



San Diego Antique Motorcycle Club The Herald

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Stark Indian Museum Tour and Temecula Wine Tasting – October 4, 2008

A couple of years ago, the Club made the journey to the Stark Indian Museum up in Perris. Bob Jensen, volunteered to coordinate another visit. Bob made several attempts to get in contact with Bob Stark, with no success. Thanks to the help of Glen Gerdes, Bob J. was able to coordinate our visit. We left the Wagon Wheel restaurant with about a dozen bikes, and headed north to Perris. Barb and I were pulling up the rear in the SAG truck. Perris is sort of a gritty working-class town, and the Stark “compound” is nestled



The Stark Museum floor



Our gracious host, Bob Stark. . .

somewhere in the middle. Besides their large house, the Starks have a building containing their Indian motorcycle collection, another building housing their restoration operation and parts warehouse. In the middle is a fair sized paved landing strip that they use to fly their various RC-airplanes. Bob Stark, whose family has been involved with Indians for almost ninety years, was a gracious host, and we spent almost an hour discussing the various bikes in the collection, as well as the history of Indian. The museum had a mezzanine containing a large amount of Indian literature and memorabilia.

After checking out the bikes on display, we ventured over to the shop where a couple of bikes were undergoing restoration. One of them was a really cool three-wheeler that was receiving its finishing touches. Nice. . .

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Monthly Meetings
Are held at:
Giovanni's Restaurant
6133 Balboa Ave, San Diego
(the corner of Clairemont Mesa Blvd and Ruffin Rd.)
On
The Second Monday of Each Month
At 7:30 p.m.
Arrive early and join us for dinner!

Herald Policies & Editorial Statement

The Herald promises to provide an interesting forum for all antique, vintage, and classic motorcycle related information and will attempt to do so in a timely manner. Since we publish bi-monthly, please present any items for publication early enough for inclusion. We accept no responsibility for items furnished after the deadline.

As a volunteer staff, we expect other members to help by providing items from time to time. We have a large club membership base with a varied interest in all aspects of motorcycling and as such, we believe all members have stories of interest.

Let us hear from the garages, sheds, and shops of the membership. This publication will remain viable only with the help and consideration of all. Our Editorial phones and e-mail addresses are available. We look forward to publishing your stories.

SDAMC Charter

The San Diego Antique Motorcycle Club is a non-profit mutual benefit corporation organized and dedicated to the preservation of antique motorcycles, and in furtherance of such purposes, the sponsorship of antique motorcycle rides, exhibitions and related activities, and the encouragement of social, fraternal and educational activities among its members and the public, with membership open to all persons having an interest in antique motorcycles.

Editorial Disclaimer

IDEAS AND THOUGHTS EXPRESSED IN THIS NEWSLETTER REFLECT ONLY THE VIEWS OF ITS EDITORS AND CONTRIBUTORS. IF YOU HAVE ANY SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE THE APPEARANCE, CONTENT OR ANY OTHER PART OF THE HERALD, PLEASE LET US KNOW. ONE OF THE BENEFITS OF OUR CLUB IS THE SHARING OF EACH OF YOUR IDEAS AND EXPERIENCES. THEN WE ALL LEARN.

Please send your contributions to any of the editors listed above.

Stark Museum and Wine Tasting Tour (cont.)

I had an opportunity to eavesdrop on a conversation that Bob Stark was having with Bob Rattazzi. Bob R. was receiving some assistance regarding his Harley project. Bob Stark had worked as an aeronautical engineer in the early days of the American space program. Predictably, in those days, launch site safety measures were pretty loose. At one Cape Canaveral launch, Bob and a coworker had parked their car literally yards from the launch pad. Not surprisingly, when the missile blasted off, not only did it scare the crap out of the two engineers, it also scorched the hell out of the car's paint job! Bob Stark is a gentleman of such vast experience, and he could keep us enthralled for hours on end.

After, departing the Starks, we gassed up, and



One magnificent Indian Four!



