

# A Bear on Safety

by William Henry, Chardon, Ohio

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** The *Model A Judging Standards and Restoration Guidelines* permit the installation of seat belts without penalizing a car's score during judging. As with all safety items permitted by the *Judging Standards*, "they must be neatly installed and in good working order."

Whether you are a purist who believes "Henry didn't put 'em in there, so they don't belong," or, "Model A's should look just like they did when they came from the factory," if you ever drive a Model A, **YOU NEED SEAT BELTS**. That Model A dash rail is not padded; that steering wheel is not recessed; that flat windshield is only 24 inches from your face. And with today's highway speeds and the possibility that a modern car will top a hill at 70 m.p.h. and plow into the back of your precious, poorly lighted Model A doing 40 m.p.h., you face considerable risk of death or serious injury.

Totally original, or restored from the ground up, a 65-year-old door latch is NOT going to hold in a major collision or rollover. The contents of your Model A - spouse, children, grandchildren, picnic basket, ice chest, etc., and YOU, are going to be thrown from the car. Statistics prove you have a much greater chance of survival if you stay **INSIDE** the car during an accident, and seat belts will keep you and your loved ones where they belong. I have often feared for a child's safety while they rode in the rumbleseat. As a grandparent wouldn't you feel more secure knowing that child was belted in and wouldn't suddenly stand up and fall out as you are cruising down the road?

A State Trooper once told me that in his 20+ years of working hundreds of major traffic accidents, he has never unbuckled a seat belt from a dead man.

Go to the wrecking yard and spend the \$5-10 it will take to buy the seat belts and install them this weekend! You may be surprised but I'll bet you can talk the wrecking yard owner out of a couple of sets if you tell him what you're putting them in. Then maybe you'll live long enough to finish that basket case you brought home from the last swap meet.



William Henry

PLEASE LET ME introduce myself- I am the teddy bear mascot belonging to Arnie and Bert Haueter. In 1985 I was snuggled up on a shelf with my friends in a Williamsburg Christmas shop when I caught the eye of a lady. She picked me up to cuddle as her husband took a peek at my price tag and immediately sauntered off to the back part of the store. My heart sank as I was tenderly tucked back into my resting place. Momentarily, I did not realize that ecstasy was around the corner.

My admirer returned to hug me in the presence of her Model A friends gathered in the aisle. In the background I spotted her husband with wallet in hand. He begrudgingly handed over some money as he muttered, "You get every-

thing you want anyway."

"What are you going to name him, Bert?" he asked.

"Why, William Henry, of course - William after Williamsburg and Henry after Henry Ford."

Now that you know of my very existence, let's get on with the purpose of this article: installation of seat belts in a Model A Ford. I am a "bear" on safety and the necessity of seat belts.

My first exposure to seat belts was while we were on tour in 1986. We were cruising along about 40-45 m.p.h. in a caravan enroute to Corning, New York. All of a sudden, Dick Dryer's blue Coupe took a heave-ho, rodeo high-dive for a ditch! No teenager could have performed the Baja any better. That Coupe completely ignored an illuminated mile marker, made a waddling splash through the murky waters and rebounded out past the next marker with never a scratch.

I was thrown out of my child's helper seat when Arnie jammed on the brakes for an abrupt stop to run to the Dryer's aid.

Lo and behold, John, Dick's wife, was still bound in her seat belt and the passenger door was wide open!

The open windshield gave entrance to the ditch's contents: mud plastered all over the glass, upholstery . . . high enough to take in the headliner. Dick, now wide awake from his short nap, sat bewildered behind his mud-peppered eyeglasses that were still riding on his nose!

Thank heavens, no one was hurt - John, Dick and their beautiful A; although, Dick's pride suffered a little for falling asleep. As he unbuckled himself from his seat belt, he boasted that he woke up in time to shove his car into second gear and pushed the accelerator to the wood to get out of his predicament.

The "U-Wash-It" car wash appeared quite untidy after Dick ran the Coupe through to rid it of all its hangings of mud, grass and other related ditch inhabitants.

As for me, my fling caused a slight redistribution of my inside stuffings. My next comment would be a recommendation that some "youngsters" need more sleep than others. A constant grind of 6:00 a.m. departures gets a little tough.

