

R68 and Errors

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by S. Hamfist An R68 was one of those scarcer bikes that always seemed out of reach for me. On a warm March day in 1995, while unemployed and doing some work under the table for my close friend Bill Herring, Bill asked me to drive up to White Lake, Michigan and retrieve an R68 basket case he had just bought from Karl Bergschwaenger. Just to look through the parts sure seemed rewarding enough for a day's adventure and I was eager for the trip. When Karl, he told me that in his younger days, he had raced NSUs at Daytona. Rubbing elbows with this accomplished rider brought even further rewards to my day. The R68 parts sat in several incomplete piles in Karl's shop. Someone had beaten the bike with a heavy hammer, which must have weighed at least two pounds. The transmission case was smashed in all over the top and right side, the now empty engine crank case was missing half its top part, the frame was bent from what appeared to be a serious road mishap and also sported scars from the hammer. Karl said he'd used the crankshaft to get his R69 sport bike running. Karl explained that he'd gotten the bike from a fellow who owed him some mechanical work done. The previous owner told him he'd gotten it from a man whose son was either badly injured or lost his life while riding the bike. The father determined that no one would ever ride the bike again, took a hammer and carried out his anger on the bike. What was left was a frame and matching crank case, a rear drive, one full wheel hub, a disassembled fork set, and a pair of handlebar risers. Bill had given me \$300.00 in cash to hand to Karl. After loading the parts in the truck and driving home, it occurred to me that the engine and frame could be repaired and was worth holding onto. Bill owed me \$300.00 for some work I'd done for him several days earlier. We would talk about this. We met at an old 1920's gas station in West Milgrove, Ohio. Bill looked over the parts in the bed of the truck and was as excited as a kid with a new toy. Somewhere under that huge grin was an adult I wanted to speak to. After promising Bill his first right of refusal in the event it ever came up for sale, the R68 went home with me. Photos of the broken crank case were sent out to friends who might offer some insight into its repair. The obituaries came back with, "Too bad, that would have made a nice piece." "You'll never ride this bike, but maybe you should take the serial number off the frame and weld it to another good one, at least you'll have an R68 frame, and so forth. The frame went to Vern Fueston at GT Enterprises in Montague, California. Three months later it came back straight. No chopped off serial numbers, just a good original, repaired frame. The crank case required thought, a lot of thought, and a donor crank case supplied by Jeff Borer. The donor was from an R50 that had its bottom half broken off in a crash. Cutting the pieces out of the donor, cleaning up the jagged edges of the R68 case and hand fitting them took only two hours. The welding done by Mark at Diversified Welding in Toledo took another hour and cost \$55.00. The actual surface work cleaning up the welds and repairing the BMW and one digit of the serial numbers on the left side took another nine hours. The texturing was done in several stages, which included the use of a needle scaler, .031 shot peen, #11 glass beads and a final hand scouring with a stainless wire brush and solvent. The BMW and serial numeral were done with fine chisels and a model maker's hammer. The total time to think about how to repair the crank case took more than six years. The hands on time of repair took twelve hours. Locating the remainder of the parts was routine searching, haggling and dipping deep into pocket. The transmission case replacement was a lucky encounter at a swap meet: \$5.00! Two new Weinmann rims found at Mid-Ohio added to the score. Ken Danzey had bought one of them just before I'd gotten to the seller. Several years went by and he must have felt sorry for me, because let me buy it from him. Photos of the case repair are on the VMCA website: <http://www.beemergarage.com> The Errors

Mr. Hamfist allowed me to ride this bike last week. It ran fine, shifted smoothly and seemed fine until accelerating in fourth gear. The engine sped up under load. The clutch was slipping.

I took it upon myself to investigate the problem and not discuss the matter with the confused and inept Mr. Hamfist.

Upon removing the transmission it became evident from the excess oil on the shelf that oil was leaking from either/or both the rear main seal and input shaft seal on the transmission.

The clutch had some oil on it. When comparing it with an original clutch disc, it became clear that the replacement had about fifteen percent less friction area.

Oil could only get to the clutch from the transmission, and that would either be from a leaking seal or! There was no felt sleeve on the throw out rod! Nor was there a snap ring on the nose of input shaft. The seal sleeve was pressed on too far rearward leaving 2mm axial slop in the shaft, causing the forward bearing to spin in the carrier. What else did Hamfist overlook?

Found that he installed an early output shaft coupling with no provision to remove the three fasteners holding the Hardy disc cover. An access slot had to be cut into the coupling.

The transmission came apart, the bearing was replaced, a snap ring installed, new seals installed and reassembled. The throw out rod was replaced and a new felt sleeve put in place.

••••• The flywheel was removed and a new main seal installed. The clutch disc and diaphragm spring were replaced with fifty year old off the shelf NOS parts. The engine is using a cut down R69 flywheel and clutch assembly.

••••• I like to beat up on Hamfist because it's fun, but we should remember that at that time in his career, he did what he knew how to. No one of us sets out to make careless mistakes. No one of us wakes up and decides, "Well, I think today I will do my worst."

Richard Sheckler Richard, ••••• Don't take yourself so seriously. Nobody else does. Slam Hamfist