The restoration of a customer's trike nears completion. . .

headed south on I-15, towards Temecula. We headed east from I-15, through Temecula's Wine Country, and arrived at the Stuart Cellars Winery at around lunchtime. Upon our arrival, we met up with a contingent of wives that chose to drive up by car. Bob Jensen's wife Fran, and his daughter Karen put together a really nice wine tasting and lunch for the Club. We had an opportunity to try a number of Stuart's wines. They tasted great, and went well with the sandwiches.

By the time things wrapped up at the winery, the weather was starting to get cold and blustery. Each of us sort of went our separate ways home. The rides home were uneventful, with the exception of one Harbison Canyon rider (who shall remain nameless) that ran out of gas.

Thanks again to the Jensen clan for all of the hard work that they expended on the outing.



Shortly before our departure from the Stark Museum. . .

Borrego Springs Overnighter – October 18-19, 2008

For the first time in a few years, the Club journeyed to Borrego Springs, with an overnight stay at Standlunds Resort. The Foremans, Virgil and Pam, and the Nelsons, Daryl and May, headed over Friday afternoon. The rest of us left from Packard's in Ramona on Saturday morning. We headed east via Old Julian Highway, and made a brief stop at Santa Ysabel. From there, we headed north via Mesa Grande and got to downtown Borrego Springs before noon. We had lunch at Carlee's, and then headed to Standlunds. Most of us were forced to make a quick detour to the liquor store.

Shortly after our arrival, a number of us decided to make a quick pilgrimage to the Iron Door bar in Ocotillo Wells. Once you get to "downtown" Ocotillo Wells, you take a side road south for about a quarter of a mile, until you reach the Iron Door. It would be charitable to call this bar a "dive", but it did have character. The entire interior, walls and ceiling, was covered with one dollar bills. I especially liked the toilet seat nailed to the wall with a sign reading "Asshole of the Month" with some guy's photo in the middle!. As I said, the place had character! I did make a serious faux pas by ordering a non-alcoholic beer. Some soused local looked me up-and-down, and gave me one of those "**What a pussy!**" expressions. I'll never make that mistake again. After finishing our drinks, we headed out of the bar, and got to do a little dual sport riding. Since the parking area was nothing more than semi-deep sand, we had the pleasure of trying to turn our bikes around, with dropping them. Mercifully, we all survived that ordeal.

It had been a while since I was last in Borrego Springs, so I was surprised to see all of the iron sculptures that dot the surrounding highways. The sculptures were created by Ricardo A. Breceda, of Perris. Each depicts some sort of prehistoric animal that might have roamed around Borrego Springs a few zillion years ago.

Most of us spent the afternoon lounging around the pool, eating and philosophizing (with a small amount of drinking!). In the evening, the whole crew had a really great dinner at The Palms Hotel. Since I have recently been so deprived of beauty sleep, Barb and I turned in early. I have no idea how late some of our more hard-core brethren stayed up. . .

Sunday morning, most of the early birds were in the breakfast room, partaking of the complementary coffee, juice, and cereal. Barb, never really a morning person, hadn't even gotten out of bed by the time that the first riders left for home. When we were finally ready to leave, everyone else had already left. We decided to head south to Ocotillo, and then west on I-8. We must have made great time on our way to Ocotillo because a number of our group had stopped at the infamous Lazy Lizard bar. Barb and I pulled in, and discovered that everyone else had also just arrived. After a little liquid refreshment (non-alcoholic, of course), we all headed west on I-8 for home.

If you haven't been to Borrego Springs in a while, it's worth the trip simply to see the prehistoric animal sculptures. You can't miss 'em!

