

Diary of a Virgin Motorcycle Mechanic

Cara Mae attempts to combine two incomplete Honda Rebel 250's to make herself one reliable ride. Absolutely no experience, just an itch to see if she can.

January 16, 2005

At first thought, I view putting together a motorcycle as being a piece of art or a puzzle because I love making things with my hands. I imagine making sure the pieces fit and getting to know how the tools feel. Some people ask, "Why would you want to work on a motorcycle?" So I answer, "It will help me on the road to know the ends and outs of the bike I am riding." But my second thought, (and what I don't tell them) is that it is a personal challenge to do it. I have this competition with the world and myself. My ego may be speaking for me "I can build it and it will run!" It is always nice to put some of the *macho-ness* of the world in its place. "Can you feel me ladies?" You might think a Honda Rebel is not like building a rocket ship or putting together an *almighty* panhead but hey-- you got



to start somewhere. So now with some time, effort and common sense, (also the great wisdom of my husband) I want to actually do it and be proud to ride it. I will be writing about the learning experiences of building a motorcycle, however it turns out--the good and the bad. Dig it.

January 30, 2005

Decisions, decisions...



Which Rebel do I want to use as my main squeeze? Let's see...hmm...should I go the easy route and put all the pretty painted pieces that match all together or do the Frankenbike style? Let's do the rugged look, just for kicks. You know, it adds character!

February 15, 2005

Here I go! I jazz myself up for a full day of wrenching with my ever-patient husband at my side to guide me. He starts me off with simple things to ease me into the mechanical situation. Foot pegs and controls, exhaust brackets, fender struts and suspension, all cake- just place and fasten- love it! Wow, I can do this, I can walk in the steps of Christine Vaughn. (*I'm not worthy, I'm not worthy.*)



February 28, 2005



Okay, so some people shudder at the mention of the "carburetor". The little heart of my future motorcycle seemed so intimidating to me. Now armed with my trusty Honda manual, cleaner and a variety of tools, I set out to do what is revered notorious-- rebuild the carb. After it is all taken apart, I inspect each piece for clogs and damage. Then I clean all the little nooks and crannies to enable smooth gas flow. Once I completed the task, it was time

to put it all back together. Thank goodness, the great biker spirits made manuals or my carb would end up like something out of battle bots. Now that wasn't so bad. It was actually relaxing, I can dig this...



Oh, yes the saga continues.....

March 5, 2005

It's wrenchin' time again, Diary. Time to swap the motor from one frame to the other. Unscrew all the nuts and bolts that the motor is mounted with...got it. Remove any foot pegs, shifter or mounting plates that are in the way, no problem. Now I had to be careful on how it was pulled out. Okay, how do I describe this? Kind of lift up, twist a bit and pull to the side. Wow, whoa, Betsy! I would say a good 80lbs. Because of the angle it was at, I was very grateful that Cheryl had a moment to help a gal out. With the other frame close by, we nestled the motor into her final resting place. I replaced all the nuts and bolts, and torched the motor down. Ah.. Yes, the technicality of a torch wrench, a weird looking, but useful contraption that tightens the screws to certain specifications. Who would have thunk it?

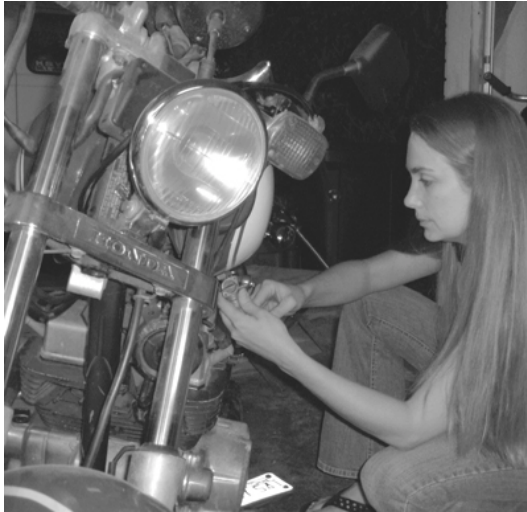


April 13, 2005

The biker spirits are with me yet again, yeah. The electrical system seems to be well laid out and easy to put together. I have heard such tales of woe and sorrow when it comes to wiring a bike. I must commend the previous owner for being so gracious. The coils slid right into place on their brackets, which allowed me to fasten in the spark plug links. Now I was able to reattach the regulator that mounts over the coils, followed by the capacitor. The wiring for the lights, blinkers, horn, starter and ignition switch are once again rejoined with their proper connection housings. FYI: Husbandly wisdom-- Always make sure the battery is disconnected before attempting any electrical project. *(Thanks Babe, what would I do without ya!)*



And the saga still continues...

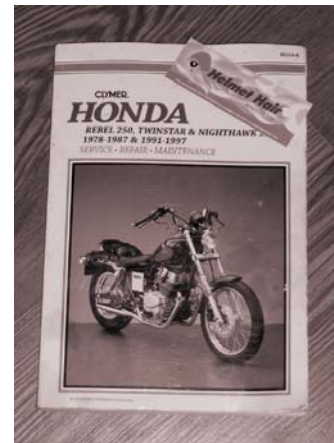


March 1, 2006

After a long winters hibernation, my Rebel beckons me from the lonely garage. Yes I know, Diary, I have neglected her. I make no excuses, can you ever forgive me? As I look down upon the moto beast, I feel an inkling of anxiousness and I say "Let's Rock!" So I snatch up the carburetor placing it in the confines of the engine. With a little wriggling and some lube on the rubber tube, it does fit quite nicely. The carburetor is all attached and tightened in snug. I work my way over to the air filter chamber making sure the rubber tube is properly aligned, and insert air filter element here as well, *Bada Bing!* After the cover is put on the air filter the sheet metal resides atop. Got to make it look pretty, right? I proceed

to the other side of my bike. Once I have lubricated the throttle and choke cables, the ends are attached to the carb. I had a heck of a time trying to get that smooth reflex from the handgrip to the carb. I think I 3-in-1 oiled everything in sight, until it finally dawned on me, take the stiff ol' hand grip off and lube the inside of it, *Howdy Doo -it felt like butter!* Today is a good day.

Important note from Clymer: Proper air filter servicing can do more to ensure long service from your engine than almost any other single item.



March 15, 2006

Today I must take a moment of pause for my:

Motorcycle Lament

Still so new to this sport and feeling that my time on the road has been cut short. One motorcycle apart in the garage and the other hopelessly sold for beginner's sake. Now I must sit on the sidelines and watch my friend's whiz by, feeling the butterflies in my stomach as their engines roar. Patience girl, your Honda is not so far off in the distance. Until then I must bide my time with fleeting moto-fantasies and the satisfaction of picking up the ol' wrench. As for right now, my Diary, I am officially a "Lady in Waiting."

April 5, 2006



Okay, lets talk electrics/wiring. Now Diary, I am one lucky girl, I tell ya! I managed to rewire and connect the blinkers and lighting all in the first try. Oh yeah... after sorting out the tangled mess I made. You should have been there in my dismay of routing the wires, to and fro, under the fender, around the engine and along the frame. I am not trying to toot my own horn, honestly I am truly amazed. Once the battery was attached, I held my breath and hoped the ancient biker mechanics would cut me a break. I'll be darned, all the lights worked: blinkers, headlight, brake and gear light. Not only that but when I gave a little key turn to the ignition, low and behold, the voice of my motorcycle was heard for the first time. I think mine eyes were as big as saucers, and if you know me, that is rare! That's me- a proud mama.



Yee-Haw...almost done!!