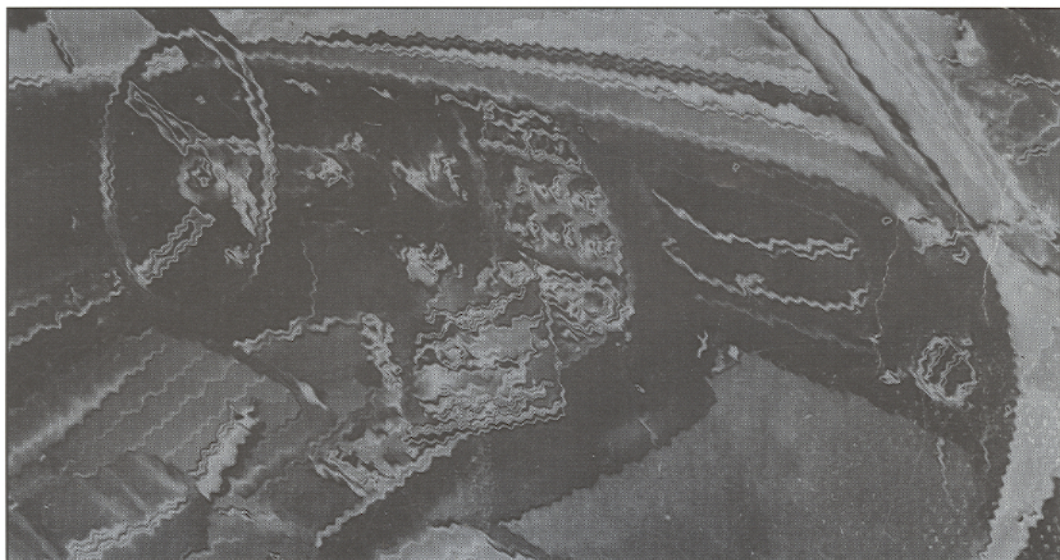


THUMBS UP

How to
restore your
thumb-wheel
temp controls

text and
photography by
Jim McGowan

The temperature control console has been a trouble spot in '68-'76 Corvettes since they were new. Corvette Central has a rebuild kit to get you back in control of the weather conditions inside your car.



True Corvette lovers have a lot of difficulty throwing out an original part. I have boxes of worn-out parts stowed in the garage hoping that, like the cryogenically frozen, a cure will be found and my parts can someday be saved. Slowly but surely, many of the Corvette parts suppliers are manufacturing rebuild kits to resurrect what would have been trashed parts only a few years ago.

One of the most pesky parts in the '69-'76 models is the thumb-wheel temperature control housing in the shifter console. There are three switches that can go bad, and two thumb-wheel cables which wear out and break. Until now, a good replacement faceplate was almost impossible to find.

This control panel also houses the vacuum control for all of the under-dash air-flow doors. If a vacuum line is cracked or broken, not only will you get a vacuum leak, but the pod activating the door won't function properly. So, if your defroster, vent, or heater doors aren't functioning, a vacuum hose or the control is usually the culprit.

Corvette Central has all of the parts that'll allow you to rebuild your control housing and replace your vacuum hoses, if necessary. The vacuum hoses have the correct color-coded striping on each hose for easy identification during installation. The complete rebuild of the control panel is simple and requires only normal handtools.

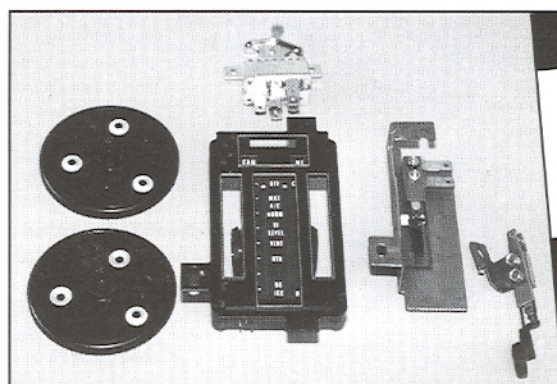
I disassembled the console and removed the right-side dash facing to inspect the wiring while I had everything else apart. The '71 I'm working on is an original California car, and the vacuum hoses were all still soft

and showed no signs of cracking, so they aren't going to be replaced at this time. That'll be another project in the future.

The control panel, however, is another story, with the blower switch working intermittently and the heater-A/C switch not working at all. You'll see how easy the fix can be. Also, during this rebuild, you can repair your fiber optic lenses and retainers while the shifter plate is removed from the car.