Ron Caudillo



2009 SDAMC Ride Calendar (check SDAMC.Net website)

1/31 Sat	Campo Train Ride
2/15 Sun	Classic Motorcycle Ride
3/1 Sun	Ex-Presidents' Ride
4/25-26 Sat-Sun	Idyllwild Overnight— MEMBERS ONLY!
5/9 Sat	Full Moon Ride
5/24 Sun	Around Our World Ride
6/27 Sat	T-Shirt Ride
7/4 Sat	Alpine Parade Ride / BBQ
7/18 Sat	Garage Crawl—MEMBERS ONLY!
8/30 Sun	Tiddler Ride
9/26 Sat	Classic Motorcycle Ride
10/17-18 Sat-Sun	Standlunds Overnight—MEMBERS ONLY!
11/26 Thu	Turkey Day Ride
12/13 Sun	Pacific Beach Parade
12/26 Sat	Year End Ride

2009 SDAMC Events Calendar

2/28-3/1	Big 3 Swap Meet
8/10	Pot Luck—MEMBERS ONLY!
9/???	El Camino Swap Meet
9/???	Del Mar MotoExpo
10/???	Coronado Speed Fest
11/1	Hansen Dam Ride
12/5	SDAMC Holiday Party—MEMBERS ONLY!

Godspeed, John Mulrean

"Uncle Smoochie" was cantankerous, grouchy and opinionated. He also was a helluva guy. John would give a fellow vintage bike person the shirt off his back. He was a major player in SDAMC for years back when Ellen and I joined in 1990. He was a heavy-lifter back in the old Del Mar days, quick to get his hands dirty. He was a good shadetree mechanic, eager to wrench for anyone with a problem. His knowledge of Brit bikes and his parts supply were endless. He and Donna worked tirelessly on the Cachuma Rally, a favorite project for him. Anyone that attended any of these NorCal events knew and respected his hard work and dedication.

Some folks leave a hole in life that will be difficult to fill. I might not always have agreed with John but it never stopped me from respecting him and I'll miss his powerful "lift-me-off-the-ground" bear hugs. Godspeed, "Uncle Smoochie." You will be missed and never replaced.

Sadly, Joe and Ellen Michaud

One Curious Motorbike Meeting. . .

Gene Smith and Ray Leebolt recently held an impromptu motorbike meeting on a familiar portion of Lyons Valley Road. At approximately 8:30AM, they were headed for the Dulzura Cafe for breakfast. No alcohol was involved. It was alleged, by those involved, that Mr. Leebolt was in the lead and decided to pull off the road and stop to discuss their next destination. Mr. Smith, unaware of this event, was happily rounding the corner, accelerating up his favorite merge lane. It was at this point that the crash bars of Mr. Smith's bike encountered the hardbags of Mr. Leebolt's bike. Despite 20-30 feet of applying all binders, smoking all tires, and locking all wheels, the bike continued to go sideways and the meeting took place. (Ray's bike previously had only top opening panniers, but now they conveniently open from all sides...) Ray did make contact with his windscreen and also the pavement resulting in the bruises you would expect with a lad of his size becoming a projectile. The bike had to be towed to the shop and was found to have over \$5,000 worth of damage to it.

Gene woke up flat on his back in the ditch, with no recollection of anything after the sound of the impact. There was no real damage to him or his bike except for the crash bars which have been replaced. Both parties and their insurance companies agreed they were both at fault and would share the liability for the damage to the bikes and their egos. Both parties were found later in the afternoon, sharing a pitcher of beer at The Finn Springs Inn. They were joined by Mr. Bob Rattazzi and Mr. Merle Clements who had also been in attendance at the meeting earlier in the day and agreed with the aforementioned verdict:

All parties agreed that it could have been a lot worse.

All parties agreed to ride together another day.

All parties agreed to have another beer.

PS. Ray's bike is still in the shop, so as some of you at The Waterfront noticed, he is riding Gene's Road King and Gene is riding his Deuce...no further meetings are planned...

Marlys Smith

VOCNA Velocette Rally—2008



The weather could not have been any better for a motorcycle ride, mostly blue sky and a slight chill in the air, a perfect morning for a ride.

The event this weekend was the VOCNA (Velocette Owners Club of North America) Rally. This club very rarely makes it way down to San Diego. They hold a lot of their rallies in Northern California, Oregon, Washington and they have been spotted in Canada, so the San Diego visit was special and a must for me to attend. And I even talked Nina into joining me.

