

CBX Restoration Team



Team Leader: Dave McMunn (photo at right)

To submit an article please email Dave McMunn at <DMCMUNN@PENN.COM> or (814) 797-2896 Eastern Time in the early evenings. Current article format/content, but be creative. 250-500 word count in MS Word or email format. Jpeg pictures please. Submit text files and picture files separately (do not embed pictures in article). Regular mail/photos acceptable. **Next Xpress submissions due by 5/1/2004.**

My CBX Total Restoration - Part I

by Brian Weir



My total restoration all started here.

My mind chose momentarily to sort of forget my idea for a small manageable project for a commuter-hop on the sidewalk-60's cool-scooter or step through with panniers (the cool name for saddlebags).

Oops - then the ad continued, "Engine is out and head is off." This was just like a red flag to a bull. Charge! If it's apart then I can get it cheap and fix it up. A winter project! No challenge too great for me! (At this point my common sense permanently left for warmer climates). The asking price of \$1750 did seem a bit high, especially when I had planned on buying at least a running bike for no more than \$1200.

But it's so cool. All those cylinders - just like Norm's!

Why CBX? Or What The Heck Am I Doing This Time??

It was supposed to be a Honda step-through or an Italian scooter. Some where along the way my problem solving, over-achieving self noticed the ad in the Auto Trader...

"1981 Honda CBX - thinning out collection of rare and collectible Hondas. Awesome 6 cylinder, 1000cc, bike is complete and in good condition."

"WOW! WHAT A COOL BIKE! ONE OF THE NEATEST BIKES EVER MADE!"

I thought: "Although I'd never get rid of my Electra-Glide, that would make a good match to it - and after all, it's good to have more than one bike."

THE NORM CONNECTION

Now Norm has a 1980 CBX that he bought new. It languished for years in his garage as his little girls were born and grew through their early years. I had occasionally talked to him about it and reminded him to oil it and turn it over. For years he was always gonna get it back on the road.

Secretly I wondered if he ever would and also considered how cool would it be to have two large bikes - my HD police special and maybe buy his 1980 CBX if he decided not to keep it on the road.

Well, I had been chatting with Norm at length, and when I suggested we go to some vintage races, I told him that he would be surprised at the interest in his bike. Right on! Not only that, there was, unknown to me at the time, a young

From Mike Brown,
ICOA National Director

This is just the first article of a series as Brian makes his way through the restoration of a Late Model 1981 CBX that was headed for the salvage yard.

He described it to me before starting as a "low budget, best options restoration series" but in reviewing the first installment and the plans for future installments, I am confident these articles are far more. In fact, Brian's restoration series will benefit ICOA members now and forever.

Brian's style is wonderfully entertaining, yet informative. His creativity, unique approach and easy to read instructions along with tips/work arounds including how to avoid using official expensive Honda tools are simply amazing.

Brian was uncomfortable about mentioning this, but I feel that I should...he is on disability with a limited income and...

I am personally asking members to review the following list of parts and get back to him if you can help out.

Forks and caps, air tubes, mine are non-stock, totalled. trees ok. both mufflers, left muffler has a wicked amount ground off it.- any usable condition, minor dents ok. left exhaust pipes from engine, (deep dents in front of ports.) right kill switch assy (housing broken) front fender (chunk missing) headlight cover glass (none, just fragments) windshield, fasteners (none), swing arm assembly.

Email or call him...Brian Weir via email at <beedub@biosys.net> - or - phone 613-531-7810 in Kingston, Ontario, Canada.

Welcome Brian; your efforts to entertain and help CBX riders and ICOA are greatly appreciatedand thanks to all of you that will help him with parts.

madman named Bruce who was out there racing on his 100,000 km CBX!

So I've had the Glide since 1991 and it has been the best bike I've ever owned. A great ride. Thing is, after that, everything else is tiny! The midsize bikes I looked at for a project were pathetic and felt dangerous just to sit on.

So there was the ad for the third week running or maybe longer. Engine is out and head is off. Hmmm.

I used to fearlessly (read "stupidly"?) go where I'd never been, why not get a bike for a winter hobby instead of carpentry?

