

Fill 'er Up!

By Robin Koontz, CRE 01f-02

There is something that one just has to do every so often if that person wants to continue their pleasure; that is to shell out some money and put some old decayed dinosaur matter into their gas tank. And this is a task that, if one thinks about it, can be deadly!

Everyone remembers that scene from "First Blood", where Rambo drives the army truck (what we old army hands call a 'deuce-and-a-half') that he stole into a gas station and right over the gas pumps, and then ignites them! Fiery plumes reaching for the sky make for a vivid visual. And there are the few people who wonder why the pumps didn't get blown into orbit? Well, liquid gas doesn't explode: It burns. Gas **VAPORS** explode.

Now, back to our GoldWings. Your gas gauge is getting down there, so you start looking for a fueling point. The cheapskates will drive an extra ten miles out of the way to save two cents a gallon (net saved...10 cents) and burn twenty cents worth of gas doing it. Some have their favorite station, or have a gasoline card that gets them frequent-flier miles or something if you buy their gas. But you find your gas station.

Now, do you put the pump on your right or left? Most will put the pump on the left, unless the only open spot is on the right, and you haven't mastered the ability to do a U-turn in a sixteen foot circle to put the pump on your left. (More reason to do some parking lot practice.) Mechanically, it doesn't matter to the bike which side it gets it's gas from. But as you approach the pump, you have to watch where you are driving. Oil, transmission fluid, radiator coolant, and other vile viscous substances are often on the ground. People add oil to their vehicles, and spill half of it because they do not have a funnel, and it just goes all over the engine, to drip on the ground. So you have to put your feet out like pontoons to keep from skidding, and try to maintain a good foot grip with the pavement. There are too many witnesses to drop the bike gracefully.

One school of thought is, as you position yourself next to the raised island that houses the gas pump, that your co-rider, or even yourself, might be able to have a nice high platform to step onto as you get off the bike. If there is enough room, go ahead and do so. Just remember how far the bike leans over to the left before it settles on the kickstand.

There are those that feel coordinated enough that they can do everything without leaving the comfort of their seat. You see them jockeying that nozzle between their legs. Awkward. You gotta remember; the gas tank is underneath you. If you are putting fuel in it, it must be mostly empty of liquid. It is not empty of vapors. Gas vapors go boom if a spark is created near it. And a spark can be caused by the fumbling around one does while trying to maneuver that nozzle between their legs. And when it goes boom, you go up. Right up into the overhead canopy that most gas stations have. Ouch!

Other things can create a spark. Leaving your power on to listen to the ball game is not good.

Keeping the power on for the electric vests is not good. Talking on a cellphone near a pump is not good. And if you want to smoke while refueling, do not do it anywhere around me.

When you put the nozzle into the gas tank, let it touch the edge of the opening, thus grounding the connection. (Static electricity.) And don't fill it to the brim. Gas expands as it gets hot. A gas tank that split at the seams one mile down the road **will** get into the local newspaper.

Do you put the premium gas in, or go for the cheap stuff? The manual says that 89 octane is just fine, unless you hear a lot of knocking in your engine. Then maybe try a tank of the good stuff to see if it helps. Odds are, if it is knocking, something else is going on, and you might want to have it looked at by a mechanic.

After you fuel up, put the cap back on, reposition the vacuum tube connected to the cap so it is not kinked, walk around the trusty steed. Do a T-CLOCK on it. Dangling wires, tires looking low, a piece of chrome that is missing, whatever. If you are pulling a trailer, grab the trailer tongue and YANK it upwards. Check the electrical connection to the trailer. The chains, too.

Oh, and pay for the gas before you leave. We must keep our image clean with the public. Perform any other bodily needs in the appropriate areas provided.

Take the opportunity to clean the windshield while you're stopped (hard to do while you're moving). Don't use the things the gas station provides for cars. There is all sorts of grit that will ruin your non-glass windshield in the cleaning solutions they have. Use that water-drenched towel you keep in a zip-lock bag to soak your windshield, then a dry cloth to wipe it off.

Have your co-rider get you some drinks for the road, mount up, make a commo-check with the others in your group, move to the staging area to wait on the others, and move on out.