

ADJUSTING THE RIDE

New Season, New Plans by Rob Dingman

Since my last couple columns have been about serious issues, I thought that a lighter topic was in order. After all, it is still early in the riding season in Ohio, so a column about motorcycling rather than one about motorcycling issues is timely.

As many members know, the mission of the AMA is to promote the motorcycle lifestyle and protect the future of motorcycling. A former AMA executive once complained to me that the organization's mission statement was grammatically incorrect. He thought that motorcycle lifestyle should be motorcycling lifestyle. However, the term "motorcycle lifestyle" is more all-encompassing and inclusive of all the activity surrounding motorcycling, not just the act of riding a motorcycle.

The motorcycle lifestyle includes the activity of some that may not even be motorcyclists. I recently attended an AMA Supercross where I saw a lot of families and others that I am sure were non-motorcyclist race fans who are very caught up in the motorcycle lifestyle without even being riders themselves. Attend any amateur motocross event across the country, and you will see a lot of "race parents" who aren't motorcyclists

but are absolutely engaged in the motorcycling lifestyle.

Also, as motorcyclists, we do a lot to facilitate our riding that is not strictly motorcycling. As an example, we are engaged in lots of activities during the winter that get us through the long periods of time when we can't get out and ride.

Unfortunately, the start of the motorcycling season usually isn't a ride. The motorcycling season usually begins with seasonal maintenance that should be performed before you get to ride. With half a dozen bikes in my garage, I have a lot of work to do before I can get out and ride each spring.

I try to get a head start on some items over the winter but activities like oil changes have to wait until it is warm outside.

Just like riding them, all the bikes compete also for the attention of their owner when it comes to doing work on them. As I mentioned in a column last fall, I took on a project bike last year. The 1986 BMW R80RT that I am converting to something I call the "R8T"—a name inspired by the modern BMW R9T—occupied much of the time I spent

working on bikes over the winter. In fact, despite putting only about 100 miles on the R8T, I have absolutely spent more time with it than my other bikes recently.

In addition to the work mentioned the last time I wrote about the R8T, I swapped the brake lines and hard plumbing for stainless steel lines, replaced the clutch cable, painted the fork lowers, replaced the rear brake shoes and modified the tailpiece for the shortened subframe. Shortening the stock seat pan and remaking a shortened seat is the last major remaining challenge that I plan to tackle on the project. I recently got the tank, new shorter front fender, side panels and tailpiece back from the painter. They all look great and hopefully, by the time you are reading this column, I will have the bike back together again and on the road.

Anyone who is contemplating taking on a project bike should dive in head-first and do it. I have learned a lot, not only about the old BMW but also about how to approach challenges from different perspectives. Things don't always work out as you envision, and sometimes you have to adjust your approach. Just like on a great ride, sometimes that new path chosen works out even better than the original plan.

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