

The oil tank and pump tub

A plastic tub full of Iron Sportster oil bags and oil pumps.

I used to keep my Iron Sportster parts in backpack moving boxes. I would have to use duct tape to reinforce them. The boxes still came apart and dirt got in and oil leaked out.

I was at an office supply store like Staples when I saw these big tubs. These older ones I have are a little wimpy. I would not stack them more than two high.

Since then I have found some really strong tubs at Office Max. I stacked those eight-high and did not have them collapse, a handy thing when moving across the country. I bought them to help with the move, but I will never go back to cardboard boxes for Harley parts.



The oil tub is one of the lighter tubs on the Gorilla rack shelving. Here you can see the two kidney style oil bags as well as an XLCH style "lunchbox" oil tank. Also an early coil cover. The bottom of the tub has oil pumps and fittings and filter mounts.

The great thing about using plastic tubs is that they keep any oil drips contained. Better yet, they keep dust and dirt out of the oil bags. If you had a flood this tub might float away, but it would stay dry until the level went over the top.

The same theory applies with the plastic bags. They keep stuff clean and rust-free until you need it or want to sell it on eBay. or trade with a pal.



I mentioned these plastic tubs full of Iron Sportster part. I get them at the office supply store. The oil tub is full of oil tanks, oil pumps, fittings, and other oil-related parts.



I also have a rack full of smaller, stronger tubs for the heavier stuff.



Here is the tub contents. Note that I had two K-model oil tanks just plopped on top. Those will go into the tub now.



Here are those two K-model oil tanks, and the coil cover that I found in a barn in Half-Moon Bay. This is all high-dollar stuff. The coil cover is worth about 500 bucks alone. I will be putting it on [my 1952 K-model](#).



Here is the backsides of the K-model oil tanks. The fact that they have threaded fittings for all the oil lines makes them very early production. I love to note the minor differences in the mounting brackets and other features on the tanks.



Here are two "lunchbox" oil bags from the 1970s. Note one is patched up with brazing. That can really backfire-- the brass gets into the steel and the tank will crack for eternity. Kenny Puccio tells me that modern thinking is to weld the leaks. Fix the steel with steel. The reason for the brazing will soon be obvious.



The brazed tank I have modified to mount an oil filter. This is a pretty high-zoot modification. There is a pipe also brazed on the inside to feed the filter from the existing feed hole. I can't remember if I ran this one or if it just leaked as I kept chasing cracks with brazing rod. Don't laugh, I run a similar mod on [my 1977](#) and it has worked for years. I am pretty sure that one is brazed up as well. I think I wanted a chrome one on the '77. This one might work fine, I will test it for leaks.



The strange thing about the kick-start-only lunchbox oil bag is all the different offsets they used over the years. Here you can see the huge difference in the mounting hole locations. Maybe with all my brothers and sisters helping, we can figure out what tanks went on what years.



Here is a crappy pic of the k-model oil feed line. The tank had the fittings on it, so that is what you look for in these early tanks. The later model tank will fit, but not have the fittings on the tank or motor.



I also came across an olive-drab tank mount. I assume it is for some military Sportster. It is a little different from the K-model part. I will record this in [the BOM section](#) one day, before I sell this stuff off on eBay.



With all those different lunchbox mounting locations, there are bunch of different brackets.



Here is the underside of the coil cover. No reason for it to be in the oil bag tub, other than it looks a little like a oil tank. This one is destined for my 1952 K-model..



Most kick-start Iron Sportsters don't have an oil filter. I have to think the Harley engineers thought the weight was so critical or that they would leak so much we could get by without a filter. Here are two after-market filter setups, or maybe the frame-rail one is a factory setup, not sure. The funky plate replaces the motor mount and you run long hoses to the filter. This is why I hacked that lunchbox oil bag, less hoses and fittings are less places to leak.



Here are all the dipsticks, oil-pressure switches, and small stuff in the oil tub.



Ha! The little can with a fitting is to fill up the front forks with oil in the old 1960s forks. I put it in the toolbox. I thought the little filters were for my 1996 that I gave to my buddy Doug when I left California. Turns out they are for my 1992 Accord, and it is due for an oil change since I shipped it to Florida.



Little things can be valuable, here are some oil pump gears for pre-1977 Sportsters. Note the spring at bottom for early model check ball setups. I am trying to keep my 1962 from sumping.



Here is a pre-1977 pump, with the wide slot so it is for 1000cc bikes after 1972. Best thing was the pump had the spring and ball bearing so that I might be able to keep [my 1962](#) from sumping when it sits for a month.



Here is a 1977-and-later pump, with the gerotors missing, since I gave them to [Duncan Keller](#) who had a hot job.



Here is another 1977-and-later pump, still grommed together with gradoo. I will take it apart, check it out, and put it on eBay, now that I know that I have it.



Here is a big-bike pump with larger gerotors. My plan is to make a housing that holds this set of gerotors where the generator mounts to the case. Then I can scavenge the motor there, and keep a negative pressure in the crankcase like there should be.



Baggies are your friend. Here are all the dipsticks. I see a screw-in cap for the [Sudco aluminum oil bag](#) I run on [my 1979](#). I dropped my bikes a few times and noticed those press-in dipsticks pop out and oil goes all over the street. So then I bought [freeze plug rubber plugs for cars](#) and screw the things in so they never pop out. I replace the nut with a wingnut, The plug worked well when I came off my 1996 at 60mph in 2013.



Here is a close-up of those oil filters. Yeah, Honda. I guess when the movers came I just tossed them into my Harley stash. I put them back on the car shelf.



So here is the oil tank and pump tub cleaned up and reorganized. I put some distinctive stuff up front so I can tell what tub this is through the milky plastic. Best yet, I can just look at this post to remind me what I have.



This gorgeous baby was in the spare room, so I am adding it to the oil tub. It is a restored horseshoe-style Sportster oil tank used on XLCH models. There are some part numbers for this tank with a -52 suffix, so I suspect it was created for the racing K-Models, the overhead-valve Sportster came out in 1957.



Another view of the horseshoe oil bag. I intend this to replace the chrome one on [my 1962 Sporty](#).