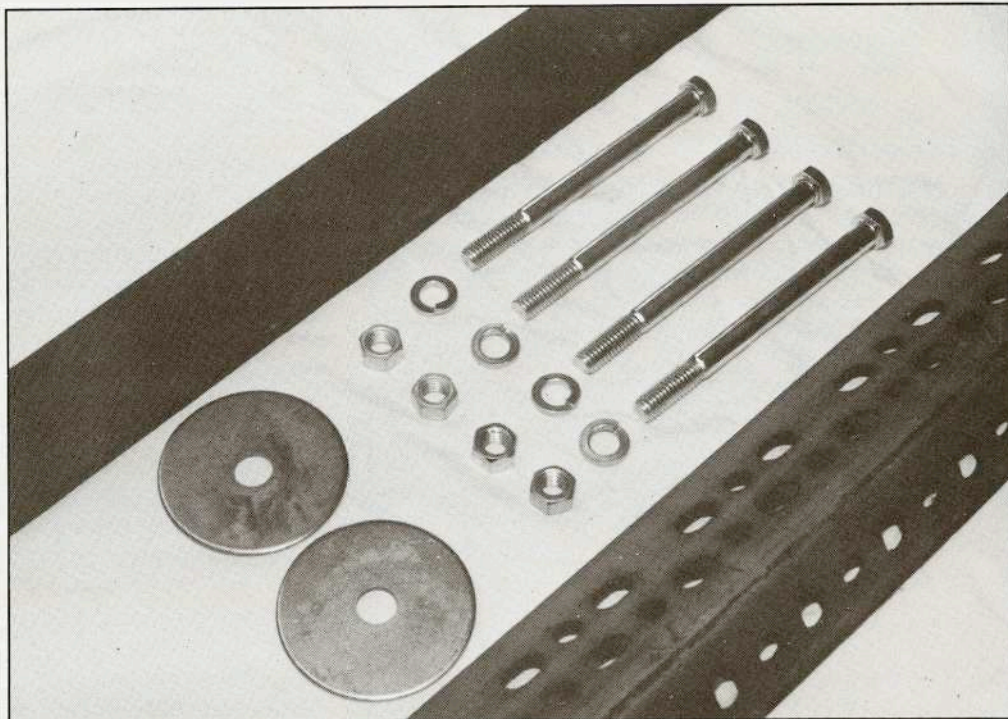
My next encounter with seat belts was on the 1988 Hargrave Alaskan Tour. On his prerequisite information list, John stated that seat belts were mandatory for travel through Canada. Instantaneously, I heard Bert protesting and fussing about ruining the new upholstery job in their 1930 Town Sedan. As she regained her composure, she gave Arnie strict orders about the selection of seat belts as he headed out the door for the junkyard. First of all - color - no purple! They must be color coordinated; something in brown, tan or beige to go with the brown mohair interior. Secondly, make certain that they are clean . . . no dirt, grease, rust or blood - ye gads! Thirdly, no frayed, torn or worn areas. Fourth, all brackets and buckles in operable condition. When he returned, I thought he had gone to a parts store for new ones. He convinced us that they were used and had been taken from a late model wrecked car.

I took my place in my director's chair to watch Arnie and Bert go about their new task. They removed the front seat for a careful inspection of the wood within which revealed no

deterioration or cracks. A word of caution here: I would not advise securing the mechanism in this fashion if the wood is in poor condition. In fact, recent warnings say, "Do not attach these belts to the wood frame, period." However, this was a hurry-up job to meet the Canadian safety requirements. It was not necessary to do the rear seat belts because our seat was removed to accommodate the sixth tire and wheel, a case of oil, luggage, etc. In fact, the rear compartment looked as if we were hillbillies with all our belongings; actually, we were loaded with necessities (or so we thought) level to the rear windows. How Model A'ers manage touring in a Coupe is beyond me.

I read someplace it seemed as if our Model A's were not meant to have seat belts; however, cherish the thought for safety's sake, that their installation will be time well spent.

After what I witnessed at the MAFCA National in San Diego when some of our friends in their Model A had their car totaled on the freeway by a high speed modern car, I was convinced of the importance to "belt up for safety's sake." I



*Town Sedan hardware: 4 - 4-1/2" x 3/8" SAE fine thread bolts; 4 - 3/8" SAE fine thread nuts; 4 - 3/8" lock washers; 2 - 2" flat washers; 1 - 29-1/2" length x 2" wide strap iron. Note: flat washers not necessary if using strap iron. If wood is in good condition, you may use 2" washers and eliminate strap iron.*

vowed right then and there to become a "bear" on safety.