For those who are not familiar with the Velocette brand of motorcycle, they were built from 1904 to 1966 in England (yes they leak oil, a lot.) They were a family owned business their entire history. The more famous and recognized models were the ohc KSS MK VIII. This model won many Isle of Man TT events and set some serious speed records in the late 1920's and early 1930's. Later on there were other models like the Mac and the MOV. These were push rod models versus the K series, which were overhead cam models.

In the 1960's there were several models that were used by the English police: the LE models and the model that I own, the Valiant, which looks like a small BMW. If you have ever watched any old films where the "bobbies" were riding motorcycles they might have been riding one of these.

Nina and I met up with the Rally at the Lake Henshaw Resort. Out in front of the restaurant there were several parked Velocettes, a Mac, a couple of KSS, a Venom and what looked like a scrambler model; very cool. Within a few minutes we met Sam, who came down from Canada, and several other riders, Craig and John, John and Clay, Zuma and Tom Ross. Tom and I had actually talked several times in the past; he helped me locate parts for my Valiant. After a long while talking shop and kicking tires the ride captain gave us a ride route map. The route was all too familiar. Ride from the lake down Montezuma Grade; meet up at the circle in Borrego Springs; take the long way around to Scissors Crossing; and up Banner Grade to Julian for lunch.

Nina and I had other ride plans so we bid the riders a safe ride. We watched them kick their Velocettes to life and one by one, they headed off towards their destination.

My riding buddy and I saddled up and headed up East Grade Road towards the top of Mt. Palomar where we had a late breakfast at Mothers'. Life is good.

Virgil Foreman

My Lucky Day. . .

This was the summer of . . . well let's just say I was about 7 or 8 at the time. We lived in Santa Cruz, California about a block away from the beach. When I wasn't in school I was at the beach leaning how to ride a surf board or hanging out with my neighbor, who lived behind us. He had a small, probably home made motor bike. The reason I say home made is because I remember it started by pulling on a cord.

We lived in a duplex and my family had the front of the unit which was on the street. In the back, where Motor Bike Mike lived, there was a large dirt area where we would park the cars. Next door there was a large empty lot. This is where Mike would let me ride the motor bike around and around in circles and sometimes in the dirt lot next door where there were mounds of dirt piled pretty high. I guess that was my first off road experience.

On this particular day, let's call it Sunday, I was kicking up the dirt and dust, and for some strange reason I decided on my own to venture out from the dirt track and try the paved street. So down the driveway I headed with Mike chasing me as I picked up speed, and pulled away, probably at all of 10 or 15 miles per hour - anyway much faster than I was used to. I must have been a sight, this little kid with his hair flapping in the breeze, no shirt, no shoes, and more than likely a huge smile on my face, all of which was about to change. The driveway was long enough that I was really flying as I passed the front of my house. I can still hear my mom yelling at me to stop. This was just enough of a distraction for me that I didn't see the car coming down the road in my direction.

The real terror came when I realized that I was about to ride up onto the paved road and I needed to make a decision which way to go, left or right, and I needed to make it fast! It was too late. Just as I found myself in the middle of the road there was the sound of rubber screeching and a horn blaring and as I looked up, all I could see was the front bumper of this big car just a few inches from my face. Looking back at this now I bet the driver probably couldn't see me by this time because the bike wasn't very tall. The only way I could go was straight ahead and that's what I did.

Straight across the street I went, smashing into my neighbor's mailbox and knocking it over with my head. I had a knot on the top of my head for months. Then through the white picket fence and into her rose bush, finally coming to rest in the middle of her yard. Before the first of many tears found their way down my face, my mother, Motor Bike Mike, the old couple in the car (who looked like they were on their way to church) and Mrs. Henderson, the Rose Bush Lady, were standing over me with a look of amazement on their faces - that is except for my mother. I knew that look and I knew I was in big trouble. I am sure I was hoping for a broken leg or an arm, any injury other than the rose thorns that had impaled themselves all over my body, anything that would defuse the wrath that was headed my way.

