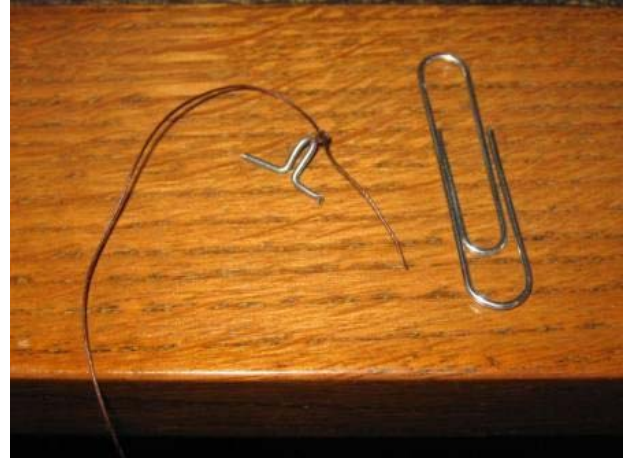
Metal wire that wraps around the broken "screw" to contain.



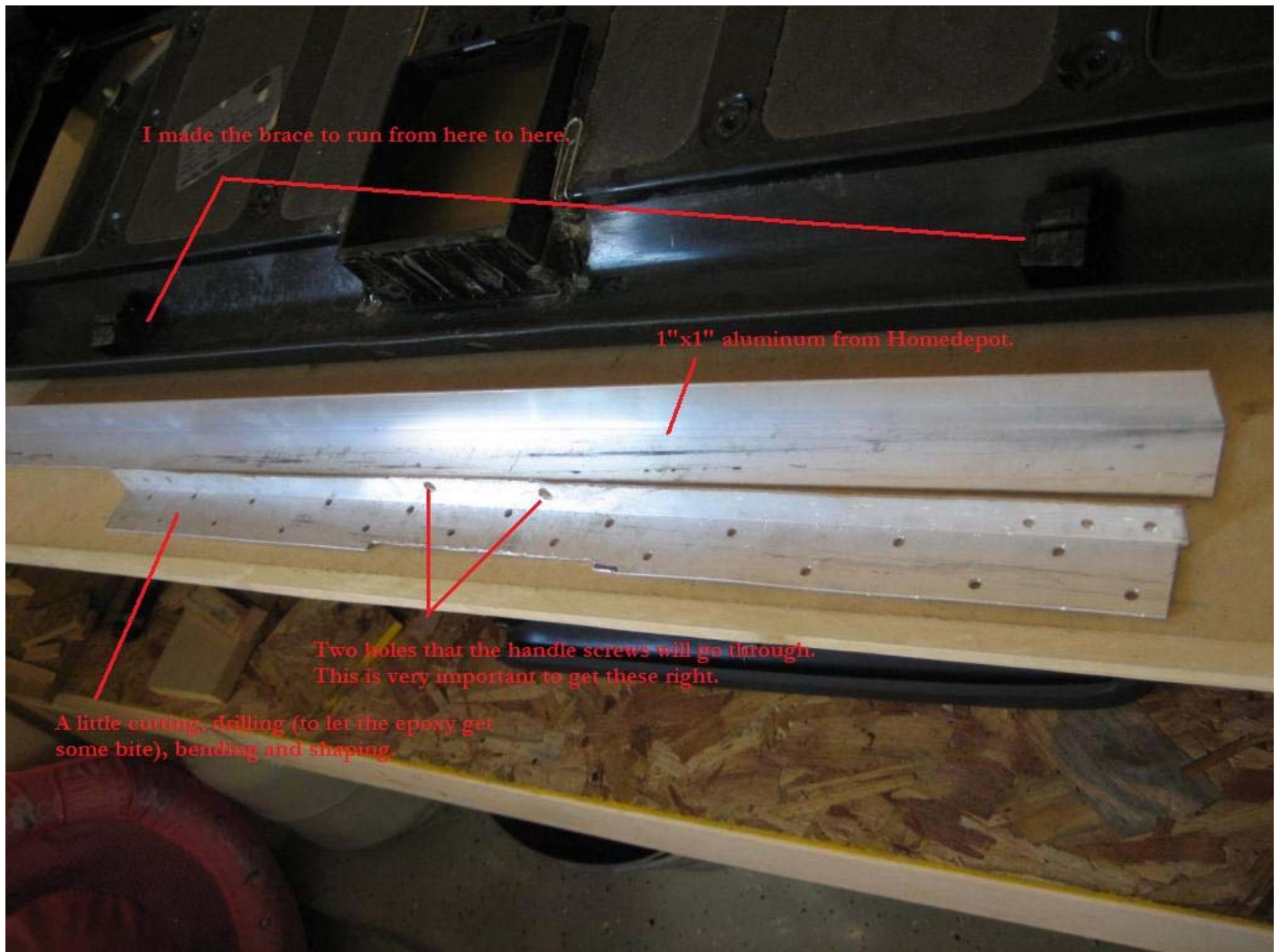
Side trim piece that needed repair.