First of all, it is of importance to secure your seat belts into some steel - whether it be frame cross members, steel seat frames or side rails. Each body style will require the owner's evaluation to find the best location for anchoring sites. If you own a sedan or other forms of multiple seating, you will be faced with double the task.

Since our return from Alaska and the San Diego episode, Arnie decided to redo our seat belts, so we paid the Dryers a visit. Dick had used some perforated shelving called Dexeion. The numerous holes allow many adjustments to install the seat belts to the lower body frame. Various other strap irons may also be used but will require drilling for positioning to the various areas of framework.

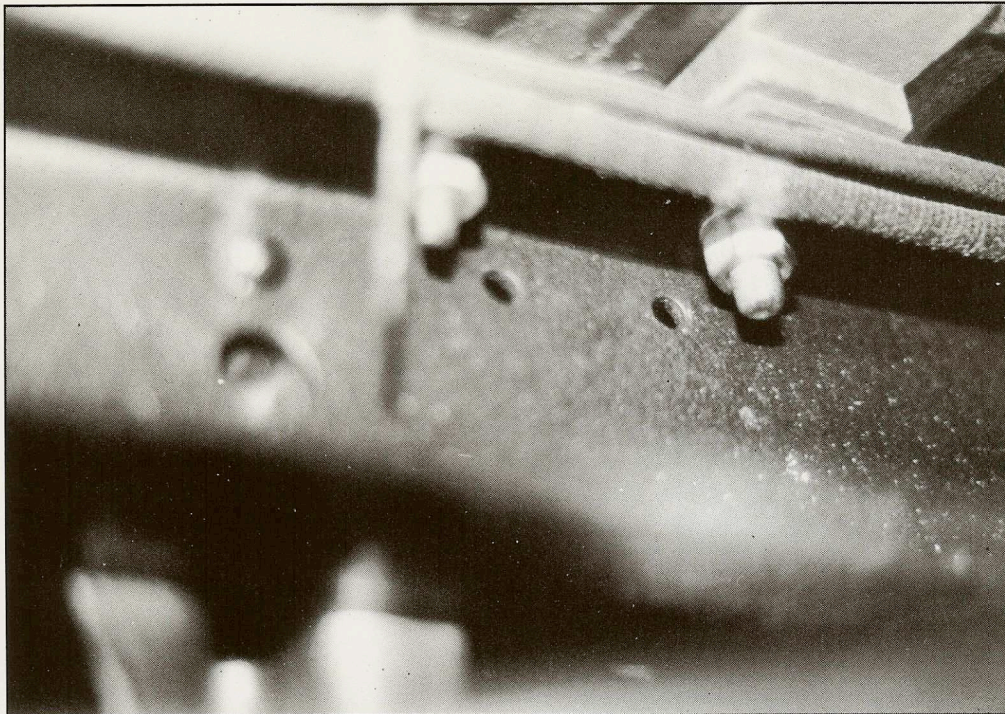
Arnie's shopping list for the hardware store included:

- 4 - 4-1/2" x 3/8" SAE fine threaded bolts
- 4 - 3/8" SAE nuts
- 4 - 2/8" lock washers
- 4 - 2" or larger diameter flat washers

Next stop was to the



*Seat belts installed in the Town Sedan.*



*Underside of Coupe - using the two existing holes in the seat pan assembly above, and drilling through to the frame below, places the seat belt bolt in front of the body block bolt.*

welding shop for:

- 29-1/2" length x 2" width x 1/4" thick strap iron
- Third stop was to son's place of business for:
- 2 lengths of Dexeion (which he later chose not to use in the sedan)

Note: Some people prefer to use Grade 8 bolts for added strength.

Tool list included:

- 3/8" drill bits
- Drill motor that will accept a 3/8" bit
- Angle drill
- 1/2" sockets and wrenches

Note: If you wish to use 7/16" or 1/2" bolts and related washers and nuts, you will have to enlarge holes in the perforated angle iron. Of course, your selection will also increase sizes of wrenches and sockets.

