

The ride that just wasn't meant to be ...

First of all, I'd like to extend many thanks to the Rallybubbas for putting on yet another awesome event. Top notch, as usual, no surprise there.

Jim Sparkman and I had been looking forward to this rally for quite some time. I ordered and installed a 5.0 gallon fuel cell from BLM Accessories a few months prior to the event, and also decided to add some PIAA auxillary driving lights. The bike came together quite well, but to my horror, Jim and I noticed a tiny coolant leak seeping from the radiator a few weeks prior to the rally, when we went on a weekend outing with our wives. We attempted to diagnose the problem, but could only determine that the small seepage came from the center of the radiator, with no apparent damage, bent fins, etc, noticeable. Oddly enough, the bike would only leak a couple of days after it was ridden, and then only a few drops at best. And then it would just not leak anymore, until the bike was ridden again. Weird

Knowing that I eventually would have to take a look at this problem in further detail, I hunted around for a used radiator and found one at Morton's BMW in Fredericksburg, VA. Jim, who lives near there, graciously picked up the item for me a week prior to the rally. As to not violate IBR rule # 5, the bike was left in it's leaky state.

Since RacerX was somewhat dormant on the discussion board, I started dropping a few lines about Trailer Week in Myrtle Beach being a great success, given the many trailers I encountered heading south on my commute on I-95. This had the desired effect of spurring on a few nice conversations.

Thursday May 22nd, Jim and I met up in Virginia to head to York together. Just before the Potomac River bridge on RT 301, Jim's glove box cover flies off the bike. As we both pulled over, and while he walked back to retrieve it, all I could think was, "What a great start" ... Little did I know.

Arriving at the Holiday Inn, we quickly checked in and soon were chatting with some of the other early arrivals and the Rallybubbas. We excused ourselves from the conversation, in order to grab a last decent meal while sitting down and not being rushed by the Screaming Meanie that would limit fuel stops and food to a meager 10 minutes.

Friday morning 5/23, and Jim and I are off for the Odometer check. Weather is good, bikes are running strong, the Remus exhaust is sounding like music to my ears. What a great weekend this will be. We complete the odometer check, and as I park the bike at the hotel, coolant is literally pouring from the bike - just f'ing great.

Jim decides to run to a local automotive shop to pick up some stop-leak, while I yank off the fuel cell, seat and move

the gastank backwards to gain access to the radiator fill cap. He returns, we add some stop-leak, the leak appears to get worse. Wonderful. We meet with the rallybubbas and indicate that we are withdrawing from the 48 hour event, but will make the 24hour rally. Jim and I draft a quick contingency plan. He would ride all the way back to King George, VA and pick up the spare radiator from his home, we'll change it Friday afternoon and be ready to rally Sat. morning. His willingness to help and forego the 48 hour rally amazes me. We always rode as wingmen, I guess this time will be no different, we just don't ever leave our wingman. As he is heading to King George (now in a downpour), I begin to dismantle the bike. Disgusted and a bit pissed off, I discover that a 13mm socket is preventing me from getting the radiator all the way out. With nothing to do, I head up to see the 48hour riders plotting, charting and getting ready to leave. Soon I chat with other riders arriving for the 24 hour event, meet David Riley's travelling lightshow, who indicated that he may have the tools I need, which in fact he did. I chat with Hotch, Bill Shaw and Glenn Mulvey a bit, before yanking the radiator out. Much to my displeasure, the center of the fan mounted behind the radiator, has chewed a hole into the radiator after all these years. Bummer. And it gets worse ...

Jim returns at about 5:30pm, rode in nothing but rain for 350 miles for ZERO points (except the ones in my book). He brought the radiator and coolant, all is ready to go. We join the fellow 24hour riders for the dinner, then decide to start wrenching again. As we are attempting to reinstall the radiator, we realize that it just doesn't fit, it's too thick, with the fan mounted it won't fit past the frame. Damn. Contingency plan #2 consisted of a healthy glob of JB Weld being applied over the chewed up fins and the hole in the radiator core. We had no choice but to put the bike back together, this time using pieces of tie-wraps as a spacer between fan & radiator. Filling the coolant would have to wait until the next morning to give the JB Weld a chance to set up over night. Thanks to Hotch and Cdog for helping shine a light on things during the reassembly. Finally, about 10pm or so, the bike is mostly together, Jim and I retire for a few drinks at the Holiday Inn Lounge. Then back to the room, and plot a route from the 24hour list (we didn't pay much attention to this list, since we signed up for the 48 hour event).

Saturday morning came too soon, and we filled the bike with coolant. I let it idle for awhile, and steam bellowed from the bike. Not sure if it was the leak, or spilled fluid from the radiator extraction. It just didn't look good. Jim and I gracefully bowed out of the 24hour event while the Bubbas were briefing the riders prior to their departure. I felt so bad for Jim, all of this (and his) effort was apparently in vain. We watched most of the riders leave for their adventure, met the Bubbas for awhile, then headed south in an attempt just to get the bike home (while not being on a trailer). Oddly enough, the bike performed flawlessly, we even added a few miles to visit Morton's BMW and replace the

radiator for one that would fit. And here comes the kicker: The radiator I bought SHOULD have fit my bike, however, a radiator from an earlier model K1100LT was installed in my bike, which I bought BRANDNEW from Bob's BMW???

The JB Weld repair work STILL has not leaked one drop!!!

Lessons learned:

1. Don't talk too much trash about folks hauling their bikes on trailers, mine almost was on one (but at least it was broken).
2. If your bike leaks, fix it (even if you have to break rule #5), it will only get worse over time, duuhhh.
3. Plan a solid 24 hour ride, even if you are signed up as a 48 hour rider.
4. Don't blindly trust that the parts on your bike belong to that years model (especially when buying a model that's being discontinued and replaced by another model the following year).

Andy Mueller (looking to buy an aircooled bike)
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