

CONST. FILE #6, FINE LE FINISHING (Feb. 18, '09) by Harley Michaelis

Wax residue on bagged surfaces prevents new paint from sticking well. To get a painted LE that wraps around that paint a little & add tip trim, you need to remove the wax. Suggestions made by friends included Prep-Sol & a non-wax, non-silicone rubbing compound found at auto parts suppliers.



I found 5 STAR Autobody Products' Wax & Grease Remover, item 5900, at about \$6/qt. It wiped unpolished bagging wax on Mylar off with one swipe. On well-cured, old lacquer-based Krylon & also the Rustoleum Specialty Lacquer, I had good results using it as follows: Dampen a small wad of toilet tissue with it. To remove wax around the LE & the tip area to be painted, quickly swipe in one direction & quickly follow with dry tissue. Repeat on areas to be painted. It harmed Rustoleum Painter's Touch, so first check out what effect it has on scrap painted with your paint choice.

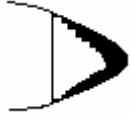
Of products tried to fill pits & irregularities & wet sand out to allow a glossy painted finish, the polyester finishing putty by US Chemical & Plastics Co. called "Icing" (item #26006) really works. I found it at NAPA Auto Parts. The putty is off white & somewhat thinner than fresh toothpaste. It pours slowly, sticks to epoxy & doesn't shrink. It sets up in a few minutes, block sands easily & feathers out to nothing by wet sanding.

It comes in plastic tubes (24 oz. putty plus 3/4 oz. of colored hardener) at about a buck an ounce. I was happy to pay the price to just easily & quickly get one smooth, pit-free, glossy, painted leading edge. It makes great fillets where horizontal & vertical surfaces meet. It fills pinholes & dings. The stuff has become indispensable like quick epoxy & CA. I'm into my 3rd tube now. The uncured putty will slowly eat into foam.

A glob of the Icing can be put on one tile & a little at a time picked up with the spatula or Popsicle stick to mix with hardener on another tile. Over time, the putty will thicken in the tube, be harder to mix, but still work. Batches can be thinned by mixing in a little acetone with the spatula on a tile before adding the hardener.



The top side of a GENIE #29 center is shown. The low tack vinyl tape gives a line to feather the putty to. Paper can be attached behind the vinyl with 3/4" masking tape for complete protection of the finished, bagged on paint. To minimize the chance of lifting paint when removing the tape, gently warm it with a heat gun. Too much heat will bubble the paint. The plastic bottle contains acetone to clean uncured Icing off the tile & spatula.



Exaggerated drawing illustrates how Icing can be contoured to the finished LE shape. The actual layer left may be no more than a fraction of a mm at it thickest point.

CAUTION: The raw putty will not cleanly wipe off painted surfaces, so work with care.



After wet sanding, the putty remains where fill was needed & is feathered out to the original paint.

Before applying the Icing, sand close to the .003 glass tape (File 3) without scoring the adjacent paint. Use a single-edged razor blade on edge to scrape down any ridge where the carrier ended so nothing protrudes above the normal LE contour.

Having decided on how far back to coat with the putty, apply a low tack, vinyl tape accordingly along the top after dewaxing the area. Since the putty sands easily, it's ok to get it on thicker than needed. In fact, there's not enough working time to be neat & tidy. Anyway, the entire LE is under thick beyond where the CF cloth stopped.

Transfer a penny-sized amount about 1/8" thick to the other tile. Clean spatula with acetone. Knead hardener tube. The stuff comes out of a 3/32" hole. Squeeze to expose 1/16". Pick up with the spatula. Mix with the putty & spread forward of the tape. You have about 3 minutes & can cover about 3' if you work fast. Clean tile & spatula. As you get experience, you can mix larger amounts.

Repeat with a new little batch until the LE is covered on one side. As you go along, use the spatula to remove putty on the vinyl tape before it gets hard. Go do something else for a few minutes while the last application hardens well.

The mix ratio of putty to hardener called for is 50 to 1, but is not critical. Experiment by mixing a small batch to see how quickly it cures. With too little hardener, it cures slowly & the paint under the stuff gets soft & won't readily powder away when feathering edges.

With the vinyl tape still on, sand the well-cured putty down to it with #80 & #150 blocks until it looks pretty smooth. Remove the tape & repeat on the bottom.

Since the putty adheres very well, most of the little ridge left by the tape can be removed by gently scraping along it with a sharp, single-edged razor blade or you can just work #150 sandpaper dry on the ridge with the thumb. Then with small block, wet sand with progressively finer grits up to at least 400, feathering to nothing toward the rear edge of the putty. When feathering, avoid scratching the adjacent original paint.

