

# 1952 K-model chassis uncrating

**My worries about buying a K-model Harley Davidson chassis that was in Ohio were soon dispelled.**

**After winning the K-model chassis on eBay with the only bid of \$3500, I had a new set of stress. I didn't want to ask the seller to take it apart and box it up for freight. I figured it was best to leave it together, even though it turned out the seller was a good guy that worked on a farm in Ohio.**

**This turned out really well, but there was some stress getting to the point where I knew I was in good hands for the shipping.**

**So I decided to just ship the bike like it had an engine. I did on-line quotes from three shipping companies I found with Google.**



For the first, I got a call from some young kid that was suppressing laughter as he was talking. Not only that, he had the high-pressure "\$75 off if you book now" pitch. And to top it off, the quote was over 1000 dollars. Out.

The next outfit I really liked. They talked the small business personal attention angle. They said they had some razzmatazz trucks so that the bike did not have to go on a pallet. So I replied to the email with a couple questions. Would the bike sit in a warehouse? What was the usual wait? Were the trucks air-ride? Nothing too hard, just a few follow ups. The price was \$850 or so. They never wrote me back. Out.

So the last company I did an online quote for was almost an afterthought. It was FedCo aka Federal Companies, the online arm of Allied Van Lines. A big giant impersonal

corporation, or so I thought. The quote was in the high 700 buck range, Ohio to California. But unlike the giggling guy, or the no-response trucker, Mary Wiker soon reached me at work. Once she found out the bike was an eBay auction, bam, the price dropped to the low \$700 range. Then she asked if I was in the AMA. Yup I said, and bam, now the quote was high \$600s.

Not only that, but the free insurance went from 8 grand to 15 grand. I hate giving out my credit card. Bam, Mary says I can pay with PayPal. Gheesh, what's not to love about FedCo? I asked the same questions and Mary patiently answered them all.

I forgot how nice Midwesterners are, I have lived in get-over California so long. I was worried about the bike sitting in a warehouse, but Mary assured me that they have a lot of really nice machinery that goes through the system just fine.

The really delightful thing about Mary is that she handled all the negotiation with the seller as to when to pick up the bike. It seemed like two weeks and the truck was in my front yard. Unlike UPS, that gave me a 4-hour window when the delivered the engine the week before, and was an hour late, these guys told me "2:00PM" and they were there at 2:05PM.

Two nice honest trustworthy guys unstrap the bike off the pallet and lower it on the lift-gate. The driver rode a Harley himself. My bike was in good hands. Since it was a box truck, it meant the bike sat in two warehouses, one in Illinois and one in California. I mentioned to the driver that I

worried about the bike getting pilfered and he chuckled and shook his head. "They have cameras and loss-control managers whose whole job it is to make sure that doesn't happen." Near as I can tell, even the cobwebs were untouched on the bike's 2000-mile journey.

FedCo had an online tracking website. Once I went to check, and the site was down. So I get all antsy and write an email. I get an instant response from Jackie Taylor, the manager of motorcycle relocation, and 10 minutes later Vickie from Fedco send a reply apologizing for the glitch, and tells me exactly where the bike is.

By then the tracking website was working anyway. From now on I will use FedCo for any bike shipping. [Update: I used them to ship 6 Sportsters from California to Florida and it was just as great an experience.]

The only complaint was from the seller. The driver of the 40-foot truck refused to drive into the farm's half-mile-long driveway. So the seller had to push the bike to the road. I guess truckers are not what the used to be. One of my trucker buddies would have eased that rig backwards all the way to the barn and then just motored out after the pick-up.

So the bike was a little rougher than I hoped. The seller offered to take more pictures and there were complaints about the shadows and such in the picture. I don't know if the seller was trying to hide some problems, but the crappy pictures also hid the nice speedometer and other



things. All and all, I am happy, this is a 60-year-old bike after all. Here are the pictures I took after the truck pulled away.



Here is the bike right off the truck. Always set the camera to flash, and the shadows will get filled in.



I saw the sun was on the wrong side and rolled the bike around to get the sun on the camera side. I still kept the flash on.



to start taking things apart. There are 20,000 Sportsters in garages all over America that are in pieces since it is so easy to take things apart and so hard to put them back together.



