

Refreshing the Turk's Interior

by Doug Bailey, member '58 Cadillac Owners' Club (*right*)

Wolf-man pushed the huge sedan hard through a right turn onto the not-so-gritty streets of Sarasota. Naturally, she swung wildly left, so I hung on to the roof rail for dear life. Wolf gave it heavy right foot. She sat down and roared, 310 horses pushing 5,000 pounds through the gears. Composing my thoughts (okay, I was positioning for a lower purchase price), I shouted over her throaty exhausts, "Wolf, this rubber's breaking up in my hand. It's gotta go, and SOON!" Eyes wide and hands clutching the Turk's 18" wheel, Wolf shouted back, "Naght eef you nevaair drive her in der RAIN!"



Sold American! I was now the third owner of Wolf Rudolph's turquoise and white 1958 Extended Deck sedan (Model 6239E). The Turk (short for *turquoise*) is a straight, black-tagged California car, all original, with turquoise (28) and alpine white (12) paint, turquoise and black Moroccan interior (36) with aqua headliner and dash paint. She's got four doors – which makes her a driver. She is not a convertible, not even a Coupe de Ville. And not all that rare: number 14,571 of 20,952 made that year, according to the build sheet. Not

highly desirable Caddie to collectors, but exactly like the one I learned to drive in back in '65. So, two more decisions for day one: I *would* replace her rubber and refresh her interior, but I *would not* try to restore her completely – at least not now.

I had never re-done an interior. But I'll try anything once. Here's how I did it, in case you're next. First off, note that most guys would rather hoist the engine with a cotton rope and grind the block with sandpaper than mess with an interior. When I mentioned my plan to replace the headliner to Denny Sanford my interior guru, he laughed out loud. "You don't have enough hours in a weekend, man..." Then he said, ominously, "Better you than me, Hoss." He knew what I was about to find out: Most cars of the 'Fifties have headliners hung from four to six steel rods. The '58 Cadillac sedans used nine. *Standard of the World...* To me that was just a few more kinks to get wrinkled up and ironed out.

The seats: The front seat came out with four ½" bolts on each side. Bolts and brackets went straight into labeled baggies, because it was two months before they would go back in. My son and I lugged the seat to Denny's workshop. It is a beast... Denny fabricated two new springs, installed new foam cushioning and re-sewed the



separated seams on the corners. Miraculously, he made the ripped seam in the middle of the vinyl upholstery disappear. The \$375 Denny charged me was a bargain; no way I could have done this. I installed a new ground line for the cigar lighter then put the seat aside for later. The back seat was good to go, as is.

The carpet: I ordered the molded carpet replacement from Stock Interiors online (\$157, and two pads at \$50 each). With the seats out I spent a day removing the door sills and original carpet. It took a while to wire-brush the remaining horsehair padding from the floors, where it had been glued since 1957.



I expected to find a treasure trove of nearly fifty-year-old geegaws. Instead I found only a '64 penny, some screws, and a bunch of hairpins in the rear passenger-side corner, no doubt left from the original owner. Turk's paperwork says that had been Sylvia Goldstein, a patron of the musical arts in the LA area. She had ordered it delivered to LA in '58, then sold it to Wolf in 1962. I also found an original Cadillac medallion, which had been there from the beginning I suspect. That's it on the Joey Jesser key chain at left.

I inspected the floorboards for rust. Finding none I installed the new pad with scissors and duct tape. You know, it's not only great for hanging pictures and fixing the plumbing, it's great for the seams in a Cadillac's floor insulation! Next, the front carpeting. It's simply a trim and fit operation, using scissors and a razor knife and being careful not



to trim too much at a time. I worked from the center tunnel toward the back seat, then out to each side, duct-taping it to hold it as I worked. No glue! There are clips under the dash to clamp the leading edges. The toughest tasks? Locating the hole for the dimmer switch and working the carpet over the accelerator pedal.



Installing the rear carpet was much harder because the molded piece was not well fitted to the deep wells of the rear floor. I had to cut in places I wish I had not, and I had to use spray-on upholstery glue in order for it to conform to the wells. Once I had the rear pieces in place I could see why Cadillac used separate pieces in the original install:

The rear carpet did not meet the front piece under the front seat and over at the sides near the doors. My solution? I ordered more carpet at \$89 from Stock Interiors to cover under the front seat over to the doors. It supplied enough extra for trim and for the trunk.



I had to have a shoe repair shop sew on vinyl edging (\$20 from Stock Interiors) for two small pieces fitted to the center door posts, down near the floor. (I glued this piece in instead of removing the old pieces from the posts; the old carpeting was sewn to the vinyl of the original.) While I was at it I had the shoe guy trim out the carpet for the trunk using the leftover edging. I polished and re-installed the door sills, careful not to cause the carpet to run as I inserted the screws.