Corvette Central has seven different control console face styles, depending on your car's options. Give them a call before ordering, as yours might differ from the one we're showing here.

The key to this kind of restoration project is to work slowly, and carefully observe how the control is dismantled. It's really self-explanatory once you see the part, but our efforts will make the project infinitely easier.



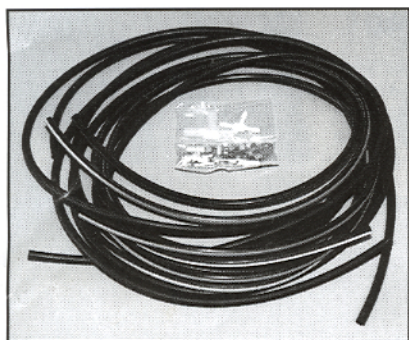
Part Number List for Heater/AC Control Reface Kits

PART NO.	DESCRIPTION
453009	'68 No AC
453014	'68 with AC
453003	'69-'71 No AC
453013	'69-'71 with AC
453012	'72-'75 No AC
453011	'72-'75 with AC
453002	'76 with AC

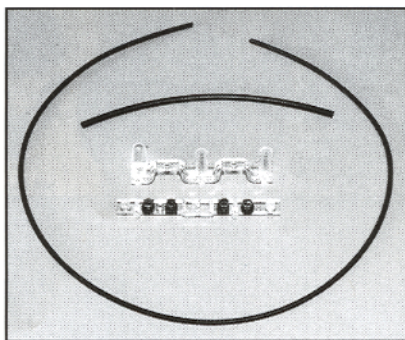
DIFFICULTY INDEX

- 1 Anyone's Project
No tools required
- 2 Beginner
Basic tools
- 3 Experienced
Special tools
- 4 Accomplished
Special tools and outside help
- 5 Professionals Only
Send this work out

1 Here are the main components necessary to rebuild your control panel completely. The various switches are available separately, but the reproduction faceplate and new thumb wheels are included with the kit.



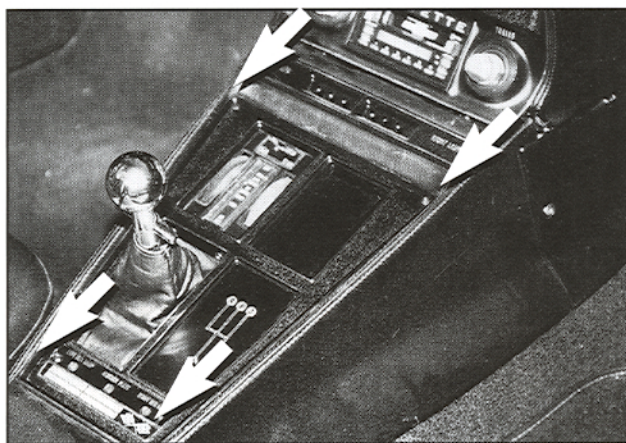
2 If your under-dash vacuum pods aren't functioning, Corvette Central has the correct color-coded hose replacement kit available. If your system needs a complete restoration from the control panel to the activation vacuum pods, you'll need these hoses.



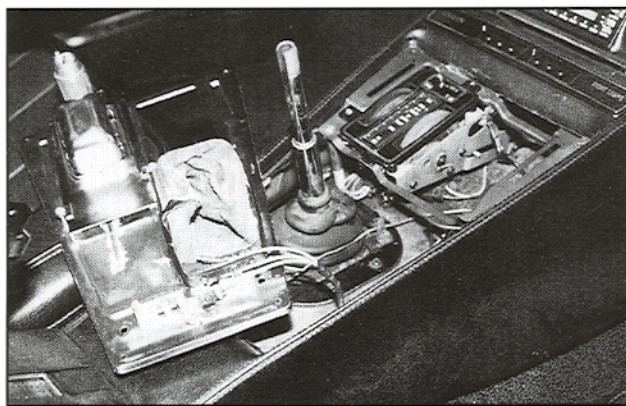
3 Here's a fiber optic repair kit, should you have any broken wires. It includes a length of fiber optic wire, a piece of shrink tubing, and replacement lenses. You'll have this exposed to repair the console—now is the time to fix those cool little indicator lights.



