

# Rebuilding an Aljoa Sportsman

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We have had this trailer for nearly fifty years. It was given to us by a neighbor here in our mountaintop when we first moved up here from a normal house in Livermore, California where I worked as a physicist designing nuclear devices (bombs) for Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory.

We used it as a sort of guest room for many years, moved it from place to place on our 100 acres, then as a storeroom, then more or less forgot about. The mice and pack rats moved in.

The place was thoroughly cleaned out, the stored items removed and mostly discarded, the mice evicted, debris shoveled and vacuumed out, surfaces scrubbed and disinfected with vinegar and so on.

An inspection at the start of this restoration project, after the cleaning and clearing revealed the following problem areas:

Interior 1/8" plywood panel at the front end below the windows more or less completely disintegrated from water leakage.

Same but not as bad at the aft end.

Similar water damage and delamination of the side wall panel on the aft port quarter.

Exterior damage on the aft Port Quarter lower corner.

For'd corners broken loose and open both sides below the window level

Corner Al extrusion loose along the edges in several spots, notably along the roof line above the aft port quarter

The tongue seems to have been bent up a bit, probable cause of the ruptures of the for'd corner edges. Probably dropped from the hitch at some point?

The interior cabinetry is all in excellent condition except for one missing door on the hanging closet.

The entrance door is delaminated but may be repairable. The screen door is missing.

## Rebuild Log

After general clean up, beginning 2 October 2022 we began in earnest.

5 October 2022 – laundered bedding and cushions, some drapes. Washed rugs.

6 October 2022 – tore out the delaminated scraps of the interior 1/8” ply from below the for’d windows. Troy raised the trailer off the blocks to get it ready to move. Wheels turn freely, brakes not jammed and bearings ok. Replaced left side 16” wheel with a 15”. The tires hold air, so far, and are good enough to move it up the hill.

7 October 2022 – Removed screws, nails, etc. from the for’d st’b’d side corner to expose the inner laminated frame parts for re-build.

8 October 2022 – Pulled remaining screws and nails and etc. holding the front panel to gain access to the lumber beneath. Re-glued the st’b’d side laminated inner rail with Titebond III.

## Research

The trailer is called a ‘canned ham’ due to its appearance – similar to the Hormels of yesteryear. They have become quite popular and there are active communities restoring and travelling in them.

Projects like ours sell on e-bay for maybe \$2,000. Full restored models go for \$15,000. Restoration companies quote \$1,000 per foot for a nominal restoration project.

The restorations I have seen tend to be of two types – full ‘retro’ restoring back to original condition and style – formica and extruded aluminum edges everywhere, original stove and ice chest and so on. Others go for a fairly thorough upgrade to the current era with new appliances, solar panels, all electric systems and so on.

Ours has its original tag intact. It was made by the ‘Mechatronic Corp. located at 1230 E 109<sup>th</sup> St, Los Angeles, California. It is an “ALJOA Sportsman.” The overall body length is 12’ 10” so it would seem to be a “Model 14.” (There were two other “Sportsman” models, the 12 and 16.)

Date of manufacture is before 1957, since the name was changed for all models after 1956 to “ALJO” (no final A) due to a copyright suit by ALCOA. It is also after 1953 since the first Model 12’s were introduced in that year, the 14s and 16s came later.

The company moved around and had three locations during this period – Los Angeles (Watts district) as noted above, El Monte and Gardena. Knowing the dates of the moves would pin down the manufacture date a bit more.