Arnie scooted underneath our Briggs for closer inspection of the wood center cross sill. Although it was two inches thick and in good condition, he decided to reinforce with the 29-1/2" length of strap iron. The shorter pieces of seat

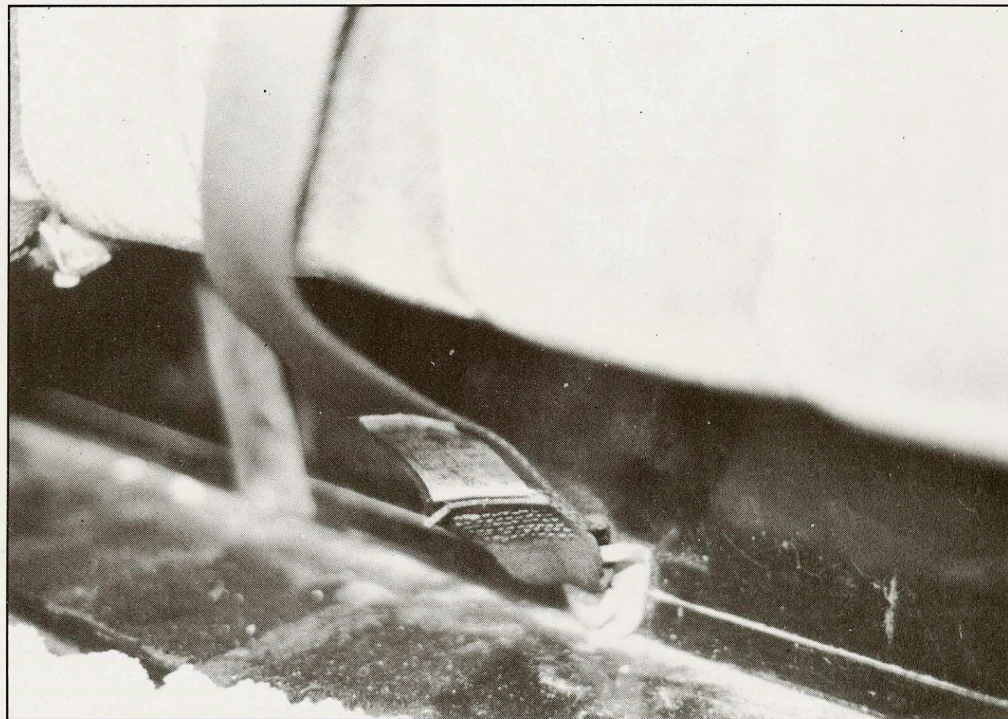
belts were attached to the side rails. The two remaining long center pieces of belts were then placed and drilled accordingly. Once the bolts are dropped in from the top side, it does not take long to complete the job underneath.

I have made several inquiries and visits to gather more information concerning this article. I found that Coupes by the use of the Dexeion iron in the rear compartment or trunk may easily be adapted to securing seat belts. By using a ninety degree angle drill, two holes may be drilled to allow placement of the bolts to the frame below.

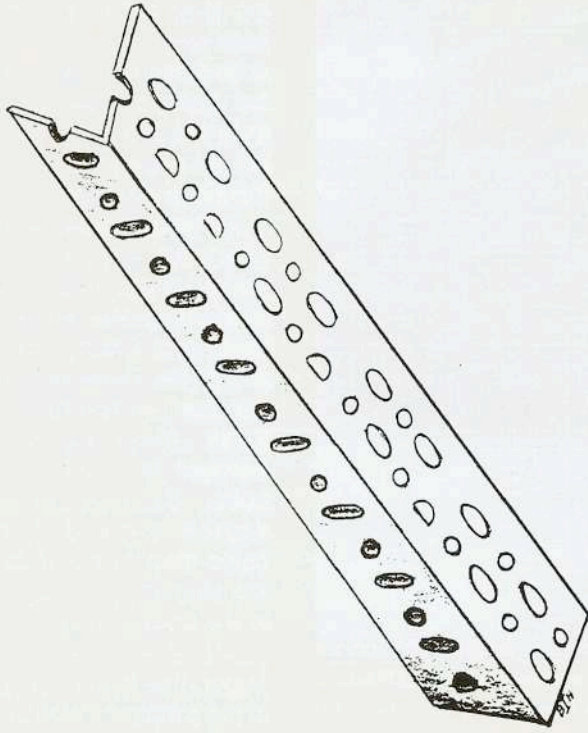
In the case of the Tudor, this is perhaps one of the simplest installations due to the easy accessibil-

ity to the frame. Again, I cannot emphasize the choice of the best site of strength for adapting your seat belts in your Model A. Most importantly, make good use of them and remember to buckle up for safety's sake.