7 The shifter console cover is now removed. Remove the screws fastening the temp housing to the metal support plate and the screws attaching the plate to the console. There are two retaining pins under the instrument cluster that need to be loosened in order for the front of the console to come free. Disconnect the front fiber optic mount, and the console can be lifted out of the car.

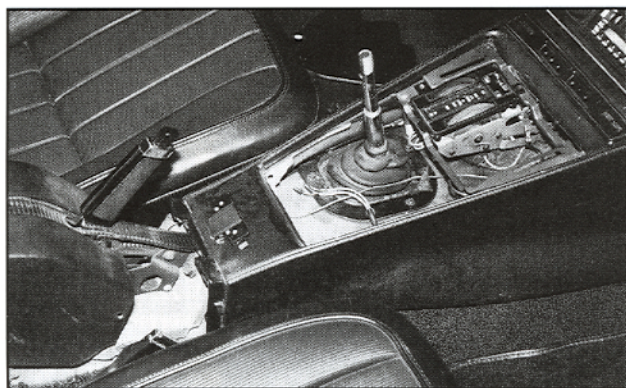


4 Begin by disconnecting the battery and placing the car in an area where you can fully open both doors. Next, remove the shifter handle and the four retaining screws (arrows) at the corners of the plate. A Phillips head screwdriver will do the job.

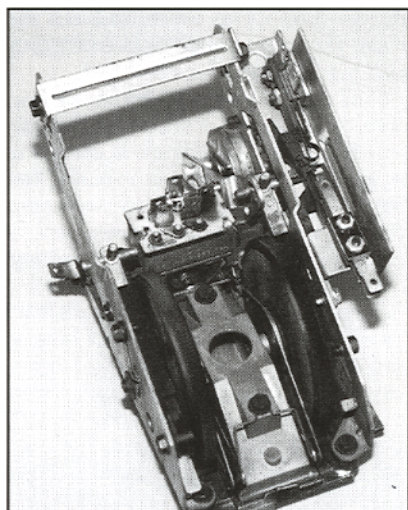


5 The shifter console faceplate can now be lifted carefully, the light unplugged, and the cigarette lighter wire disconnected. The rear fiber optic plastic retainer is located at the bottom of the housing. Carefully remove the wires from the retainer. Ours was broken and someone had glued the pieces and wires together so it would work. Yuk!

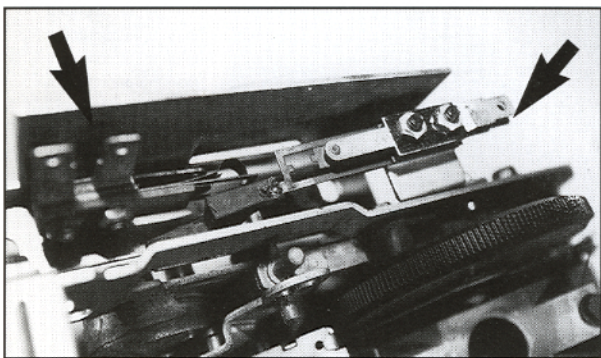
8 While it might look complicated, it's really simple. It's a good idea to label the various plugs and wiring as you disconnect them from the plugs. There are only three plugs which are all different and can't be confused. Each connection is different, and they won't fit the wrong connection.



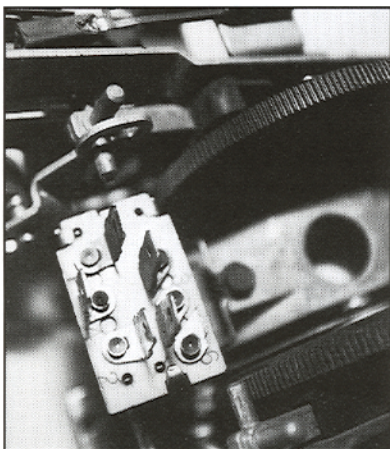
6 Remove two Phillips head trim screws from each side of the plastic E-brake cover, lift the cover up, and slide it back at the rear. Be careful not to crack the plastic or break the sliding trim strap around the parking brake handle.