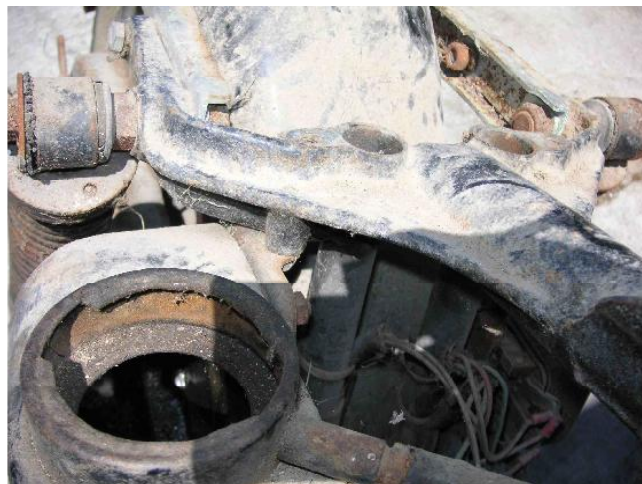




That little circuit board, aka terminal board is a nice thing to see, they come up on eBay but its nice to have it included.



The eBay ad had a big shadow that covered the dents in the top tin. But I could see it was real Harley top tin. The little pear-shaped swivel lids over the ignition and light key-switches is Harley, the repops are flat. The real tin also has the indentations for the flippers. The dent will be easy to pound out. But the eBay picture with the shadow also hid the speedo face. It is in much better shape than I expected. That us a big deal, speedometers can cost 500 bucks.



Here is a close-up of the oil tank and frame. I now know that this is not a 1952 tank, but I already knew the bike had a Sportster front fender, so I did not expect it to be correct. It might take a while, but I can find a oil tank on eBay, and then sell this on to offset the cost a bit.



Everything looks OK here. The brake is even adjusted right, so the pivot lines up with the swingarm pivot. That way when the bike rear suspensions jounces or rebounds, there is no change in the position of the brake rod relative to the drum.





The seller said it was a KR race bike. Maybe, that brake switch is not stock. I read up on KR frames and they are chrome moly and much lighter than stock. I really doubt this is a race bike frame, but when I strip it down, I will weight the frame to be sure.



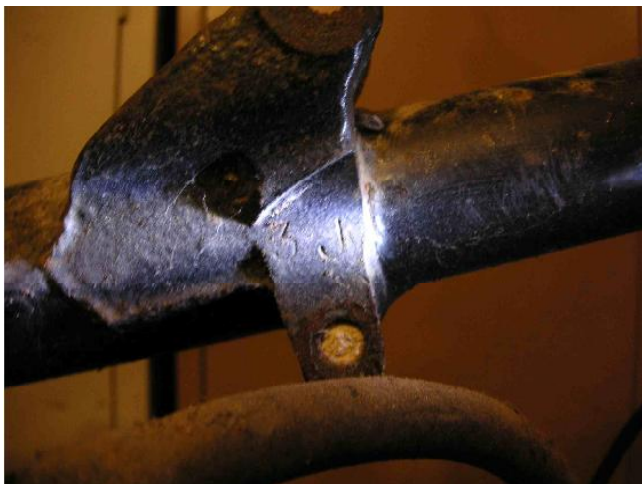
The piece of fender was not chipped in shipping, I broke it off with my fingers. I forgot about that Ohio rust I grew up with. The fact that the rear fender had the little flip was a big deal to me. They make them repop, but this is the real deal. The edge will weld up just fine.