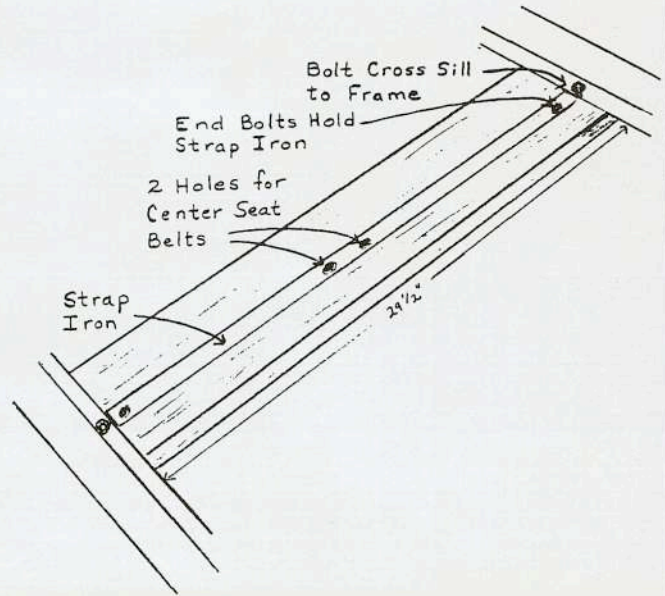
By now, you must have realized that my mouthpiece is really Bertha I. Haueter from Chardon, Ohio.



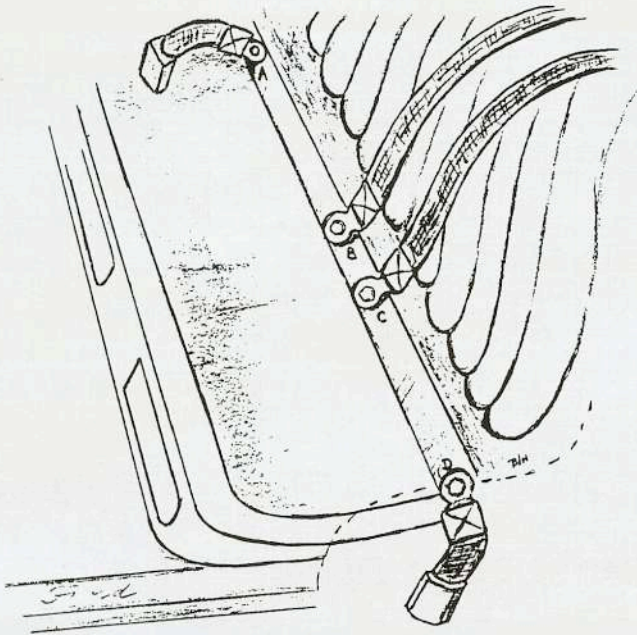
*Coupe seat belt - placement of mounting bolts to rear into the perforated angle irons.*



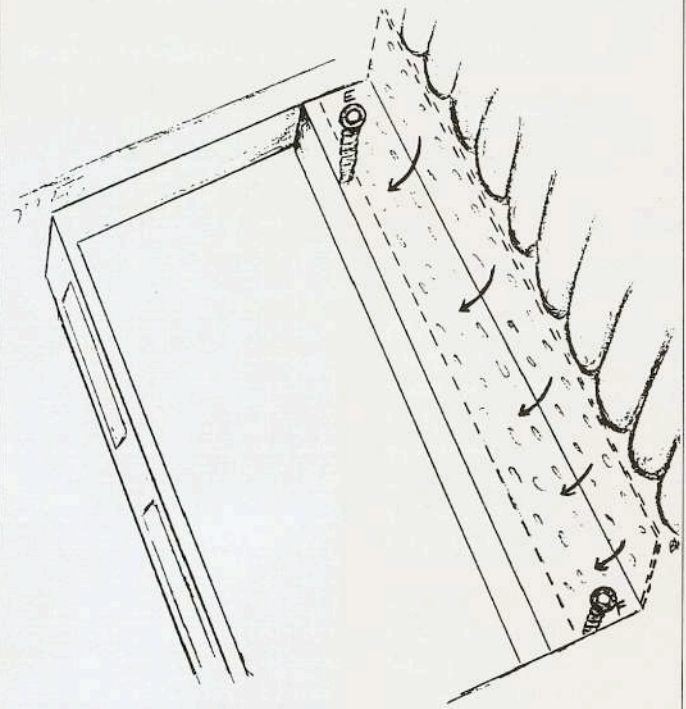
Section of perforated Dexion angle iron - numerous holes allow adjustment and positioning of bolts.