The package shelf: I took a piece of the new carpet and edging to a local Benjamin Moore Paint Store. They prepared a quart of turquoise oil-based paint for the shelf (\$20). I masked off the glass, weather seal and seatback and brushed on two coats of thinned paint. It takes time to get the straw-like material well coated, but it's worth the extra effort. I think this little change looks great.

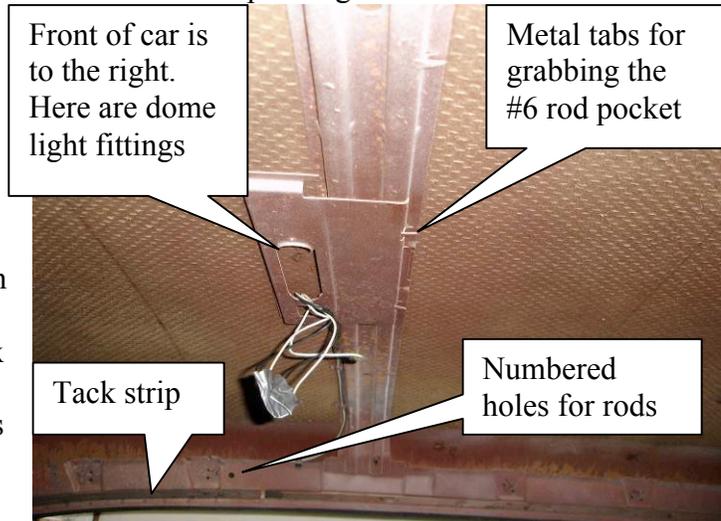
The headliner: I took a day just to look it over and to think about what I was about to do. For \$250 I had ordered a pre-sewn header from SMS Auto Fabrics of Canby, OR. This was a perfect match for the old material, down to the pattern in the fabric. (Stock Interiors could not match it.) You can see below how discolored the old header was, even though it was still intact. It took me about a day to remove all the interior brightwork, carefully tagging and bagging the pieces. What was left was a fiberboard tack strip that ran the perimeter of the compartment. Cadillac's builders used narrow 1/4"-long staples every quarter inch or so



to hold the liner at its edges. I pulled the liner away from the tack strip with a pair of needle-nose pliers. Most of the tack strip stayed in place, but I had to glue a few pieces back in. (I could not find a replacement for this strip, so I was lucky mine stayed in good shape.)

As I removed the nine steel rods I worked from back to front, labeling each with a marker on duct tape (#1-#9). I marked each hole on the body with the corresponding rod's number. There are

multiple holes for each rod, and getting the right rod back in the right holes is crucial for an easy installation. As the liner dropped down I withdrew the rods from the liner. Later I cleaned them up before inserting them into the rod pockets of the freshly ironed, new headliner – in order. The roof's insulation was nearly perfect, so I had nothing to fix there. The rubber on the front and rear glass was perfect as well. This is the time to fix those if they need it.



Installing the new liner: I learned that rod #6 is the key. You start there, in the middle! It has no hooks on its ends; it just fits into a slot in the roofing, and is held in place with six metal tabs that grab the #6 rod pocket. Once all the rods were in the pockets of the new headliner I measured the distance from the center line on the roof to the first tab-grabber on either side and transferred that measure to the #6 pocket on the liner. I then started by hanging #6, which is right behind the front seat and just ahead of the dome light. The entire liner can hang there from the two central tabs on #6, hanging down behind the front seat while you get the tabs hooked into the #6 pocket, grabbing the #6 rod. From there you work your way forward to #7, #8 and #9 – then backward to #5, #4, #3, #2 and #1. Be sure you are working with the liner centered on the rod, inserting each rod into its proper hole in the body. Each rod will start out flexed and out of vertical. Work them forward or back until they fit into place; mine sort of snapped into a proper slot. When all nine rods are in their holes you'll have the front and rear flaps hanging down, and the sides will all be loose, waiting for you to draw out the wrinkles and insert the staples.

First the wrinkles, which are caused by not being fully pulled down to the edges: You have to use a knife to reach up to each rod end and snip a notch into the rod pocket so that the liner can come down closer to where the rod rests in its hole in the body. Be careful! A slip

will cost you your \$250 investment. Work one rod at a time, both ends, and complete this step for all nine rods. When that's done go back over all nine again, snipping where you find wrinkles and pulling the liner down on the sides toward the rod's installation holes.