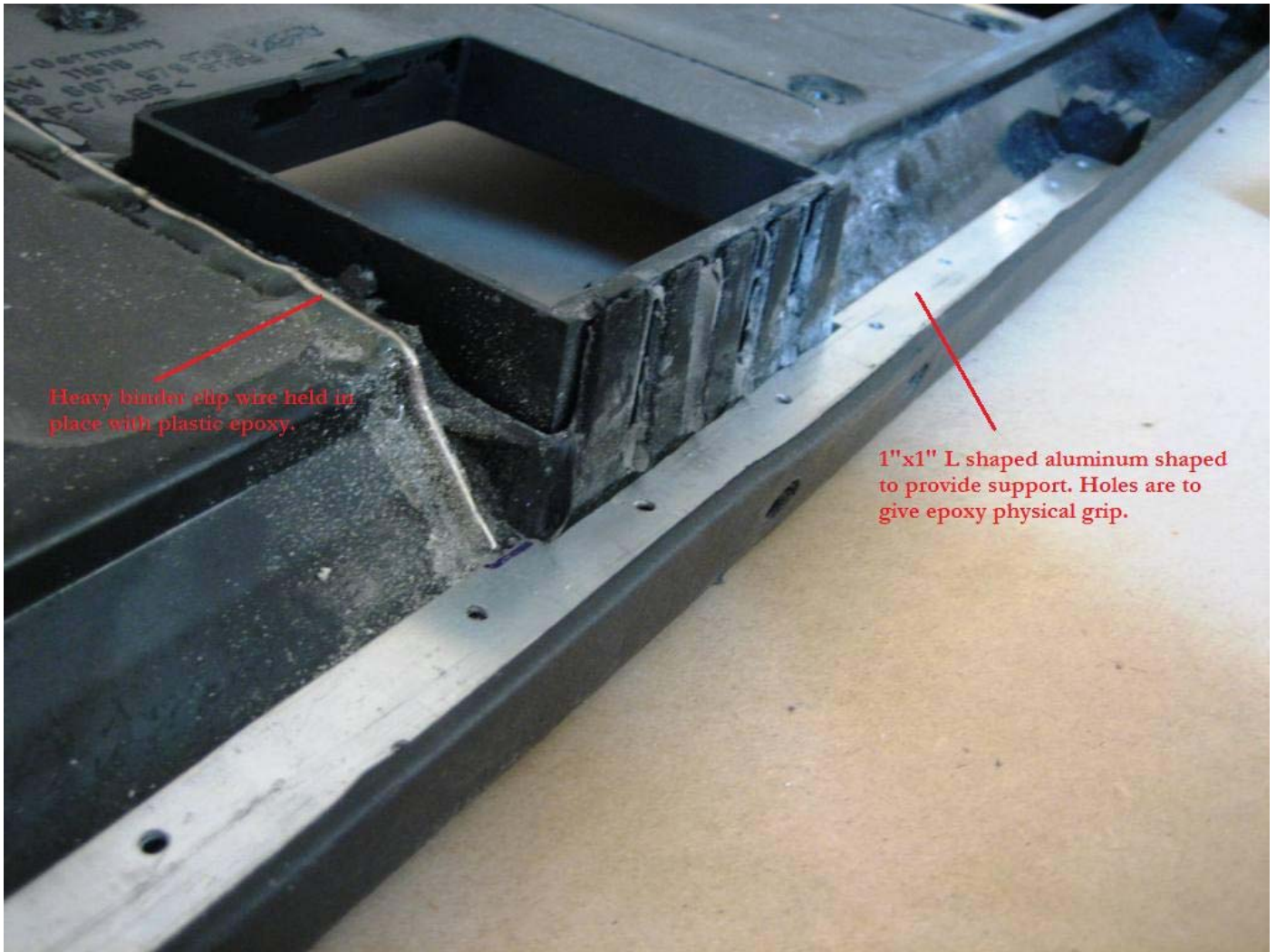
After repairing the various broken plastic clips, it was time to tackle the rattling sun shade and the pull down handle. The sunshade is held in place by a screw on each end and several plastic welds (looks like cigar burns). The plastic near the screws was beyond broke and most of the plastic welds had failed. My fix might be a bit overkill and a little on the ugly side, but it has held strong for the last 6 months.