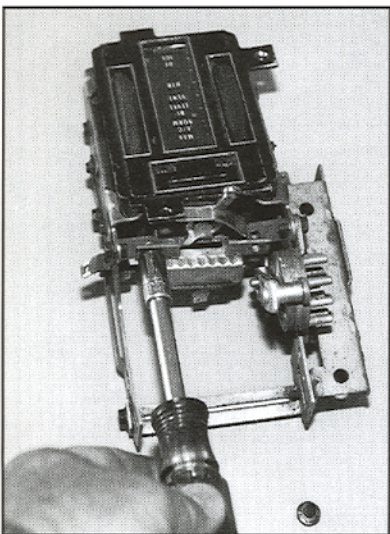
9 Here's the original housing turned upside down. We immediately discovered several problems while inspecting the switches. Notice the threaded cables running behind the thumb wheels. Often, these wear out and break over a quarter of a century of use.



10 There are two points-activated switches (arrows) on the driver's side of the housing. These points can be fried together. The small spring which keeps them separated can be broken or missing, or in our case, damaged by heat to the point of no return.

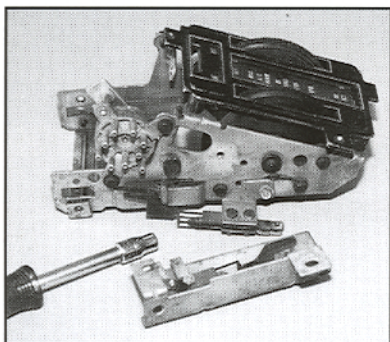


11 At the front of the housing is the blower switch. Two separate plugs from the main wiring harness attach to this switch. The original showed where heat had damaged the plastic plug and the prongs on the switch housing. This was most likely the reason the blower switch worked only intermittently.

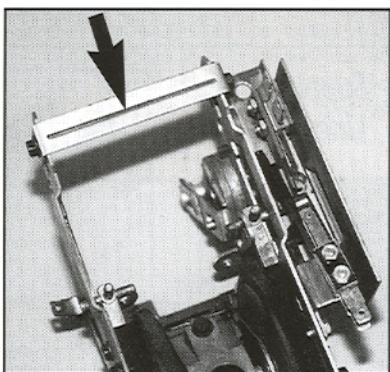


12 Begin the rebuild by removing the two screws securing the blower switch. If you have trouble remembering which screws go where, place them in a labeled baggie for easy identification as you take them out.

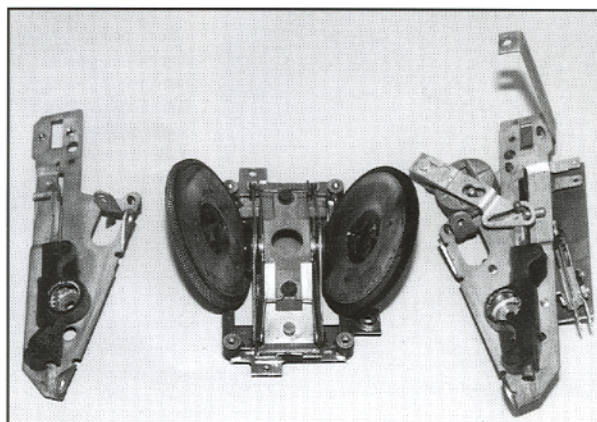
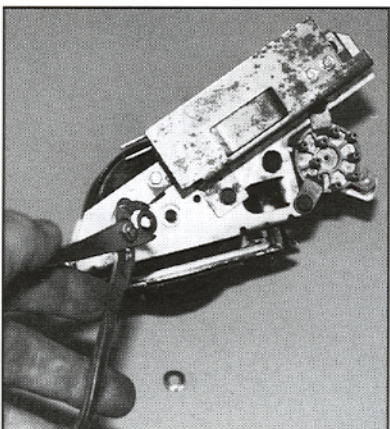
15 Using a small pair of pliers, carefully twist off the original thumb-wheel retainers. New retainers are supplied with the kit. Normally, the old wheels will be damaged during removal because they're thin metal.



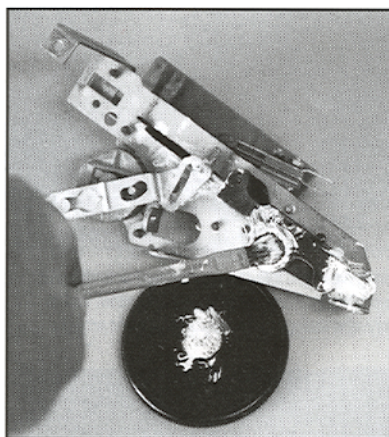
13 Two more screws remove the metal housing containing the heater, A/C compressor switch, and the heater switch with A/C. The Corvette Central replacements go right into place, using the same hardware.



