

This short article is another in the “how small things can muck up your whole day” series. Referring to the photo, you will see 3 oil seals. One is 40 years old and just removed from the timing cover of a 40 year old car; not bad service considering! The one on the left is or I should say was the first replacement seal, which leaked worse than the old one – bugger! The one on the right (now installed) fixed the problem. During this process I learned a lot about oil seals; which I am happy to pass on here.

Basically, oil seals that operate on a revolving shaft, particularly high revving shafts, and contain oil in a stressed and pressured environment; are uni-directional. The seal needs to suit the shaft’s rotation. The seal on the left in the photo is (mistakenly) to suit an anti-clockwise rotation. The one on the right is for clockwise rotation. If you look closely at the photo, you will see tell tail ridges or lines on both new seals. You will note that the ridges are in opposite direction, to suit the different rotation. While I haven’t mentioned the “motorcycle” word in this article, I think you will agree that there is good general information here, applicable to any oil seal on a revolving shaft. Added to this, is that the seal you are changing may need to withstand heat, mineral or synthetic oils and varying pressures etc, hence the (specialized) material used in it’s manufacture.

Make sure you are using the correct seal to suit its application. I suggest when buying a new seal, you specify what and where within the vehicle, it is intended. I was very impressed with both bearing companies I spoke to, who were able to call up information on the computer, regarding my 40 year old Renault! I think my Renault parts man made a simple mistake in supplying a seal of wrong rotation, because of my incomplete info, or I was talking too much at the time etc, etc.

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