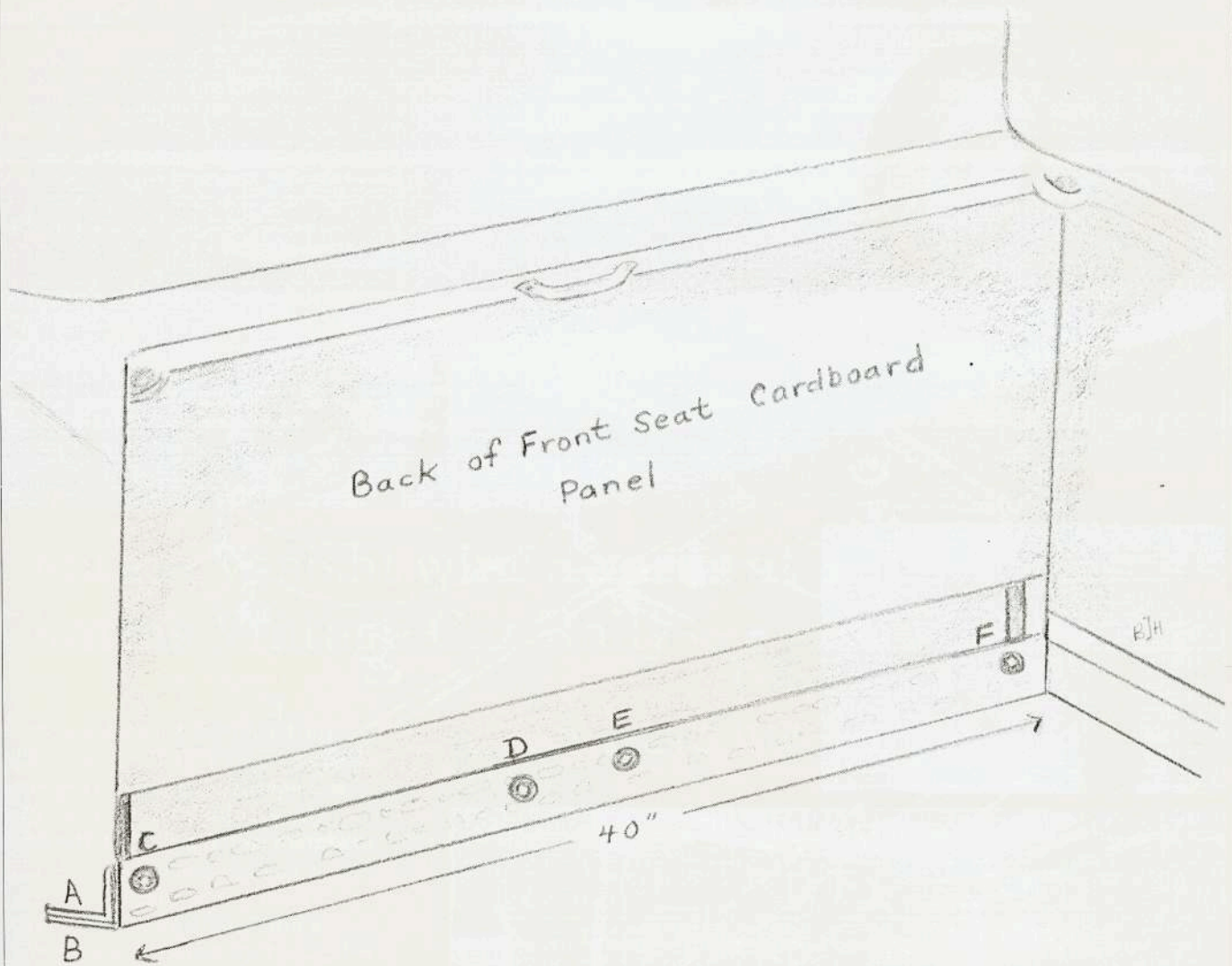
Underside of Town Sedan showing reinforcement of wood sill with strap iron.



