

HOMEMADE DOORS ON A FAIRMONT MT-19

BY RUSSELL HOMAN

After having been on a few motorcar runs here in the Northwest, where the temperature can be 35-degrees at 8:00 in the morning, I began to envy the other motorcars with enclosed cabs. My wife, Patty and Phoebe our dog, do not like the cold and having just curtains for doors was not helping. (They were good sports about it though.) As another motorcar operator said to me, “it’s important to keep the wife happy”. We



have also ended up leaving the motorcar on the tracks overnight, out in the rain, having to take everything out each night and wipe down the seats in the morning. I was envious of the other cars with lockable doors.

My Fairmont MT-19 came with curtains for doors, but at least it has a back and side walls. The door curtains were old, cracking, drafty, and the plastic windows were turning opaque. I could have bought new ones, but I saw other cars with these nice aluminum doors that kept their occupants warm and dry. After taking photos and measurements of the OEM doors, I figured I could build a set for my car. These doors were welded, so I bought a TIG welder, watched a few YouTube videos, and quickly figured out that welding aluminum is much harder than it looks. I will never criticize anyone’s aluminum welds again.

The few joints that I managed to put together always needed a little adjustment one way or another. After cutting out the worst of those messy welds and starting over, I decided to abandon welding the door. The stock doors had one big panel with a hole cut for the window. Many had the solid windows replaced with an RV window with a little slider for flagging. These RV windows cost \$400 each and have an 18-week lead time. The doors also have a 4-inch U-channel down the middle, that only had an 11-week lead time. This is when I decided to change the design.



My new doors would be built with 1/8” thick x 1” aluminum angle for the frame, 1/16” thick-aluminum diamond plate panels and a big plexi-glass window, all inset in to the “L” brackets.

The corners are held together with corner brackets which also hold in the panels. These were much better than just using “L” brackets and I found them at Home Depot. I already had some used standard doors locks with flip handles, which worked just fine. All the nuts are the nylon lock type stop nuts.



In the middle, I put a small door for flagging. It stays latched shut when we're parked

The second door took less than a week to build, now that I had a working design. You can see the snow now stays on the outside, while it is snug and dry inside. Only time will tell how well they hold up, but I'm happy, and more importantly, the wife is happy.

Some of the cars I saw had raised the doorsills, with the bottom of the door straight across. I like the low doorsill of the MT-19, so I made the doors longer with curves around the wheelwells. The door frame corner supports were moved from the doorway to the inside, facing away from the door. The door jams were reinforced with 1 1/2" aluminum angle. A prop-rod was added to keep the door open about 3" for those hot days. They can also be folded all the way back, for that open air feeling.

I was planning to put the smooth side out and paint everything, but Patty said the unpainted aluminum frame and diamond plating would look better. I chose to agree.

