

**Repeated Battery Failures**

I am writing you to thank you for the article on Yuasa in the August issue.

I have a 2003 Victory and my one-year warranty is just about up. My dealer can't find why the bike can't keep a battery in it. The bike came with a Yuasa and that has been replaced with a Yuasa. The battery charge will hold sometimes less than 24 hours or up to several weeks.

I won't ride out of town as I am afraid of getting caught without a battery. Is this Yuasa's 20% failure rate? It's the best answer that I have that the bike can't keep a battery.

Thanks for telling us about Yuasa.

Ivan Golden

*There are a few things that can be going on here. You say that the batteries will not hold a charge in the bike, but is it really the battery that is going bad?*

*The first thing to check is whether the battery will take a charge outside the bike and then do a load test. If it passes, the problem is in the bike, not the battery. If the problem is in the bike, it indicates one of two things:*

*A) You have a poorly functioning charging system, and the bike is running on mostly battery power for as long as it can.*

*B) You have an excessive load on the battery and are draining it faster than the charging system can replenish it. This could be due to aftermarket accessories (lights, heated clothing, whatever) or due to something like a stop lamp that does not turn off due to a stuck switch or pinched wire. This kind of situation does not blow fuses, but rather just runs down the battery in a day or three.*

*Another thing, if the battery does not pass the load test, perhaps it is being 'cooked' by constant overcharging. This happens when the voltage regulator is bad and will also shorten the life of any battery that's installed.*

**V-Star 650 Gearbox Hang-ups**

I have a question I need to ask you about my 2002 V-Star 650 Yamaha. I have approximately 2800 miles on it and the engine runs just beautifully.

My only problem is that when it is in neutral, at times (not all the time), I cannot put it into any of the gears, especially first gear, without pulling the motorcycle back about two or three feet or rolling it forward about two or three feet, then I am able to shift into gear. As I mentioned, when it is in neutral, it appears to be locked, and I cannot get it into gear.

Is this normal or is this a potential problem? The dealer tells me that it is normal

and it just means the gears aren't meshing and by rolling the motorcycle back a foot or two, then it meshes and I can shift.

I would very much appreciate your comments. Is it safe to continue riding with this problem?

Jack Hartstein, MD

*It is not uncommon to have to rock some bikes a bit to get them to shift into first gear from neutral. But in that case, we are talking about a few inches, not two to three feet. The teeth of the gears are not what controls what gear a motorcycle is in. The process is that when you move the shift lever, a sliding fork moves a sliding gear into position. That gear has either notches or keys (called slots or dog houses), and dogs, no kidding, into engagement. It is not uncommon for the forks to wear or become bent (at 2800 miles I doubt it's worn), making engagement difficult. If the problem persists, we recommend that you have it disassembled and inspected.*

**Subject: Another Harley Brake Problem**

I have read twice now in the Letters section about problems with the four-piston calipers on the newer Harleys—the problem being that they get spongy to the point that you need to pump the brake handle to get them to grab.

I had the same problem, and same response from my dealer: Master cylinder. The problem is that the caliper pistons are sticking part way out, and taking the calipers off and removing the brake pads off will reveal all four pistons being stuck and 1/8"-3/16" extended in my case. Pressing the cups back into the caliper and reassembling the caliper, bleeding the brakes will get them back good as new. All fine and well, however, there seems to be more than a couple of us having this problem more than once.

Although it can be "fixed," I suspect that it will happen again because what caused the pistons to stick in the first place isn't fixed. Seems to me that there is something wrong with these calipers as a whole. If so, somebody ought to find out how widespread the problem is and what needs to be done to correct it. Not having front brakes is a bit of a safety issue.

Love the mag, keep up the good work.

Paul Smeltzer  
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Athens, LA

*Thank you for your comments, we have heard the same things about the pistons sticking, but do not have any information about a permanent fix, yet.*

**Poltergeist Shadow**

I have a 1988 VT1100C Shadow with 55,000 miles on it. The engine has never been opened. In the last 2-3 years it's developed a ringing noise, sounding like it's coming from the top of the engine. I'm thinking something on the line of a valve lifter. Also in this time frame, my gas mileage has dropped about 10 mpg, and during high speed riding at 60-70 mph, when you roll on the throttle, it sounds as if the engine pings, and it doesn't ping lightly, either.

I use the same high octane fuel wherever I'm at. I've had the timing checked, coils checked, changed the air filter to a K&N, charging system checked, use the same sparkplugs (NGK), had the carbs off and synchronized, compression checked and I've always used Honda Pro 10/40 oil. Speaking of oil, in the last few months it's starting to use about a 1/2-qt. per 500 miles, with no signs of blue smoke. You can rev the throttle with absolutely no blue smoke!

Is it time to give this bike a major overhaul? I'm thinking maybe just the top end meaning the lifters, cam, etc. Maybe the valves are not opening up like they did when it was newer. What do you think?

Todd Strom  
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Dickinson, N.D.

