

FEATHERWEIGHT CASE RESTORATION

By Barbara Lewis

The first thing I did was to check out what was going need to be replaced on the case. I did not have to replace the clasp or latches on any case but they can be replaced if needed and not working. I found the least damaging way to remove the hinges or spring latches was to drill out the rivets and not pry them out. Some of the rivets are bent over and will remove a lot of the wood so drilling them made the restoration easier. I was able to get all the original replacement parts either from the Singer Featherweight store or on eBay if they didn't have them available.

To refurbish the exterior of the case, [the tutorial on the Singer Featherweight site is very complete and thorough](#). I did wear nitrile gloves so I wouldn't be shoe polish stained or black marker marked. If you get any marker on the metal hinges, etc., a cotton swab and nail polish remover took it off for me. I had some corners on the one case that were completely worn off in small areas (less than ¼ inch size) and there wasn't any fabric to re-glue. I used black 3-D or puffy paint to fill in it, smooth it out and let it dry. It took a couple of times to get it even but it did it. I did all my repairs, regluing the Tolex (exterior) and let everything dry for a day before I used the black marker and shoe polish.

If you are going to be doing any fabric removal, either the Tolex or the lining, I would recommend wearing a mask, the kind you can get in the paint department at Lowes or Home Depot. The fibers are very fine and the age of the case and glue can be irritating to your nose and sinuses. I strongly recommend wearing one if you are doing any sanding so you don't inhale any of it. The sanding dust is very fine and irritating.

I removed the side accessory tray and oil can holder. I sanded, primed and repainted them with spray paint (and the screw heads) so they would be clean to put back in the case. To remove the Tolex, just start pulling it off. I used an x-acto knife to scribe around the latches and handles first so it came off cleanly. A pair of tweezers or needle nose pliers helps to grab the edges of the lining and some of the hard to reach areas.

If you remove any hinges, etc., you should fill the holes so there is something for the replacement to secure into. I cut toothpicks down and used wood filler and wood glue to fill them. Be sure to sand these areas smooth too. Instead of using screws and nuts to put everything back together, I used "Brad Hole Tee Nuts". I got them at Lowes and their SKU number is 880535 so you can find them on their website. They are ¼ post and have a screwed area on the inside of the post for the 6/32 screw. You can use screws but these have a round flat area on the inside so there aren't any nuts to bump into your featherweight.

Two of my cases had to have the handles replaced. They were leather and not the D-ring type that could be replaced. I measured the existing handle (center to center) and found on eBay a guitar case handle as a replacement. There are all kinds and colors of handles to choose from depending on what you want to spend. Do the same thing as the hinges to fill the holes if they don't line up with the new handle.

If the hinges, latches, etc. need to be cleaned, do that before you start refinishing the outside of the case so that you don't mess up your new exterior.

WOOD CASE

This case fell apart when I took the Tolex and lining off. It had to be completely glued and clamped back together. I sanded it down with 150 grit sandpaper and then a light sanding with 220 to make sure it was smooth. Don't over sand since the Alder wood is a soft wood and isn't very thick (only about 3/8 inch thick). Once the case is sanded smooth, wipe it down with a dry, soft cloth to remove any dust. Canned air also works to get any dust out of the crevices or a vacuum. I used painters tape to tape off the edges of the latches and handle so that I didn't get any Tung Oil on them. That also helped to keep the handle out of the way. I did not use any stain on my case, just Minwax Tung Oil. It is a wiping finish and takes several coats to give it the nice shine. Give it time, wipe a coat on, let it sit and dry and put another one on. It doesn't take long to dry in between coats. Once you have a few coats on, use 600 grit sandpaper or #0000 steel wool over the surface to remove any little bumps and imperfections. Wipe it down with a dry cloth again and put a final coat or two on the case so it has the look you want. Let it dry for at least 24 hours before reassembling anything, 2 days is better. After all this hard work, it isn't worth rushing it and marking up the case.