The next few moments are a little foggy. All the adults were talking amongst themselves all the while staring at me. It wasn't long before my mom grabbed me by the ear and hauled my sorry ass across the street and into the house where, in her moment of motherly fear of losing her son, she grabbed my father's belt and began to beat me within an inch of my short motor bike riding life.

After the mother/son bonding experience, a good dose of mercuriochrome and a lecture about doing what I am told to do and to NEVER get on that bike again, life returned to a normal childhood summer.

That is until one day my mom's brother Uncle Lucky drove up the street on this big red shiny motorcycle he called his squaw

Virgil Foreman

The Long and Winding Road – The Trials and Tribulations of Black Mariah. . .

Prologue:

Being somewhat of a military aviation buff, I came to read about a famous Canadian fighter pilot of WWI named Raymond Colli shaw. Besides do wning 60-or-so German planes, Colli shaw was noted for his black-painted Sopwith triplane which he named “Black Maria”. I suspect that he probably pronounced “Maria”, like “Mariah”, as in Mariah Carey (whoever she is!).

While I was in high school (Go Matadors!), I came to consider myself a Norton man. Of course, I needed to use the term “man” kinda loosely. Most of you old-schoolers should recall Norton’s T & A-based marketing campaign, featuring a bevy of stunning estrogen-based life forms. Besides being obvious chick magnets, the Commandos were actually formidable bikes for the time. I knew that eventually I would own one. My preference was the jet-black painted beauty, with the sexy gold pinstriping. I was pretty sure that I’d soon be beating the hot chicks off with a stick. The only question was how soon I’d weigh enough to kick the engine over. At 105 pounds soaking wet, I could scarcely budge the Norton’s kickstarter! If I ever was lucky enough to get a Commando, it would be black, and I’d call her “Black Mariah” . . .

A.D 1995:

Almost twenty-five years had sped by, but I never got over my Norton Commando infatuation. At this point in my life, I had finally got to where I had a modicum of discretionary income. That itch to get a Norton got worse and worse with each passing day. In the pre-Internet days, searching for old bikes, parts, and literature was much more difficult than it is today. In the Union-Tribune classifieds, I spotted an ad for a pair of 1975 Commandos somewhere in Lakeside for 500 bucks. I drove out to the seller’s home (a shack at the end of some dirt road), and immediately spotted the skeletal remains of the two bikes sitting in the yard. They were such abject pieces of shit that I didn’t even get out of the car before departing.

A coworker of mine, Brad Holt, had recently begun racing old Bultacos in AHRMA (American Historical Racing Motorcycle Association) flat track events. We spent way too much time bulkhitting about motorcycles on company time. Brad had several issues of the organization’s monthly newsletter. Of particular interest were the issues’ classified ads. Sure enough, some guy named “Ron” (a sure “red flag” if ever there were one!) had a low mileage ’75 Mk III Commando in Wisconsin. Despite the obvious logistical problems with buying a bike long-distance, I gave Ron a call. Ron seemed to know a lot about Nortons, and the bike appeared to be a pretty good deal. He mentioned that his main interest was in vintage motocross racing. He was really into Maicos, and since I too had been into Maicos, I knew that he had to be a cool guy. Ron mentioned that he’d be traveling to the next AHRMA races in a couple of weeks. The races would be held in Steamboat Springs, Colorado, and he’d willing to truck the Norton, along with his MX bikes to the races. I told him that I meet him there to check the bike out, and possibly purchase it.

Along the way, Ron gave me a quick run-down on the Norton’s history. Nowadays, people get all misty-eyed, fantasizing about finding a pristine Commando Mk III or a Triumph T-160. The truth is that back in 1975, NVT (Norton-Villiers Triumph) had warehouses full of these bikes that they couldn’t give away, especially after the factories closed their doors. The poor Norton-Triumph dealers likewise couldn’t unload the bikes that were gathering dust in their showrooms. In Black Mariah’s case, it happened to be the last Commando of a dealership in Three Rivers, Wisconsin. Realizing the futility of trying to sell the bike, the shop owner relegated Black Mariah to his mother’s basement, where it sat (with zero miles) for about eight years.