Now, for the final fastening: I used an Arrow stapler with 1/4" light staples. They are wider than the originals, but they worked fine. They will penetrate the tack strip and hit the metal roof, bending back and securing them firmly. Begin at the front, in the middle, ahead of the rearview mirror's mounting holes. Spray upholstery glue (lightly) along the tack strip. Then staple the center of the liner to the tack strip, working toward the sides. You'll have to nip and tuck around the corners of the windshield. Go to the rear window and repeat this process. Now, work up both sides: spray, pull, tack. Give it a chance to rest a while as you admire your work. You might have to go back and tighten a few wrinkles. Then reinstall the interior brightwork. Lookin' good! Installing the headliner and trim took me about six hours to accomplish.



The sun visors: These are a challenge. The original pieces have a single swath of fabric wrapped around the fiberboard core, stitched along their margins to two pieces of matching vinyl, and all fitted to the visor with a vinyl edging – which is machine-sewn. The good news: SMS provided plenty of extra material from the headliner at no charge! The bad: I had to find someone who could do this complicated sewing with a heavy sewing machine. A home machine was not heavy-duty enough. I tried the shoe repair guy, but

settled on doing it myself by hand.

The interior brightwork: The overhead light has five wires: a ground and a positive and a negative for each of two lamps in the housing. Mine were fine without re-fitting the plugs. I screwed the trim pieces from the roof line, windshield and rear glass to boards to keep them from being bent or damaged as I worked on them. I decided not to have them polished or re-chromed profes-



sionally at this time. If I ever want to restore the Turk I can do that then. So, I just cleaned and polished as best I could, using soap and water, cleaning wax, a buffing wheel on a portable drill, a Dremel tool with a wire brush fitting, and fine-gauge steel wool. There was some pitting, but nothing a good re-chroming wouldn't cure one day. I tried to find new stainless or chrome screws, but no luck, so I just polished the old ones and re-used them.

New weather-stripping: I ordered my replacements from SoffSeal, who reps Steele products, but who convinced me they were less expensive. I began with the roof rails (\$152). The old ones came off with a putty knife and elbow grease. Moving slowly I popped the old wire retainers and stripped as I went. Removing the residue was fairly easy with household cleaners. (I didn't use solvent as planned.) The new rubber went on as planned, using 3M adhesive for this purpose from AutoZone (\$3.00). I used the yellow glue, but wish I had found the black. Just lay in a yard or so at a time, pressing the plastic pins in to replace the wire fasteners.

Next, I did the rear doors' weather stripping (\$122). The rubber was mostly fastened with wire tabs; only about four inches near the doors' locks were glued. But the lower edges of all the Turk's doors (below) were beginning to show some light rust around the holes



where the rubber seals are mounted. I took the time to wire bush the mounting holes with the Dremel, swabbed on and wiped off naval jelly to neutralize the rust, then sprayed on Rustoleum before installing the new rubber. It wasn't a great fix, but this is an unseen location and it may hold off the need for body repairs a little while longer.

The front edges of the rear windows have seals that seat with the front windows. On the Turk these were hard, crispy and breaking away. I had replacement parts from SoffSeal (\$22/pair). The rubber has a metal strip embedded, and getting the old piece out of its slot was hard. The builders had crimped the slot with a hammer blow. The only way to reverse this was to destroy the old rubber by working the crimp with a screwdriver until it released the old fitting. I sprayed the new rubber insert with WD40 and it slid right back in. I'll re-crimp IF it ever slides downward. By the way, Steele's Lock Pillar Fillers (\$28) are the wrong parts for this car; so don't bother.





Finally, I replaced the long seals on the front doors (\$146). The old rubber comes off with a putty knife, and all surfaces are cleaned as before, including rust treatment for the lower edges of the doors. But the leading edge of the doors is hard to access for removing and re-installing the weather stripping – at least for big old hands like mine. You’ll need a long screwdriver. One more thing: The Steele products were too long by about two inches, which wouldn’t be a big issue except that both ends are finished. There are metal screw hold-

ers at the front end, and an angled bracket at the door’s lock end. That forced me to snip out a 2” section at an angle up near the door locks, where I figured it would wreak less havoc with leaking. I glued it there and will monitor for leaks.

I also installed new weather stripping to the trunk (\$25) and new under-hood insulation (\$45).

On the road again! This great winter project gave me something constructive to work on in the garage for two months while adding to my enjoyment of the Turk. The interior is MUCH brighter, and the seals should hold if I am ever caught out in DER RAIN!

Total cost:

Carpet:	\$ 367.00
Headliner:	\$ 250.00
Weather strip:	\$ 515.00
Paint, glue, misc:	\$ 100.00
Denny’s seat fixes:	\$ 375.00
TOTAL	\$1,607.00

Total Labor:

Carpet:	16 hours
Headliner	12 hours
Metal Trim	4 hours
Weather strip	8 hours
Misc, cleanup	8 hours
TOTAL	48 hours

