

Singer 185 Case Repair

<jensoriginalsewembroiderydesigns.yolasite.com>

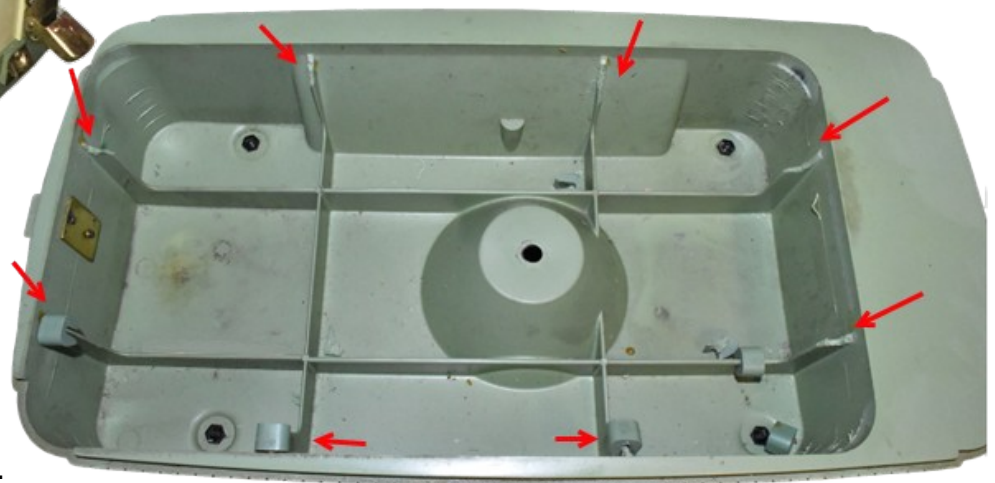
Originally Posted 2026 June 19

Among the machines that arrived in the shipment from my friend's warehouse was this pretty Singer 185 – the “updated” 1950s version of the famed 3/4-sized Singer 99. These are amazing little machines and are among my favourite mid-century Singers.



This one was housed in one of those two-tone plastic cases. These vintage cases are pretty, but after 70+ years, the hard plastic has become quite brittle and fragile, and less able to support the heavy machine head, as I learned when I opened the case on my machine.

When I lifted the cover, I discovered that it seemed to be sitting off-kilter in the case bottom. I decided to remove the base and have a look.



Here's what I found inside.

Originally, the machine head rested on eight narrow flanges topped with rubber bumpers. Unfortunately, after 70+ years of bearing the weight of the machine, almost all of the plastic flanges have given way. As plastic ages, it begins to crumble; the machine becomes unstable and bumps around in the case, causing further damage to the fragile supports.

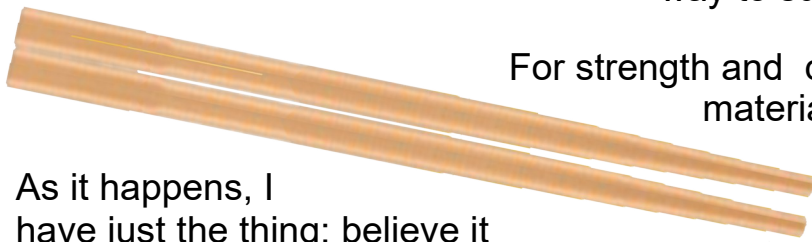
It turns out that seven of the eight flanges inside my case were deteriorated, which is why my machine head was wobbling and sitting unevenly.

Here's a close-up of two of the supports. On the left is the one remaining intact flange with its rubber bumper in place (yellow arrow). On the right you can see a crumbled flange (red arrow). Obviously the bumper will no longer stay in place on the decayed flange, and as a result the machine isn't properly supported. No wonder it was leaning in the case.



To fix the issue, I'll need to either repair the existing flanges, or introduce some new supports. Shoring up the aging plastic flanges didn't really seem a

reasonable option, since plastic is notoriously difficult to repair successfully, and even if I could find a way to build up the plastic flanges, I didn't think they'd have the structural strength to hold the machine's weight. I decided to look for another way to support the machine inside the case.



For strength and durability, I generally prefer authentic materials like wood and metal over plastic, so I cast around to see what I have on hand that might work.

As it happens, I have just the thing: believe it or not, that turned out to be bamboo chopsticks. Bamboo is lightweight and strong, so I figured these sticks would be sturdy enough to suffice as supports for my machine. They are also easy to cut to size using my AnvilCut snips.

To determine the length I'd need, I measured the height of the one remaining intact flange and bumper, and cut my chopstick pieces to that length.



Two chopsticks yielded all eight of the pieces I needed to make the new supports.



(These "disposable" chopsticks can be purchased inexpensively on line, but for years I've routinely saved the unused sticks any time we've had Chinese take-out. They are really useful in the craft loft, and I always keep some on hand.)



Once I had cut the sticks to length, I secured them to the inside of the case bottom using GOOP. I spread the glue along the length of each stick and glued it into the corner formed by the flange and the sides of the case.

My chopsticks are slightly flat rather than fully round, so I angled them with the flat side against the flanges, to provide the greatest degree of contact between the new supports and the base of the machine head.

Then I left it to dry overnight.

Once the GOOP had set, I bolted the machine back into the case, and I can report that it's now sitting nicely level on its new supports, which (unlike the plastic) won't crumble with the years.



A repair like this could perhaps affect the monetary value of this vintage case, but it could be argued that the new supports are a net benefit, since they actually help to preserve the case from further damage. I'd rather have it functional than broken to bits, which it surely would eventually have been from the heavy machine bumping around unsupported inside. The repair could be made a little less obvious by painting the sticks seafoam green to match the case colour, but I didn't bother, because they aren't visible when the machine is installed.



The Singer 185J now sits proud in its vintage base. At 3/4 size and in that beautiful seafoam green, it's as cute as can be.

But although it's eye candy, this machine is also a serious workhorse, manufactured at the peak of Singer's machine quality. This particular one dates to 1952, so it's been sewing its perfect stitch for more than 70 years.

In all likelihood, it will still be sewing just as perfectly in another 70, when today's plastic models have long since crumbled to bits in a landfill somewhere.