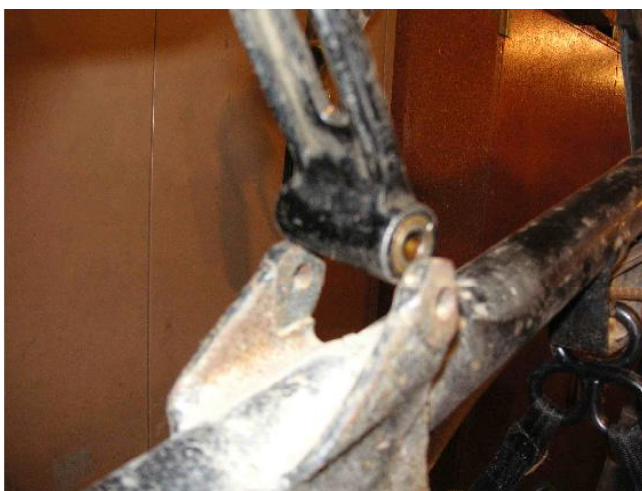
Here is the aftermarket taillight. I saw one come up on eBay, it is a Drag Specialties taillight. Since I have a broken collarbone from getting hit from behind, I might keep this instead of the tiny factory light. Them Ohio boys are smart and don't want to get rear-ended either.



OK, now I have used my 200-dollar Taiwan hoist to get the chassis up on a workbench. note those straps that keep the bike from flopping over. Sunnyvale is earthquake country. [Update: I now live in Florida, but I kept those traps and the bike is now up on the same desk with the same straps keeping it on one place.



Now that the bike is up in the air, first thing is to see what year the frame is. The top motor mount made it clear it was K-model, but that could be 1952-56. This is the right side of the seat mount, where the gas tank mounts. The 3 means 1953, the J is the 10th letter in the alphabet so that means this was made in the 10th month of 1953, October.



Sorry for the crappy picture. Someone reefed down on the seat mount and bent the frame so a factory seat T will not fit. I figure a torch and a nuts on the inside of a threaded rod might flex it back out.



The eBay listing showed the double groove on the shock. That is just like the 1952-53 shock in the parts book. I am pretty sure the studs, nuts, and washers are all available repop, in "cad". I don't know if that means "zinc" or cadmium. I am pretty sure I can get the rubber bushing new as well.



The rear tire is shot, but I expected that. The front tire actually looks pretty good. No matter, anything I ride gets Metzlers, nice and sticky, even in the rain. That might be a good first thing, get new rubber on this thing so it rolls better.





Another crappy pic, but it shows the handlebars are not 1952. This is the setup for later years, like on my 1962. I am pretty sure 1952 handlebars will be near impossible to find, so these will have to do.



Here is another money shot. The lever, the switch, the pivots and even the screws, all this is original and all is treasure. I think I saw a local Tampa shop that does cadmium plating. That would be great for a lot of parts, but many plating shops won't do automotive parts, since they are used and might ruin the plating bath.



Here is a nice surprise. The fork tube is not rusted where it counts. I am pretty sure these tubes have seals in them, which means they are meant for the tin "cowbell" covers, not the rubber "gaitors". So maybe this front-end is a 1953 like the frame. Nice.



Here is a restored K-model from over in the Smorg section of the website. This chassis was a huge advancement for Harley. The K-model was the first bike to get a rear suspension, and in 1952, long before the 1958 DuoGlide. The chassis does retain the sprung seat, like a big bike or 45 flathead.



Here is a restored 1952 K-model from the Smorg section of this website. I am pretty sure the rubber bellows on the front fork tubes are incorrect. The earliest models had "cowbells" the same way old Panheads did. The K-models ones are smaller, but have a similar style. I might be able to cut up an aftermarket set of big-bike cowbells and make them look right. That would test my welding skills, but I did manage to find a tiny ox-acetylene torch like jewelers use. Other than that, I might try to tig weld them. There is some guy I see on eBay

who claims to have stainless steel cowbells for big bikes. If I can weld that with a stainless rod, maybe I can polish up the mess after I cut and weld them and have a set that looks half decent. Like I have said, my first goal is to just get the parts in one place. Then to rebuild the engine, then to ride the bike a bit. Only after I have some miles on will I pretty up. Building things takes engineers, architects and interior decorators. They are important, but you don't send in the interior decorators to the jobsite first.

Date	Descript	Cost	Shipping	Total
03/21/12	Engine, uncrating	\$2,500.00	\$464.56	\$2,964.56
03/23/12	Rolling chassis, uncrating	\$3,500.00	\$669.00	\$4,169.00
		\$6,000.00	\$1,133.56	\$7,133.56

Here is the table as I buy parts for this project.