

Radiators and Reservoirs in Li'l Reds

During my continual search for differences in the 1978 & 1979 Dodge Li'l Red Express Trucks, I recently found some unique information about the radiators and reservoirs used on these two-year trucks.

I always knew that the '78 and '79 used a different overflow reservoir, because of the differences in the hood release mechanisms. They had to be shaped differently to accommodate the fact that the '78 hood release is under the radiator support and the '79 hood release is above the radiator support. I had also noticed that there were 2 different type caps on the '79 reservoirs, one with a top neck vent hole and one with a vented cap and overflow hose.

On the '78 reservoir, there is a vent "hole", at the back of the tank neck, where the pressure could be released. One of the '79 tanks has the exact same neck vent hole, but the other tank with the vent in the cap did not have the hole in the neck. While examining these tanks, I noticed that the '78 had the overflow hose coming off the bottom of the tank, on the "*driver*" side and going to the recovery port on the "*driver*" side of the radiator filler neck.

The '79 tanks had the overflow hose coming off the bottom of the tank on the "*passenger*" side, and then going to the recovery port on the "*passenger*" side of the radiator filler neck.

During this investigation, I found that the '78 had 2 different radiator part numbers, one for a non-air conditioned truck and one for an air conditioned truck. When checking the '79, I found that there was only one part number radiator used, whether the truck had air conditioning or not.

Needless to say, this spurred my curiosity. So, the search began to find just what part number radiators and reservoirs were used on what trucks.

As far as why the 1978 had 1 reservoir and 2 different radiators was obvious, the A/C trucks had an extra 3rd core in the radiator, for cooling, as opposed to 2 cores on non – A/C trucks.

The 1979 models were not that easy to figure out. Apparently, all '79 radiators came with 3 cores, thereby negating the need for 2 separate radiators for A/C and non – A/C trucks.

The reason for the radiator recovery tube, on the filler neck of the radiator, being on the “*driver*” side of the '78 and on the “*passenger*” side of the '79, is still unknown.

I have not been able to correlate when or why they switched the overflow tanks from being vented out the hole in the neck on some trucks and out the cap on others. The overflow coming off the cap, just vents to the atmosphere, down the passenger side of the radiator. The only answer I can come up with is, if the tank vented coolant out the neck hole, there would be residue on the top of the radiator and on the radiator shroud. By venting down the side of the radiator, the residue would be expelled to the ground, instead of the engine compartment. Since at this point, we do not know at what VIN range they changed the overflow tanks, either type will be accepted on a 1979, in the Concours Judging Class.

On the last page, I have illustrations of all 3 radiators and all 3 tanks. It really is strange that the '78 was available with 1 tank and 2 radiators and the '79 was available with 1 radiator and 2 tanks! The mystery of these trucks seems to never end. It is like being an Archeologist, digging up facts on these great trucks. I hope this information will be helpful for anyone restoring either year of these trucks.

John C. Roberts (Lil Red Dad)
Co-Founder, President & Senior Concours Judge,
NALRETO (National Association of Li'l Red Express
Truck Owners)

1978 & 1979 Mopar radiator, part numbers with and without A/C
#4030318 #4030319 #4089732



1978 without A/C



1978 with A/C



1979 with/without A/C

'78 radiator reservoir tank, drivers side overflow hose, green cap with indentation, vent in neck. # 4086800



'79 radiator reservoir tank, passenger side overflow hose, flat green cap, vent in neck. # 4089624



'79 radiator reservoir tank, passenger side overflow hose, green cap with top vent hose. #4089623