I think the following three pictures illustrate what I did, but a few words will help. After bending and shaping the metal from a paperclip, I tied some heavy sewing thread onto the piece to make it easier to hold onto. The metal cross bar is from a heavy binder clip (most paper clips are too thin). The pieces of wood are actually wood shims, which allowed me to snug things up. A packet of shims cost around a dollar. A couple of dabs of epoxy holds things in place.



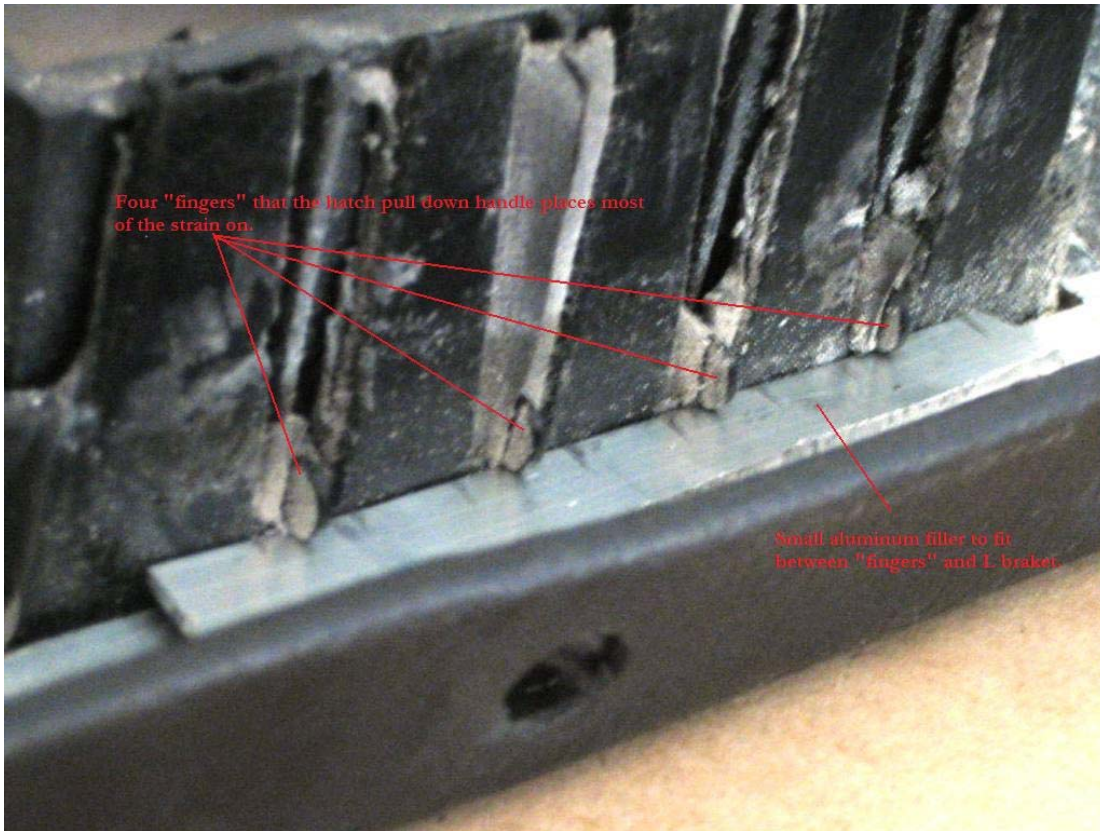
Fixing the pull down handle was the trickiest. Much of the plastic surrounding the handle was in poor shape and both tabs had broken off. Closing the hatch requires pulling down on the handle with a good bit of force. Pulling down on the hatch with a hand on the black exterior paint during a Texas summer is a sure way to burn your hand, so fixing the handle properly was essential. After studying how the handle interacts with the trim and tailgate, I decided that I needed to beef up the area around the handle and spread out the force as much as possible. Some 1 inch by 1 inch L shaped aluminum would do the trick. By having the piece span from the two clips points, and having the two handle screws go through the aluminum, I was able to spread out the force across the entire bottom of the trim. The two screws should bear the majority of the force, but I wasn't taking any chances. I hope to never have to do this job again.