Coupe's inside metal seat frame - four bolts secured and passed through double layers of perforated angle iron located in trunk area.



E & F - 2 holes already in the seat pan assembly allow installation of bolts to frame below. Use a 90 degree angle drill to drill to the frame. Dotted lines show the position of the two perforated angle irons from the rear compartment or trunk. Two additional bolts will be needed.



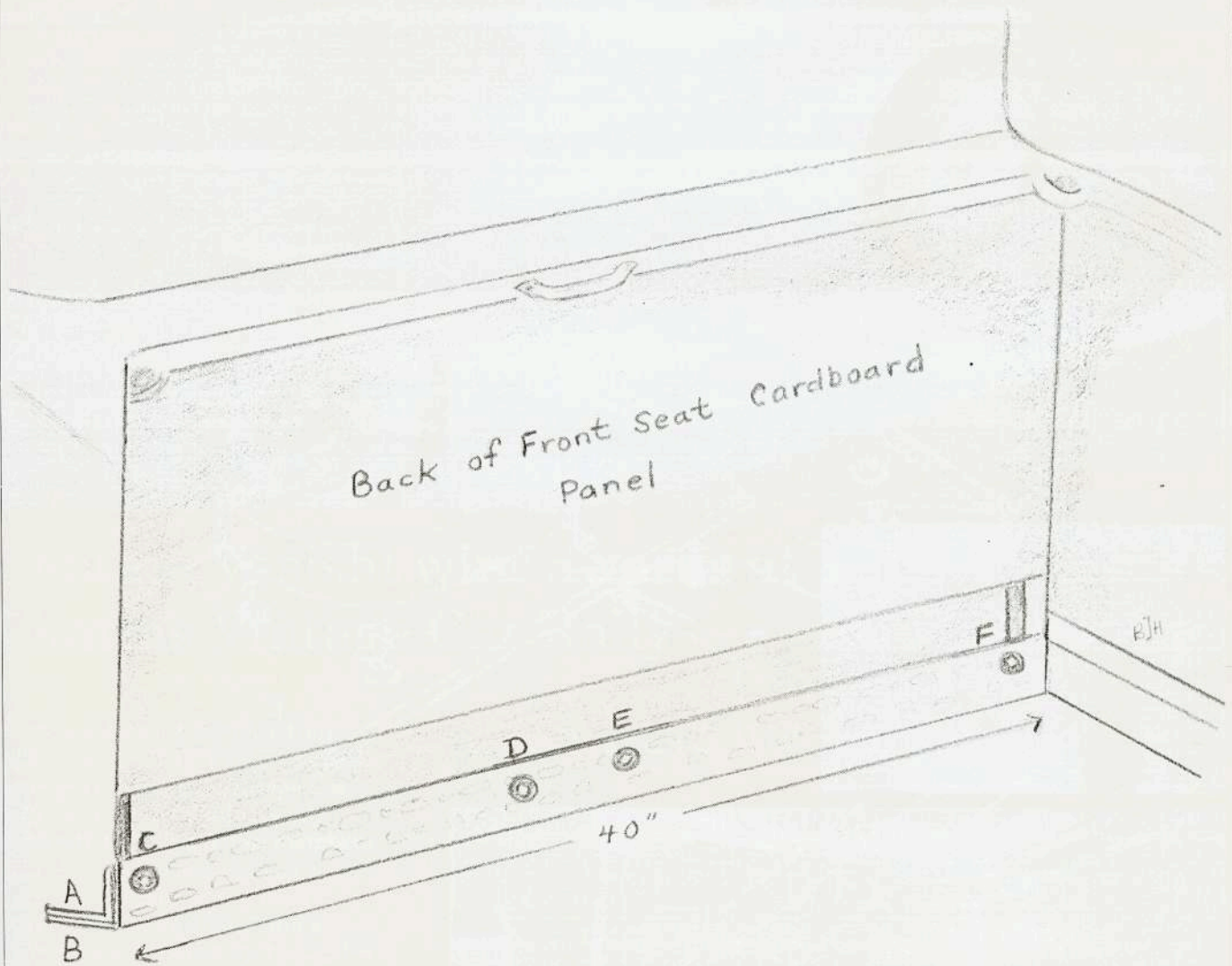
*Inside of rumble seat or trunk area.*

*A & B - 40" length double thickness of Dexeion angle irons.*

*C, D, E, & F - four 3/8" fine thread nuts & lock washers.*

*Four holes were drilled through base of the front seat and carpet dustshield.*

*Numerous holes allow adjustment for spaces between the four bolts while securing the angle iron to the front seat assembly.*