None of this takes much time & yields a uniform, smooth finish ready to prime & paint. I liked the lightweight, lacquer-based, rattle can Krylon & now the Rustoleum Specialty Lacquer for painting carriers, but it dries too quickly to remove masking to get a rounded

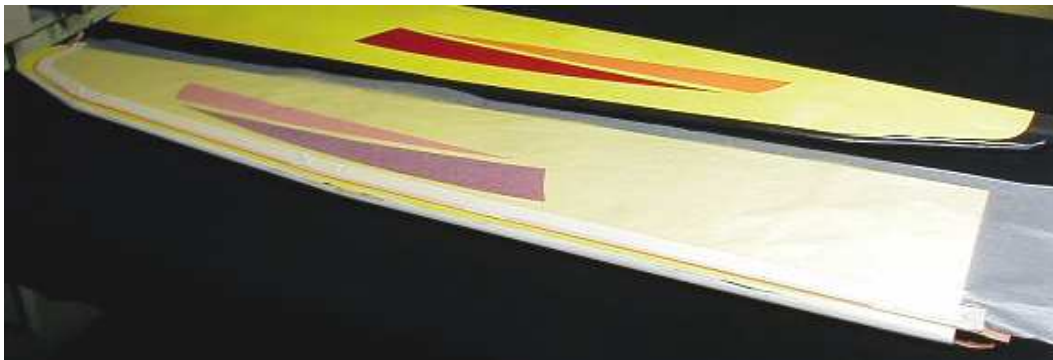
edge on LE trim paint. A slower drying, compatible, more durable paint is called for. Rustoleum Clean Metal Primer & slower drying Gloss Protective Enamel works nicely over cured lacquer. Use of the rattle can gun attachment is recommended to keep paint off the fingers. As shown in the following pics, glassed-over wood LE's can be finished to look very beautiful, as well as more durable. When dings, new Icing can fill in the dents, be smoothed & painted.



This shows a black LE trim. The red & orange swooshes are sprayed on the carriers before the overall yellow is applied. Masking ridges are flattened during bagging.

As shown in the next pic, masking for LE painting is done with clean 1/4" low tack vinyl tape, waxed paper & common 3/4" masking tape.

You can mask both the top & bottom of a panel to do the trim painting all at once. The tape rear edge under the waxed paper can be used as a guide to score the wax. Scissor the LE line & attach the paper with regular masking tape. Put tabs on both the vinyl & the regular masking tape for something to grab for removal before the edges of the paint dry & cling to the vinyl. On long center panels, masking can be applied over all, but in right & left sections for easier removal in two shorter pieces. Since quick drying is not wanted, it works well to paint outdoors in 35-40 degrees. Warm the paint can so it readily sprays.



Spray from an angle at the front so it gets half way or more down & around the LE. After the last pass, get masking off ASAP being careful not to drag it on anything.

Don't work in direct sun. The warmed wax can transfer to the bagged-on paint & make a terrible mess. If it's breezy, the waxed paper can be flipped onto your just painted LE. To avoid that calamity, trim the paper about 1/2" inside of the panel TE & keep it in place with bits of low tack masking tape.

Apply light coats of primer to one side, turn the work over & do the other. In a few minutes the primer will lose its sheen & be set up enough to accept the finish paint. To avoid runs & drips apply several light coats.



Outdoors, a card table supports a panel. Here, the top LE trim had first been done & that masking left intact while doing the masked bottom shown. Masking keeps overspray off the bagged-on paint. When the LE is painted, clean off any paint on your fingers. **BEWARE:** The paper has fresh paint on it. Get a clean hand under it to grab a panel. Utilize gravity to dangle loosened masking away from the new paint. Extra hands are very helpful when removing masking.



Left shows the first Big Smoothie high gloss panels by window light. The other is an SGP tip. Red & black swooshes go on the carrier inside first & that masking removed. Overall white is then applied before bagging.



Multiple colors: Use a single, curved pattern cut from a manila folder or thin cardboard. First apply the lightest trim color inboard by fogging over the pattern held steady a bit above the surface. That makes a fairly fine line. After that's set, angle the pattern out a bit more to apply the next darker color, fogging over the edge toward the tip to minimize overspray on the prior lighter color, etc. When those are dry, mask to do the black LE.



If using an overall paint when bagging that'll be durable on the LE, you can position a carrier near the LE to fog forward over it without fine line masking. Apply paint 1/2 or more around the LE on one side. Let it set up, invert & do the other side. If different colors, you get a 2-tone LE.

Have a clean & safe place to put a panel while the LE paint cures.