I even went to look at few midsize bikes, "Harley" 250-350cc Aermacchi's. It was appalling to see a 1968 350cc Sprint unrestored, welded frame, banged tank, bad condition overall, that the owner wanted \$2000.00 for. Nuts!

Also that was a bike that shifted on the right like the Brits.

So when I went to see that 1968 Harley, I found out a few things about my own tastes. For one thing, what had once been a large bike (350cc), was now feeling pitifully small and felt horribly unsafe to sit on. It reminded me of a minibike a clown or chimpanzee might ride at the circus. A cartoon image came to mind of me careening nervously through traffic complete with humungous trucks and transports, and a picture of getting flattened completely like Wile E. Coyote on a bad day.

Then a 250cc Aermacchi HD Sprint: really bad, rusty, rotten, apart, broken, sinking into the barn floor.

Aaaarrgh. A 1966ish step-through type Honda at a cottage auction: broken, incomplete, \$800 paid by someone who was "gonna make it run in the field". An auctioned Honda 70cc MiniTrail with the pressed frame. Frame rusty, through in spots, broken, terrible, \$550. Nuts. Keep looking.

ANOTHER CBX CONNECTION AND MY INTEREST IS ON THE UPSWING

I belong to the Canadian Vintage Motorcycle Group, (motto -"We ride 'em") <http://www.cvmg.on.ca/>, and we were having a rally hosted by an area group. One to the west is called the Quinte section because it's around the beautiful Bay of Quinte, and the other to the east/north is called The Old Bastards section. Oops, I mean the Rideau Riders section.

The Old B--Rideau section was hosting a rally in September at a nice little village called Delta, a very historical spot. Good campground, clean, and a big field for activity. Earlier this summer a rally at Shannonville racetrack, which is near here, I'd glanced briefly at a 1981 CBX that was a beauty, (p11), but not as appealing as weird scooters. It was now at the Delta rally, and I met Bob who had restored it. A really nice job.

WHY BUY A NICE RUNNING CBX WHEN ONE IN THE BASKET WILL DO?

So I talked at length with Bob about whether to buy the Basket Kit and parts availability. He immediately sat cross-legged and repeated the Honda CBX mantra

(Ommmmmm sound)

"You can still get most part\$ from the dealer\$, but they are expen\$ive."

(Ommmmmm sound)

"Finding a mechanic is nearly impo\$\$ible."

(Chimes)

"Tuning it's a bitch."

(Gongggg)

"It's a great bike."

He levitated off the ground slightly on this last statement.

Boy that's some Zen bike!

I WAS STARTING TO FEEL THAT SEDUCTIVE PULL OF "OH BOY - TOO DIFFICULT AND EXPENSIVE"

Anybody know what I mean? Dan Marino? It is usually accompanied by that sinking feeling knowing that you just won't be able to resist the following: "What's that? You don't even know if it's all there? It's seized from sitting with the head off for 8 years? No one knows why it was disassembled? The guy died two owners ago? Part\$ are hard to get?"

And it had been crashed too.

Oh boy, oh boy, oh boy, Please Sir can I have it?

What the heck does this say about me??

So I had phoned the owner about the bike again and he told me about how he had never touched the basket case and also had a 1979 CBX for sale that was running. He explained that he had got the Kit from an estate sale in Ottawa, and when he bought the bike he also bought the 79 CBX and a car. Then he tells me he wasn't able to get the motor for about 6 months!

To further "set the hook", (my own doing) he tells me he never even opened many of the tins or boxes and has absolutely no idea if it's all there. I got him to give me the serial number--And waited for my wife to come home.

(Ominous deep foreboding, thoughts of moving house last summer, many thousands of expenses for teeth, parental stuff, wife drives a lot, newer car, currently very very careful with cash trying to hammer the extraordinary stuff down while having watched long term investments tank.)

"Hiya honey!" she breezed in the door, "Whatcha do today?" she asked.

"Well," (pause) I offered, kinda hunching down a little -you guys might know what I mean-, "I called Lui again about the 6 cylinder Honda."

“And what did he have to say about it?” her pleasant reply.