*Checking the valve clearance is certainly a good idea. The amount of oil you are using (1 quart per 1000 miles) is at the top end of the normal range for an engine with 55K miles on it, but you are coming to the point where wear is a factor in things. If the valve guides are leaking oil into the top end, you could have carbon build-up in the combustion chambers that is increasing the effective compression and reducing the heat conductivity of the head, leading to the sound of detonation you describe. However, the kind of noise you are describing can come from a number of sources, so the best thing to do is if the valve adjustment does not cure it, do a top end disassembly and inspection.*

**Harley's Oil Pressure Fluctuates With Altitude**

I have enjoyed your magazine for years and I look forward to your reviews of products and bikes in every issue. I have a question that you may be able to answer. I have a 1999 Harley Twin Cam with 70,000 miles. I take trips every year and this year I noticed something with my oil pressure gauge (fairing type) that I have not noticed before. Normally, my gauge reads 28 psi while driving below 1000' elevation at normal operating temp. This year while traveling above 4000-9000' elevation, my oil pressure gauge

was reading 20 psi during the whole trip which worried me some. But as soon as I dropped down to below 4000', the gauge started showing higher until I reached home, below 1000'. Now it reads 28 psi again.

Can traveling at high altitudes cause the oil pressure to drop like this? Like I said, I have never noticed this before and I am wondering if this is an indication that my oil pump is starting to go. My cam bearings went out at 18,000 miles and were repaired under warranty and I have had no problems since then.

John Johnson  
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*Since the problem appears to be related to altitude rather than engine rpm or anything related to that, we suspect that the problem is in the gauge, not the pump. There may be an atmospheric vent in the gauge that is partially blocked, and since the gauge displays the difference between atmospheric pressure and oil pressure, the gauge misreads when the air pressure drops (high altitude). As long as the pressure is, in fact good, which it seems to be, we would not be too concerned about it.*

**CB750 Front Brakes Sticking**

Having been recently introduced to your excellent publication by my father (who shares my love for motorcycling), I was immediately impressed with the insight and quality of information presented. Dad has kindly loaned me several back issues, and I feel better educated with each page turned.

I own a 1981 CB750, which was in neglect when I "found" it three years ago. I have restored it to good operating condition since then, and really enjoy riding this "classic" Honda.

However, I have been unable to resolve temperature-induced hydraulic lock on the front brake system. Honda supplied a new rebuild kit for the master cylinder, and the parts are identical to those removed. The piston has two seals, one is on the lever-side of the fluid passage, and one is on the downstream side. Even with the brake lever fully relaxed, the downstream seal remains between the fluid passage and the calipers. It appears that once fluid is pushed past the downstream seal, there is no way for it to go back to the reservoir.

DOT3 fluid is specified (imprinted on reservoir cover) and that is what is in the system. The brake line runs to the bottom of the triple-clamp, and then splits into two lines, one for each side.

I park the bike at work in the morning when it's cool. When I come back in the

hot afternoon, the front brakes are "locked up." It is then necessary to open a bleeder on one of the calipers and release the excess pressure. The brake system then functions fine until the next day when the same thing happens again.

Any insight you could offer would be greatly appreciated. Hope every ride you take is a good one!

Douglas Billups

*It sounds like one of three things are happening here: Either the caliper seal is weak and not able to overcome the pressure of the system and return the puck to its resting position. Another possibility is that you have fluid accumulating behind the master cylinder piston cup. That would prevent the piston from returning all the way back and uncovering the pressure relief port in the master cylinder.*

*One more thing to do is to inspect the piston bore and look for a white residue (it is a combination of old dried-up brake fluid and aluminum corrosion) behind the piston under the rubber boot. (An accumulation of that sort is very common and it keeps the piston from fully returning.)*

*Since the puck returns when you open the bleeder, we would start at the master cylinder, but if it's okay, completely disassemble and check the slave cylinder.*

**VTX Plug Fouling Cure!**

Recently, I was thumbing through the service manual for my 2002 VTX-1800C (VIN sequence 6125, mfg 06/01) when I realized it was time for a plug change. After a trip to the local dealership for four NGK IFR5L11 plugs (at a list price of \$15.99 each), I pulled the right front plug to start the change process. Imagine my surprise when I saw that the plug, though similar in size, had quite a different electrode. The following Monday, I checked with the service department at the dealership—I wanted to know why my bike had come from the factory with other than the specified plugs.

The service manager explained that some of the early production VTX1800s had a fouling problem (of which I was aware) and that Honda had used the different plug from the time when they discovered the problem until the fix was implemented. The actual problem that caused the plugs to foul was a kink in a hose under the right side bottom of the fuel tank. He was unable to tell me what the hose was, but he did point it out to me on a floor model. Seems that the hose was cut too long, and when it was put into the allotted space, the extra length caused it to kink. This kink was the culprit in the early fouling problems. The "work around" plug

wasn't any better at stopping the fouling, but it did a much better job of working when fouled, which is why Honda used it as a temporary fix.

Sure enough, when I checked my bike, the hose had a nifty kink in it. The solution was simple, though. Just trim the hose until it was able to fit without kinking. The biggest hassle in the fix was fitting a pair of cutters into the limited space available.

It's worthy to note that the plugs that Honda originally put in the bike were somewhat fouled when I pulled them, however, the fouling never caused any rideability problems. The plugs, according to the service manager, could be used as a straight substitute for the IFR5L11 for the life of the bike without problem (or loss of performance). But, here's the kicker: The NGK BKR5E11 plug that came from the factory with my bike list for \$3.79 each. The set of four would be less than one IFR5L11.

Hope this clears up the plug dilemma for my fellow VTXers.

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*Thank you for the great letter, the information you posted is accurate and it definitely will help other readers. (Guys like you make our jobs much easier.)*



**Downtime Files**

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