



# CROSSED FLAGS

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## About the Author

Bob Tuchrelo is the auto body and paint guru responsible for the outstanding body work done on Gene and Sue Manno's '67 silver coupe.

On May 11, 2002, Bob presented the chapter Technical Event during which time those in attendance saw him in action as he conducted a body work seminar in his garage. The subject of that was the work being done on Gene Manno's '57 Nomad.

Since that time Bob has written numerous columns for our newsletter. He is a true craftsman, has a wealth of information, and is willing to share the minutest details to help others achieve a measure of success in their projects. Thanks, Bob!

## ■ Repairing a Paint Chip

by **Robert Tuchrelo**, *Nationally Recognized Auto Body Technician*

The biggest question at the Corvette's 50th Anniversary Celebration was simply:

***"What do you recommend for repairing a paint chip?"***

**STEP 1:** First of all--Thanks for your input. Here's what I recommend:

Identify the chip. What I mean is, clean the area around the chip thoroughly. If you're not familiar with using wax and grease remover (also known as bug and tar remover), try our suggestion in step two.

**STEP 2:** Consider putting dish or laundry detergent diluted with water into an empty spray bottle as an alternative surface cleaner. Yes, these products will suffice as an adequate alternative for removing the majority of the surface contaminants, including wax. Figure one tablespoon (concentrated soap) for every eight ounces of water. Soak the area with plenty of solution, work the surface with an old terrycloth (i.e., an old bathroom towel will work terrific for all the steps you'll perform in this demonstration). If you're using a wax and grease remover: Follow the manufacturer's recommendations for application on the back of the label. After wiping the entire surface dry, examine the area carefully for any formation of rust.

***"What is it I'm looking for?"***

Good question. Almost always, if rust is present: You'll see more than likely a dark-colored base in the chipped area. On the contrary, if the primer-sealer (paint's undercoat) wasn't damaged, the base-color should appear to be more in the gray-scale range of the color spectrum (i.e., light-gray to gray-green), especially for OEM (original equipment manufacturer) finishes. If you're not sure that the area of concern is even metal to begin with: Try placing a refrigerator magnet wrapped in tissue paper onto the surface where the chip resides. If it falls off, you can continue on to step three.

Evidence of rust: Look for a brownish cloud, which will propagate around the chip's outer perimeter. This is more detectible on lighter colors, but nevertheless still visible. If in fact, this is the case for your chip, you'll need to perform some additional steps in order to remove the rust, which is a must before continuing.

If you believe rust is present!:

- Examine the chipped area even closer.
- Check the immediate outer perimeter of the chip for any raised defect beneath the painted surface. If present, are they itchy in appearance or blistering (loose edges)? If so, read the detour comment, or else check our web site to read our comments on what we recommend for rust treatment.

If the outer perimeter is in fact raised or blistered more than one-sixteenth of an inch: It falls beyond the scope of our topic. This type of damage requires a rust removal procedure. Most likely it was just a paint chip, but due to the extent of impact, the undercoat (primer-sealer) was removed along with the paint, leaving the sheet-metal exposed to the elements, allowing unwanted rust to form.

**STEP 3:** Fill a spray bottle with plain tap water. Flush the area thoroughly. You want to neutralize the surface from any possible residues [i.e. rust inhibitors (converters), detergents, etc].

**STEP 4:** With your terrycloth: Rub the surface area of the chip with a medium-cut rubbing compound. Medium-cut refers to the aggressive properties of the compound. What you're hoping to accomplish: Remove all impregnated staining in the top coat. This will renew the surface, so your touch-up color won't look so much newer (brighter) than the original paint. This will also create a little tooth (adhesive surface) for the touch-up color. If you don't currently have any rubbing compound: Toothpaste will work just fine for this stage of the demo.

**STEP 5:** To further your conditioning for the touch-up color: Take an eraser and erase the center of the chip. This will simulate what a small piece of sandpaper would do, but without any additional damage to the area.

**STEP 6:** Now go ahead and rinse, then wipe the area dry. Color is coming up!

**STEP 7:** We'll need a really expensive applicator for our touch-up color. Like NOT! Go ahead and dig up an old pack of matches. I highly recommend using this tool, yes--this tool, instead of whatever applicator your touch-up color may have provided you with. Why, go ahead and remove a match from the pack and turn it upside down while I explain.