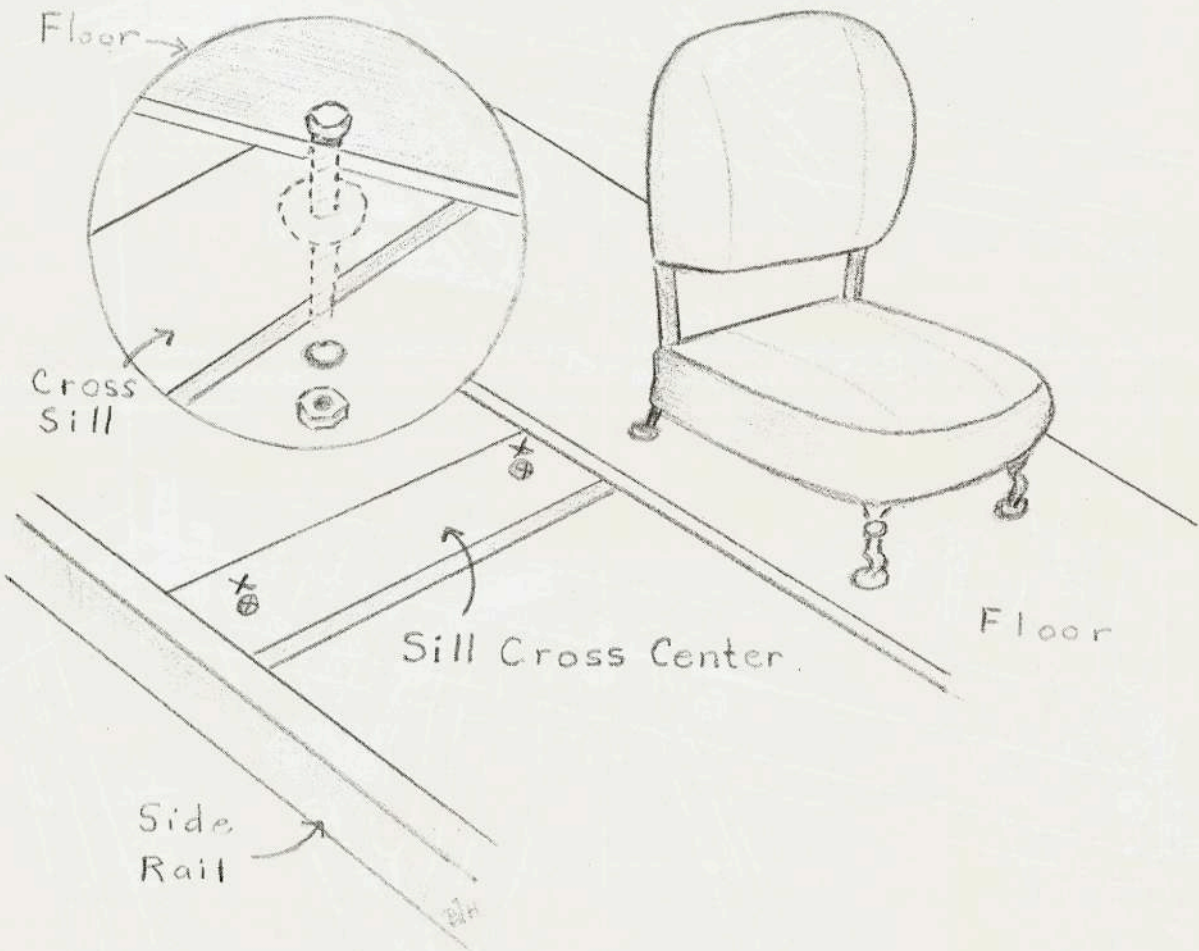
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*Tudor installation*

4 bolts through floor into frame cross member below.  
 4 flat washers on underside of cross sill with nuts and lock washers.  
 "X" sites for other seat.