The plastic handle is welded to the main trim at the top of the handle. The bottom has four “fingers” that push on the main trim piece. The main trim piece had several cracks which I epoxy’d and supported with heavy binder clip wire. The four fingers did not quite touch the aluminum bracket, so I placed another shim piece between the L bracket and the fingers. Be careful with the size of this shim, because it could have interference problems when reassembling. Check fitment with the plastic piece that the two screws go into.

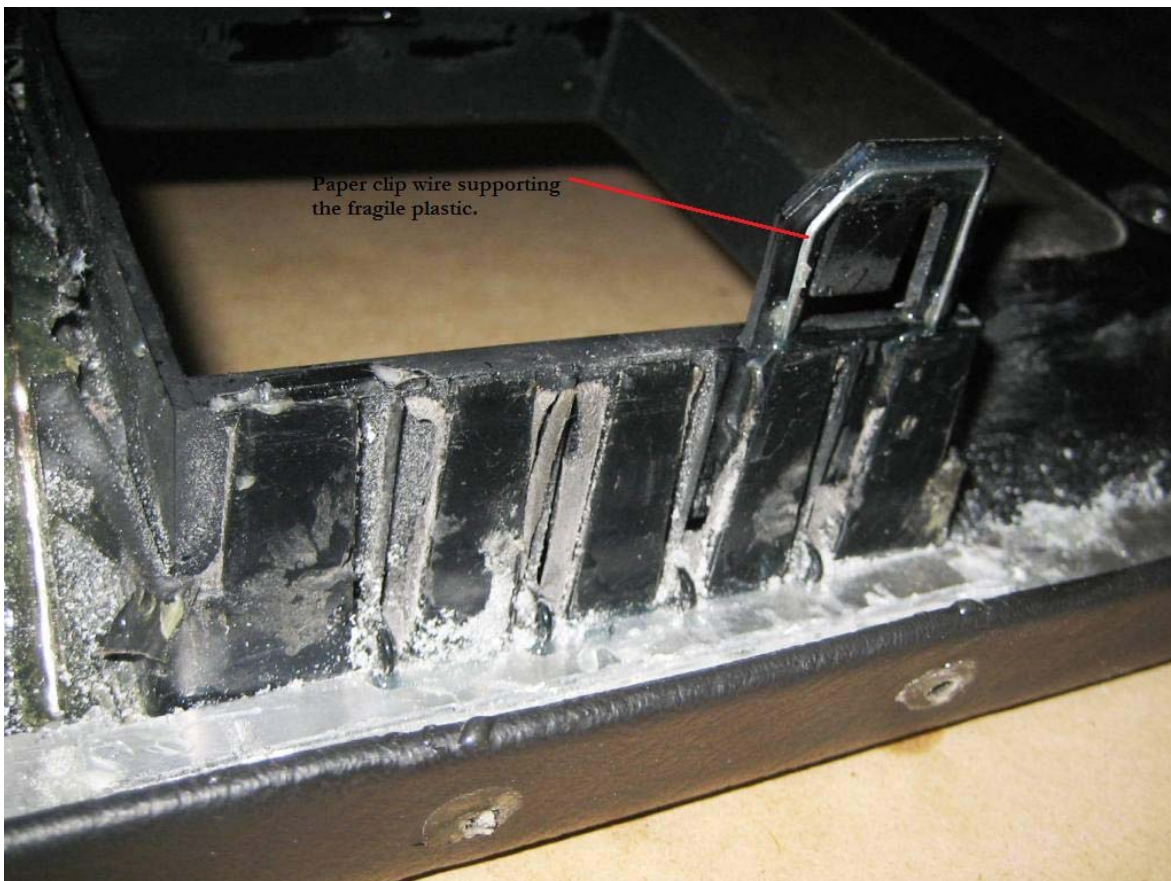
I also filled in the holes where the screws go thru the trim and then re drilled them.



Four "fingers" that the hatch pull down handle places most of the strain on.

Small aluminum filler to fit between "fingers" and L-bracket.

Lastly, I reattached and supported the infamous plastic tabs. Hope this helps.



Paper clip wire supporting the fragile plastic.

Mike McGovern