

Vic Miller & Joe Harvey

MECHANICS



Tom Kleindinst/WHOI

Miller: This is a 30-year-old piece of *Alvin* syntactic foam. The foam is the buoyancy for *Alvin*. We're cutting and getting it ready to re-glove. This piece here had some damage in the center of it.

Harvey: Normal wear and tear. We've been doing a lot of repairs on the old foam, and shaping the new foam, and drilling and modifying it as needed.

Miller: The majority of the foam on the rebuild is new.

Harvey: We add inserts for cameras or this or that. Or you get the new foam in and it doesn't exactly fit right, so you've got to modify it, fit it again, bring it back, modify it, fit it again.

Miller: Tell how bad it is.

Harvey: Just dusty. Dirty. When we're cutting the heavy foam, it's everywhere.

Miller: The foam is basically an epoxy with glass spheres. We're sanding and cutting epoxy and glass. It's just dirty work. You don't want to be doing it long-term without protection.

Harvey: I'm a mechanic. I've been at WHOI for about a year and a half. My family has the marina right across the street, Woods Hole Marine, and I found my way over here.

Miller: I've been here four or five years. Before I came here, I worked in a body shop for over 20 years, with the shaping of the plastic and the fiberglass repair on the Corvettes or other types of vehicles.

Harvey: Cars, submarines—he's expanded. Planes next!

Miller: I have a shop at my house. I do a lot of car service work, and I still do some bodywork. I restore old cars as a hobby.

Harvey: It's more than a hobby. People from all over come to him.

Miller: Cars, foam, it's all bodywork. The shaping, knowing the grits of the sandpaper and the finish, the priming and painting and such. It's very, very similar.

Harvey: I haven't worked with syntactic foam before. I started in the shops, and then when the foam projects came in, that's what Vic and I have been put to, kind of our specialty.

Miller: We make a good team. I'm a little more experienced in some of the bodywork, but Joe picks up on it very quickly. It's nice. If you get in with the wrong people, it doesn't work. We know what we need to do and we get in there and make it happen. It's just overwhelming what it really takes to build something. Whatever you think it takes, double it. And maybe double it one more time after that.

Harvey: There's bad days with it. It's tough, it's just been every day for five months.

Miller: And it's dusty, dirty, dirty work. It takes its toll.

Harvey: It beats up on you a little bit. But at the end of the day, when you leave, you say, 'You know what, that was a good day. We didn't make any huge mistakes, and it's a really cool project.'

Miller: It's rewarding. You know, the guys need it done, they appreciate it. They know we take it very serious and we do the best we can, and we're competent.

Harvey: It's great being involved with *Alvin*. It's really a big, historic thing and to be part of it is really special.

Miller: Big time. ▲