

SIDECAR DREAMS

'Wild' Idea Reignites Old Project Plans

In coming up with a topic for my regular column in this space, I sometimes look back at what I wrote in the corresponding month in previous years. It is curious how often in the month of February, when I usually write my March column, that I have written about not being able to ride during the winter months in Ohio.

The themes have varied from blaming seasonal affective disorder on the lack of riding, to my failure to perform timely winterization, which leads to complaining about the ill effects of too much ethanol in our fuel, to what to do in the off-season to get your motorcycling fix when you can't ride.

This winter, being drawn out into the garage to work on a project bike is what has helped tide me over until the riding season. I have written on a couple of occasions (September 2018 and March 2019) about my current project, a 1985 Honda Nighthawk CB700SC that I acquired at the 2018 AMA Vintage Motorcycle Days swap meet. I previously wrote about cleaning the ethanol infected carbs and vaguely mentioned some clutch issues, which required a replacement of the sight glass in the main reservoir, a rebuild of the slave cylinder and accessing the clutch basket to free up the stuck rings.

Although I got the bike running relatively quickly despite not having a great deal of time to work on it, there was way too much internal engine noise that would need to be addressed. Addressing that issue was going to take a fair bit more time, however and the project stalled.

There weren't many opportunities in 2019 to get back to the project as my day job and life in general conspired to

occupy all of my time. While walking past the bike in the garage every winter morning and evening on the way to and from the car, provoked feelings of guilt over neglecting the project, that alone was not what inspired me to get back to work on the bike.

I had thoroughly enjoyed riding the Ural sidecar that was raffled off last year in support of the AMA Motorcycle Hall of Fame. I had the opportunity to ride it on a number of occasions in promotion of the raffle but had no sidecar experience prior to that.

I had no idea how much fun I was missing out on not having ridden one before.

I had a wild idea that once I got my project bike running, I would attach a sidecar to it. That is what instilled a determination to get the bike roadworthy in time for the spring. By the way, riding a sidecar is not at all like riding a conventional motorcycle and you can get yourself into trouble very easily. It is really important to learn from an accomplished sidecarist. I want to thank Corey and Casey Wilkinson of Good Spark Garage for their tutorials. I was able to take what I learned from them and practice on my own to develop more confidence and a better understanding how the rig would react.

It was time to tackle the bigger job of getting to the bottom of



By Rob Dingman

► Rob's 1985 Honda Nighthawk CB700SC project.

the noisy engine problem. I was pretty confident I knew what the issue was which is why I had been avoiding dealing with it. One of the great things about the Nighthawk is that it does not require valve adjustments. The reason for this is that it has hydraulic lash adjusters intended to keep the valves continuously properly adjusted.

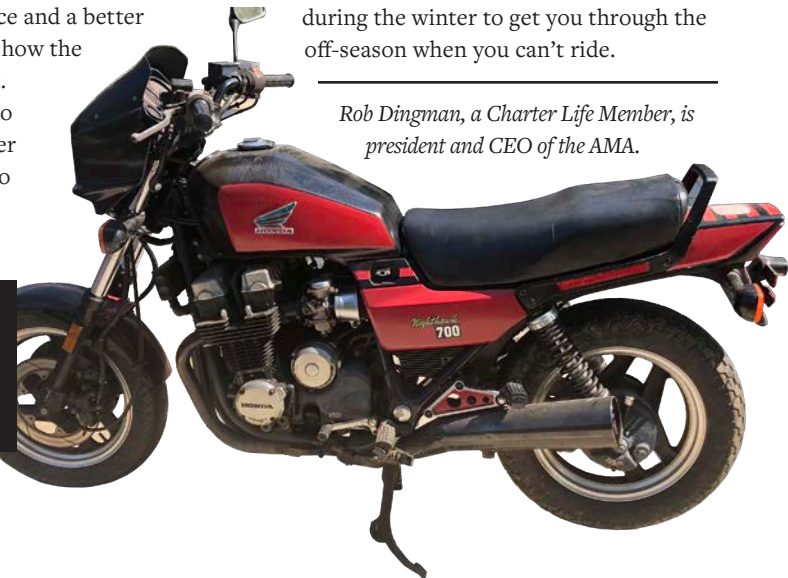
The HLAs work great unless the bike is neglected and sits for too long. Given the other mechanical issues with this bike, there is no doubt that it sat for quite a long period of time. If the engine isn't run fairly regularly, the oil in the HLAs can drain out and not pump up properly when the engine is eventually started, resulting in a lot of top-end clatter.

Top-end clatter was a bit of an understatement concerning this bike. The job required pulling the camshafts to get to the HLAs. It is not particularly difficult, just time consuming. It was time to stop procrastinating and get to work on the issue.

Of the 16 HLAs, 10 were completely collapsed and seized. I was able to bleed the other six and revive them, but as I write this, I am in the process of trying to salvage the others. So far, it is not looking good. Since new HLAs cost close to \$50 each, I think I will be scouring the internet to find some used ones.

So, in addition to looking for a suitable sidecar online, I am also searching for parts. Searching the internet for parts is all part of the process of working on a project bike. It is after all part of the challenge. It is also one of things you do during the winter to get you through the off-season when you can't ride.

Rob Dingman, a Charter Life Member, is president and CEO of the AMA.





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