

IT'S SUMMER TIME!!

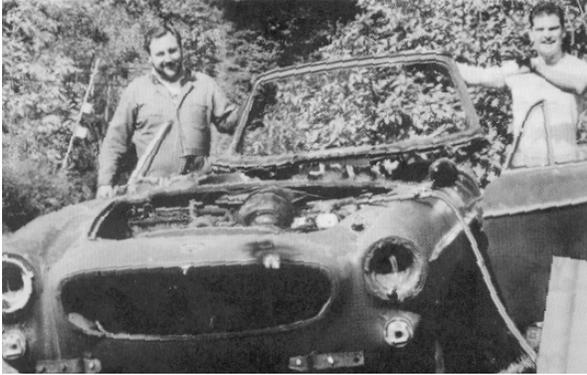
Here are the some pictures of the work during the conversion. Before I began the conversion, I had to make a decision whether to spend my money on a new car, or to restore and convert an 1800 into a convertible. Since I wasn't impressed with the styling of the new cars, and given the fact that a new sportier convertible was out of my price range-- you can see I went for the conversion. Since I have owned at least four other 1800's so far in my lifetime, I find they are easy to work on. Besides, there are people in this car club that are willing to help you if you get into trouble, so the decision was a natural one.

I will say that the car you are looking at is an exact replica of a "Volvoville" conversion. This car started out as a coupe. I bought this car at the end of 1991 from the original owner from New Jersey with only 152,000 miles. Overall, the car was in good condition, but it needed new rocker panels. I also realized that the original owner spent quite a bit of money having the frame rails and floor boards replaced a few months prior to the sale of the car. As soon as I picked up the car, I drove it straight to my garage and replaced the engine with another one that I completely rebuilt. The engine was bored out to 2130cc and it had a street performance camshaft. The cylinder head was modified with SS oversize valves, bronze valve guides and double valve springs.

On the first day of driving with the rebuilt engine, the rear end started to make some grinding noises. Upon examining the rear, I found that the "guts" of the rear was cracked. So, by the end of one driving day, the gears inside the rear end didn't have any teeth left. After a few weeks, I found a low mileage rear end and installed it. I continued to drive the car in its original condition until the beginning of the summer of 1992.

That's when I found out about an original 1965 "Volvoville" 1800 that was for sale in Rhode Island. The car had only 44,000 original miles. However, this original owner had some front end suspension problem, and parked the car on a grassy field and left it there. Well, everyone knows that if you leave a car on a grassy field over time, the car will start to rust from underneath. When I picked up the car, it was in very poor condition. We couldn't open the doors because the car was so rusted (had we managed to, however, the car would have collapsed in the middle!). As you can see from the pictures, in my opinion, this car was beyond repair. Everything needed to be replaced(!). but the car WAS a convertible and it WAS complete, not to mention the seller, who, at one point wanted to restore it so a lot of spare parts were on hand. We negotiated a price and I came with my friends along with a U-Haul trailer to pick it up.

Since I lacked the space to keep a "junker" for a long time, we torched the convertible pieces off the car and salvaged some good pieces, and junked the rest. The reason we torched the convertible pieces out of the car is so we could have all the dimensions and duplicate the cuts in my 1970 1800. Once all the pieces were off the car the project began (that was almost two years ago). The first part that was done to my 1970 1800 was to have the new rocker panels put on, as well as reinforce the frame before cutting the roof. To reinforce the car, a 1/4" thick by 1-1/2" wide steel plate was welded throughout the length of the inner rockers; just like the original convertible. Also, a 1/2" thick by 1-1/2" wide plate was welded from the front to the rear of the jacking points.



After that, the roof was cut using those pre-cut pieces of the original convertible as a guide. Once the roof was cut, new metal was welded and shaped along the top of the windshield and along the back. As the pictures show, the rest of the body work on the car was done. After the car had been housed in my friend's garage for more than a year (we originally planned to do this work in about four weeks) the car was finally ready to be painted. We towed the car to the shop and 12 weeks later the car was painted.

Now the car was ready for assembly. Next was to put the top on. Well, the original pattern for the top is still available and using the original bows. I had a local upholstery shop install the top. Also, I bought two leather hides and had both the front and back seat recovered in white leather. Throughout the fall and winter, working on the car in a rented garage that was barely big enough to fit a 1800 and without electricity or heat, I proceeded to put the car back together.

I can probably say that this car is fairly new, since practically everything in and on the car was replaced. There still some work left to be done on the car; for instance, I would like to change the color of the door panels to white and install a stereo inside. Was the car worth the aggravation? YES. Would I do it again? Not at this moment. Having not driven this car for almost two years now, I know I am going to enjoy driving the car this summer. Maybe over the winter months, I will rebuild another motor that will accept a turbo.

TOM BADERTSCHER



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