So I told her the stuff, mentioned that the price was really high, and then waited for the crunch. Ready to duck.

“IT’S HOW MUCH??!!”

“Asking \$1750. Way too much! I’d never pay that and probably no one else would either.”

“What about the little scooters you were going to get?”

I scrambled – think! Quick! “They’re too small to me any more and too simple to restore. I’d be done and bored.”

“Well then, why don’t you go and look at it?”

Deep Breath. Whew. Now finish it carefully. “Well, I’d take my trailer from the folks and since it’s about 2–3 hours away, I might as well take some cash in case it looks like a good project.”

Phew! There! Done it! Got it out!

Unknown to me she was way ahead of me. In our very large former house I’d done woodwork in the winter and after moving had bitched and complained about the lack of wood workshop space here to the extreme of talking about moving again. Smart Woman.

She had already figured that this was irresistible to me and would be good for me as a focus for my energies rather than complaining about not being able to turn a 2x4 around.

Standard Cautionary Note

from her. “Well dear, just make sure you don’t get in over your head”.

Oh heckkk no. All those valves, cylinders, washers and pieces? I had no idea yet what was in store for me.

Later that evening on a ride in the car with my wife, my conclusion of this project was:

RESEARCH

Time to get on the net! Anybody out there got a CBX?

Let’s see. Holy Smoke! There’s tons of CBX stuff and other links too. Gee, who would have thought that Viagra and CBX’s were related? Boy, hope it’s not something that owning one does to you.

Ok, here’s one in the UK and an International website. Click the International Honda CBX Owners Association. Wow; they just implemented a web-based CBX Library.

Good timing. Tons of stuff!

Go back. Wow more sites, parts sites too; here’s one in Canada, Germany, one in the UK, and Usenet postings galore. So many that there’s no way to look at all of them.

All right, then, let’s post and see if these guys can help me in any way. I need to know what this basket case is worth, and how hard it is to get pieces for.

AAARGH. Too many categories at ICOA to pick from. Where can I fit in?

I post to ICOA, CBXCanada, CBXWorld and Tim’s CBX.

“I am going to call about a 1981 CBX in Ontario, Canada which is taken apart, quote “bike is complete & in good condition. Engine is out and head is off.” Can anyone tell me or direct me to what to look for in terms of problems as well as hard to get missing parts? I would

appreciate answers SAP to buy this weekend maybe. Any ideas on value?”

TOM NEIMEYER FROM ICOA REPLIES. WHEW!

He gave me an idea of used values. But I needed more, a little worried about buying something that might be missing some part that is worth \$1000.00 (memories of the \$350.00 heater valve in my van came to mind).

It was disappointing to only get the one response.

So I posted again.

“Hello all, I’m going on Sunday 28th to look at a basket 81 CBX and the engine is out with the head off and camshafts out. It has two tanks but I am told that they are both dented. Supposedly the handlebars caused this. How big a deal is it to fix this? Mucho \$\$\$?”

Two owners ago the owner died after taking it apart, and then it was bought by a Honda collector who didn’t get to it. If I can get it at a good price then I have to check the entire motor, and if I could I’d like to replace the camshafts for higher horsepower, but I have no idea if that is possible. Ideas on \$ value would be most helpful.

Any suggestions on what to check for on the engine would be welcome– Also if anyone sees this that previously wrote me could you please send again as my email was trashed. Thank you Brian.”

Yikes! NO REPLIES yet and the weekend’s approaching! Boy did that make me nervous. Sept 25. Hmmm let’s see. Check Tims. Nothing there either.

A “BOOST”! (GROAN) – A TURBOCHARGED E-MAIL REPLY ICOA MEMBER MARK MILLER IN SUNNY CALIFORNIA: SR71CBX

“K.... There’s a guy up in Sudbury that has done a bunch of CBX work, you may know of him, Yvon Lamarche, his brother lives in Winnipeg...he’s in the website under CBXSUDBURY....



A CBX Basket Case Rebuild, *I must be nuts!!!*

you all have a long, cold winter coming on.”