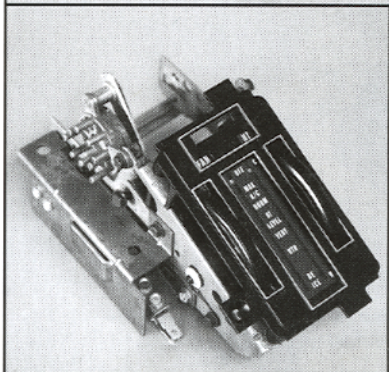
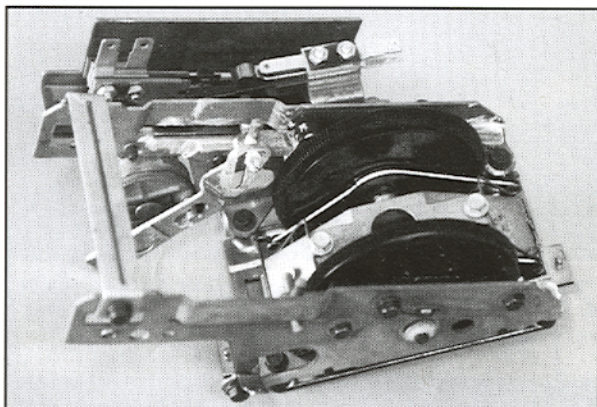
14 Next remove this crossbar in order to allow the assembly to come apart.



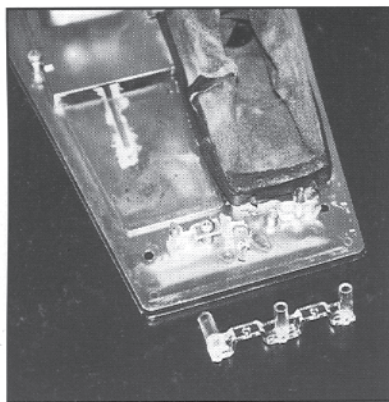
16 After removing the four small screws from the underside of the control faceplate, the entire assembly will come apart easily. Once broken down, you'll see how simple the whole control panel really is.



17 Before installing the new wheels, we gave all the parts a generous dose of white grease for lubrication. This will prevent any problems over the next 25 years of service. You'll see where the original factory lubrication was added; now add some of your own.



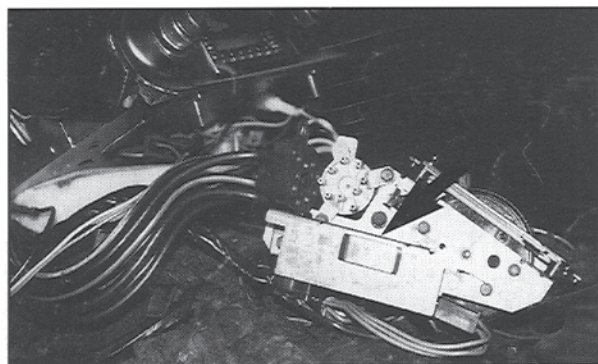
18 The new wheels and console faceplate were installed by simply reversing the removal process and the assembly was ready for reinstallation. The new Corvette Central faceplate and assembly looks and works perfectly. It's an incredible improvement over the faded lettering and dinged-up metal surface. Even if your switches don't need to be replaced, this new faceplate is worth the effort.



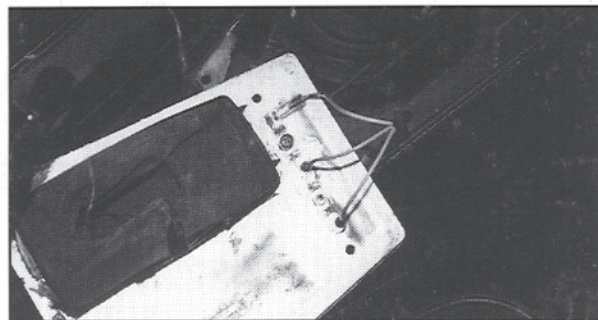
19 The new plastic fiber optic wiring mount is attached with two screws to the rear bottom of the shifter plate. Be very careful not to tighten the screws too much or you'll crack the plastic. Corvette Central has replacements for both the front and rear fiber optic lenses. The front fiber optic harness is detached in order to remove the center console, so you may want to add new lenses while it's out.