DECOUPAGED CASE

Follow the same instructions as the Wood Case for removing the Tolex and lining. Sand all the old glue and any remaining fabrics so that you have a smooth surface. Tape off the hinges and handle if needed. I replaced my handle so it wasn't in the way. Paint the interior and exterior with a primer (wall paint type primer) to seal the wood and stop the wood color from bleeding through the paper. Paint the inside of the case whatever color you choose with acrylic paint (craft paint). I used a paper from Cavallini and bought it on Etsy. It took 3 sheets and they were 20x28. I did not put this on in one piece. I did the sides, back, front and bottom separate. I allowed for 1/2 inch overhang on the inside of the case and lid. I cut separate pieces for the inside edge of the lid and did them separate so that the design was going in the right direction. Using an x-acto knife, cut around the latches and bottom feet and any other hardware. To put the paper on, I used Elmers Glue (yes, Elmers Glue). I watered it down so that it was easily brushed on, about 50/50. Put a coat on the surface completely and then put the paper on. I used a 4 inch Brayer Roller (Amazon) to smooth out the paper. It really made a difference. You want the entire surface to be smooth, all the edges flat and no bubbles or glue globs. They will show up later if you aren't careful. Do one side and let it dry completely, a full day is best. Be careful to make sure the upper edge is very flat so that the lid will close over the tapered part. I did the lid exterior as one piece and carefully trimmed it at the corners. When it is damp from the glue, be careful so you don't rip it. It must dry completely before putting the finish on. Put a coat of watered down Elmer's Glue over the entire surface and let this dry to seal it. For the finish, I used Minwax Polycrylic Gloss (it is soap and water cleanup). I used a brush and not a sponge brush. I wrapped it in a plastic bag in between coats so it didn't dry out. It took several coats but it dries quickly in between coats. After several coats are applied, use a 600 grit sandpaper or #0000 steel wool to smooth out any bumps. Wipe it down with a dry cloth and

apply a final coat on. Let it dry for several days before reassembling any hardware. Don't forget to put Polycrylic on the inside to protect the paint and any paper you might put on that part.

RE-LINING THE CASE

Follow the same instructions as the Wood Case for removing the old lining. You will need to sand the interior but only to remove any rough areas of glue. Wipe it down with a dry cloth (or use canned air). If the exterior of the case needs to be refurbished, do that first so that you don't get any shoe polish on the new inside. Also refurbish the inside edge of the lid. I used poster board to mount the fabric on for the lining. My case had the angle corner wood pieces which needed to stay for stability of the case. I cut the poster board about 1/4 inch shorter and thinner for each side. If you don't do this, the lining pieces might not fit depending on the thickness of the fabric. Make sure your pieces fit and they don't fill the whole vertical space, make sure to allow for the bottom fabric. I used felt to give the pieces some added thickness/padding. I cut the felt approximately a 1/8 inch smaller on each side of each part of the lining. (If the measurement was an inch, I cut the felt 3/4 inch.) I used spray adhesive to attach it to the poster board centering it on the board. Let it dry. I cut my fabric (microfiber fabric) so there was 1/2 inch overhang on each side to glue to the back. Make sure the corners are not thick so trim them and glue them. Painter's tape works well to hold any edges down while they dry. I did not use poster board pieces for the inside of the lid. If you have corner pieces like my case, cut pieces of fabric to cover these corners. Be sure to cut them wide enough. I used a rotary cutter for these pieces so that I had a nice, clean edges. My corners were one inch wide and the fabric was 1 3/4 inch wide. You also need to cut fabric for the bottom. Glue the corners on first and then the bottom. I used Elmer's Glue at first but found that Titebond Wood Glue (blue label) worked better. It has a quicker drying time. I cut the pieces for inside lip of the lid so they were 1/8 inch from the edge when I glued them on so that they would not affect the case closing. I glued one side of the lid, let it dry and then on to another side. Painter's Tape again worked well to hold things in place. Once all the glued in pieces were dry and all the lining inserts were dry, it was time to glue them into the case. Again, I used Titebond Wood Glue to secure them. I did one side at a time and used Painter's Tape to hold the top edge where it needed to be and stay in place. I laid the case on its side so that the piece that was being secured was down. I used a quilter's ruler that fit in the space to hold it down and put something on it to weight it down. (I used a stapler, 2 pound weight, book, whatever fit and had some weight to it). Let each side dry completely and then go onto the next side. If you are replacing the handle or hinges, put those sides in last. Once you have the replacement hardware replaced, follow the same as above to glue them in place. If you have any edges or corners that aren't as flat as you like, I used a Popsicle stick (clean of course) on either side and used a strong clamp to hold it while the glue dried.