Message: “Yeah, don’t know how far you are from him but he has done a bunch of work on these bikes and I have walked him thru a couple of tight spots with them...him & his brother Marc as well, both a couple of great guys.”

THE LARMARCHE BROTHERS

Good! Some guy named Lamarche. Wow. He contacted me, and sent pictures too, very encouraging. And so began my correspondence with the Canadian Lamarche brothers – Yvon in Sudbury and Marc in Winnipeg, and a whole bunch of CBX’s between them. Marc has been my “guru” and a great encouragement.

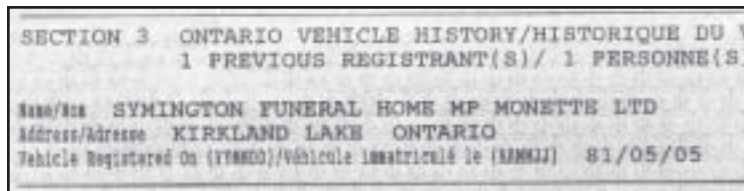
When we corresponded he said that the bike was in fact a good reliable unit when assembled, but it would actually be a better idea, less work and less cost if I would sell off the basket case, and buy a used working complete bike!

But that would defeat the purpose of a challenging and interesting hobby!

BACK TO THE BASKET CASE

I was getting a bit more informed on value and at the same time cautious about the big picture. Then I got keen again thinking of how I truly like bikes, making and rebuilding things.

Why, it would be no problem for a man with my years of experience – heck, I’ve been doing it since I was 4 years old and helped daddy rebuild his car by putting the key from his car’s flywheel into the hole in the bumper. (He was gentle but firm persuading me to tell him how I’d



helped and where that critical little part might be.)

So I called Lui again and talked to him about it some more. I told him I was very

interested and if we could come to an agreement I would buy it when I came. Also got the serial number so that I could take it to the MOT and get the buyer/seller paperwork, I figured that might be a good selling point if I made it easier for him by having the seller’s papers there.

So at the Ministry of Transport the lady behind the counter took my money and printed out the motorcycle’s history.

This one you’ve never seen. The first registered owner was a business. Ok? Sounds reasonable, tax break, right? Figure a bike shop, car dealer, or something like that? Try a guess.

Nope.

MY CBX BASKET CASE WAS ORIGINALLY REGISTERED TO THE SYMINGTON FUNERAL HOME LTD. IN KIRKLAND LAKE, ONTARIO.....

This is North of most civilization. Bears, deer, wolves, plaid jackets, and cold winters. Its beautiful Northern Ontario in the summer after black fly season.

So what the heck was it doing for the funeral home? Picking up clients? Not too easy, they would tend to slump and fall off the back, don’t you think?

Leading funeral processions? Doubt it.

Emergency high speed runs? Nope. If someone’s dead the emergency is over.

It’s a mystery to me.

Then the second owner, suspected of being the person who took it apart, was listed from a place I’ve never heard of – Sutton.

Looked it up on the map, the bike had moved south by 500 miles. This was getting more habitated, where the people now outnumbered the animals. Sometimes.

From there it made its way 300 miles east, probably as a crash or basket case, to a bike collector in Ottawa, Ontario, from where Lui had bought it.

SO THE HISTORY OF THE BIKE WAS THERE. HOW BAD COULD IT BE?

I called Norm, my buddy with the 79X and told him all about it. He was excited and agreed enthusiastically to go and look at it with me.

So off we went on a Saturday morning.

The directions were good; it was simple to get there. Not too much civilization



in sight once off the main highway, and as the miles rolled by I was wondering where the heck we were. Then we turned in to a modern looking farm and knocked on the door. Lui came out and suggested we go back to the shed.

Expecting a barn, I was surprised to see a beauty of a two story modern steel building with a concrete floor. This was the toy bin and a nice one too.

He opened the garage door and we could see the X sitting there in all its majesty, or lack of it. No engine and lots of parts lying around it. **CBX**

In Installment 2 we learn all about the CBX in a basket and Brian starts the restoration process. Plans also call for another Restoration Team article in the Summer Xpress. Stay Tuned.

If you want to help Brian with advise or parts send him an email brian.weir@sympatico.ca

-editor