**STEP 8:** Most touch-up applicators (similar to nail polish), tend to apply way too much material at one time; exactly what we don't want here. The soft end of the match stick applies just the right amount of paint for one coat. It performs two functions simultaneously. It becomes an excellent applicator, and a sponge at the same time (limiting your application of color). Every time you apply a coat of touch-up: Grab another match stick. They're only good for one coat!

**STEP 9:** If you didn't feel rust was a concern for your application: Go ahead and dab away. Wait! There is a catch. I suggest one dab a day. "What!" One dab a day will do yea! Many reasons apply here, but trust me. Usually two dabs is all that's required. I'll explain why you might want to apply more coats later in this demonstration, but don't!

I suggest having a quarter pint of your car's color mixed by a professional retail auto body supplies store. The paints are more expensive, but much closer to your actual car's color. Yes, if you do have your color professionally mixed, then most likely the color will require some additional additives. Ask the sales person to assist you in acquiring exactly what materials you'll need. But if this all sounds a little too scary, go for the little touch-up bottle (acquire from your local dealer). They require no additional additives. If you supply them (dealer) with your VIN (vehicle identification number), they should hook you up just fine with the proper color match.

**STEP 10:** Day three. Yea, two days allocated for application, one day to let it all set up (dry). OK, not so pretty yet! Notice how the area still looks indented (chipped), and now with this raised gob of paint surrounding the whole mess. What's up! Don't be fooled, you're getting close. Believe me, you filled in the chip. This is why some people will add way more paint than they really need, which will cause our little demo to fail.

**STEP 11:** If you have a carpenter's knife, great. Remove one of the single-edge razor blades (new only) and continue to mark one side with either tape or a permanent marker. If you don't have a new single-edge razor blade, you'll need to obtain one. Hardware or automotive stores can help out with this one. Please, it must be new, or you'll create more damage than you originally started out with.

**STEP 12:** Don't be nervous, herein lies the secret! Take your water bottle and wet the surface. Now, simply slide (drag with no pressure) the razor blade over the chip. Start a good inch above the touch-up (chip) and continue all the way through, going beyond the touch-up (chip) about an inch. Always start and finish in the same direction. **DO NOT TURN THE RAZOR BLADE OVER.** Once you start with the marked side facing up, continue to use the razor on the same side until completion. If you drop the razor, throw it away and mark up another one before continuing. Now keep adding water while you stroke over the chip. Amazingly, you'll notice all that excess material around the outside of the chip slowly becoming level with the surrounding surface, and you're not even damaging any of that surrounding color. When you feel you successfully removed (leveled) the excess material, you can put away the razor blade. You can also open your eyes again, just kidding. There's a reason we use this razor blade technique, trust me. Actually don't trust anybody, you can do it!

**STEP 13:** After you dry the surface, you should notice a slight dulling around the area where you performed the razor blade technique. Don't be concerned. If you followed step twelve carefully, you'll be smiling in just a few. Now apply that medium-cut rubbing compound to your terrycloth; sorry, tooth paste probably won't cut it this time around. With your towel in hand and compound over surface: Rub away. That is it!

If you're happy with the appearance of the surface, stop rubbing. If not, continue on you animal! Yes, get that water bottle out again so you can see what's up...

**STEP 14:** I hope this was worth your time. I do suggest that you don't fix your first chip in the eye level arena. I mean, fix something where it's not so noticeable, in

case you need to get a little experience under your belt. Once you're comfortable, go for it! I did mention in step nine, that you might want to apply more than two coats of paint to the chip. This could be true if you feel the chipped surface is still lower than the surrounding area after completing all the steps suggested in this demonstration. If so, start over at step 8 until you obtain the results you want. Also, if your color is a base-coat clear-coat: first apply the base, then perform step 9 before applying the clear coat. One coat should suffice the base, and then the rest should all be clear.

There are many products available for removing\converting minor and major surface rust. Consult your local professional automotive supplies store for available products. I don't want to mention any name brands, but look for a rust converter that washes off with water. Very adequate for this demo. Converters change rust into a black, protective coating; the non-reactive material simply washes away with water. Always follow label instructions; use in a non-conspicuous location while testing. Rust converters shouldn't require additional primer, but metal conditioners will require a primer-surfacer before applying any color. If you do apply a primer: Perform the technique in **step 3** before you apply any color...Back to **step 3**.

Best of luck — **Robert Tuchrelo**, *Nationally Recognized Auto Body Technician*