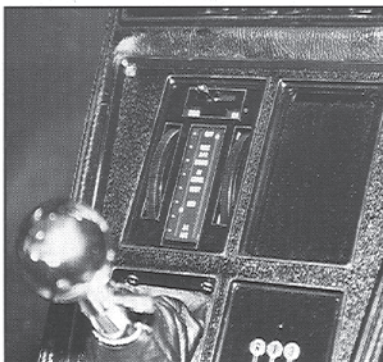
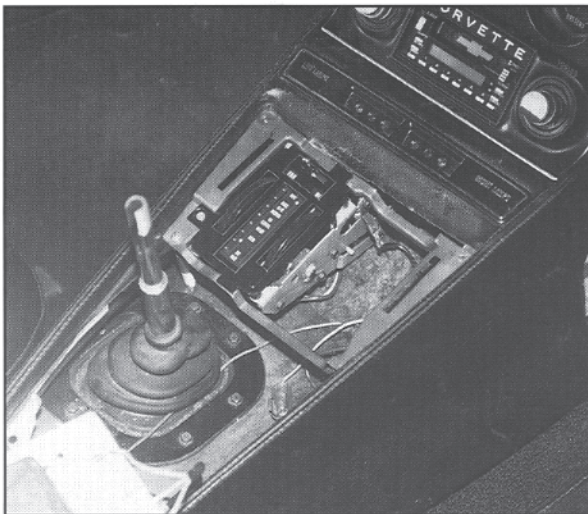
20 Here you see the stock wiring replugged into the rebuilt control assembly. We tested all the new switches prior to putting everything back together, and all worked well. Disconnect the battery after testing and before continuing the project.



21 This is the vacuum control wheel with the original hoses attached (arrow) to the rubber plug. It's secured to the assembly with a single screw and will go on only one way. Foolproof!



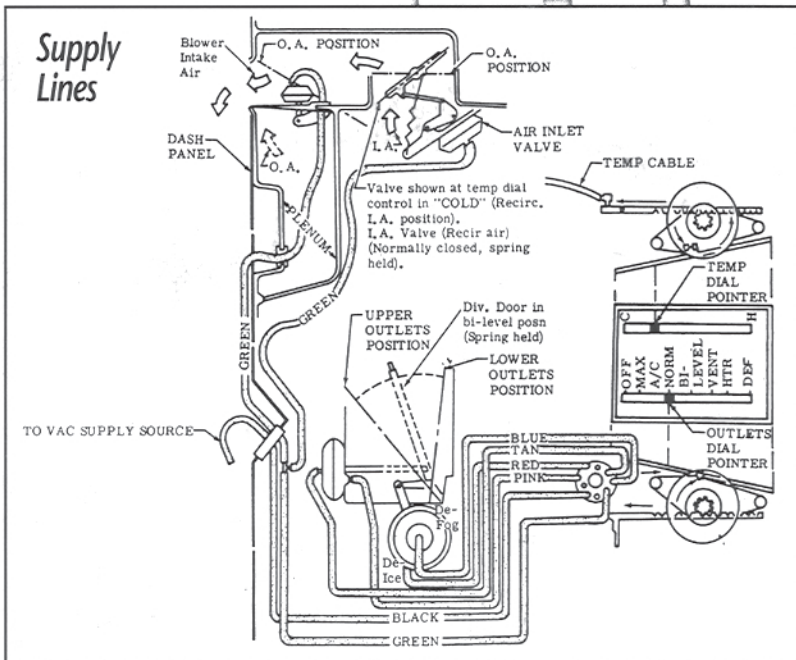
22 The rear fiber optic wiring is now inserted into the new plastic retainer on the bottom of the shifter plate. There's plenty of slack to allow the plate to be replaced over the shifter handle.



24 After reassembling the entire center console, you can see how nice the new faceplate looks. Not only have we done a cosmetic rebuild, but the A/C compressor, heater, and blower controls now function as new.

Source

Corvette Central
13550 Three Oaks Rd.
Sawyer, MI 49125
(269) 426-3342
www.corvettecentral.com



In order to help you identify the under-dash routing of the vacuum lines, here's a diagram with the locations of the color-coded hoses. In order to access the de-fog and de-ice pods, the steering wheel has to be dropped and the instrument cluster housing removed. The outside air and vent pods are under the passenger side dash, which is removed easily. I suggest a factory assembly manual from Corvette Central to make these projects a little easier.

CF