At some point, the dealer sold the virtually brand-new bike to Ron W., who proceeded to put about 10,000 miles on the bike. Right after he bought the bike, he rode it to an INOA (International Norton Owners Club) national event, and came away with a Best of Show trophy. Ron W. stated that he was selling the bike since he hadn’t been riding it much lately. Get this: He said that he preferred riding his BSA A65! That’s gotta be a first!

Some people might call it “synchronicity”, but things were falling into place so quickly, that it was starting to get scary. I had a P.O.S. mini pickup at the time. The drive to Steamboat was about nineteen hours each way, and the odds of the truck making it were about 50-50. With a \$4,000 cashier’s check in hand, I set off for Steamboat right after work on the Friday before the AHRMA weekend races. Ron and I planned to meet at his hotel on Sunday morning. By driving all night, I was able to get to Steamboat (all bleary eyed!) late Saturday afternoon. I pulled into the hotel where Ron was staying, and parked next to a large enclosed trailer. As I was getting out of the truck, some guy was wheeling a gorgeous Egli-Vincent out of his enclosed trailer. Over the next couple of years, this guy, a big-bucks hog farmer whose name I don’t recall, was the subject of numerous magazine articles.

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The Long and Winding Road . . . (continued)

This was before cell phones, so I was a little uptight about being able to find Ron, but it only took a few minutes to run him down. The bike was in very good, bordering on excellent, unrestored condition. Sure enough, the bike was the delectable black and gold. With my background being dirt bikes, I had only ridden big street bikes a few times, and I had never ridden a Norton. Therefore, I was really excited when it came time for the test ride. Ron started the bike (it only took a couple of kicks after the obligatory “priming” kicks!), I hopped on, and was on my way. After about a quarter of a mile, the bike stalled when I pulled up to a stop. I could not get the damn bike restarted! Steamboat’s at about 5,000 feet, so by the time that I got the bike pushed back to the hotel (it was all uphill), I was ready to be put on life support!!! It turned out that I was operating the carburetor choke lever in the wrong direction, thereby flooding the engine after it had warmed up. Ultimately, the money changed hands, the bike was loaded into my P.O.S. pickup, and I was headed back to San Diego.

I think I may have driven a little too fast on my way to Steamboat since I was so anxious to get my hands on the Norton. On the return trip my pickup really started to run poorly. By the time I got to St. George, Utah, the truck wouldn’t restart after gassing up. I did as much troubleshooting as you can do 500 miles from home with very few tools. After about a half an hour of futility, the truck restarted (barely), and with grim determination, I patiently nursed the truck back to San Diego.

Over the next couple of years, I spent a significant amount of effort getting the Norton dialed in. British vertical twins have their virtues, like their “coolness factor”, and their “lovely” exhaust sound. But let’s face it—they were pieces of shit compared to their Japanese contemporaries. So I spent no effort trying to keep the Norton’s bullshit stock equipment just for the sake of keeping it original. (I planned on running the hell out of the bike!) Instead, I concentrated on improving the bike’s reliability and performance. For example:

- The dual Amal carbs were deep-sixed, and replaced by a single 34mm Mikuni. (Quick tech tip: when you buy a carburetor, make sure that the moron that assembled it has put the correct slide in. It’s difficult to tune the bike when a left-hand slide has been installed in a right-hand carb body!)
- I dumped the archaic Lucas points ignition, and installed a reliable Boyer-Brandsen electronic ignition.
- The mis-sized, stock Lockheed front brake master cylinder was replaced by a Nissin master cylinder.
- The stock front brake disc was replaced by with a cool, 12” full-floater from RGM Engineering in Old Blighty.
- A quartz-halogen headlamp replaced the stock, “glow worm” headlamp.
- The stock “black cap” mufflers were swapped for classic “peashooters”
- I installed a set of genuine Craven panniers giving a modicum of cargo carrying capability
- Braided brake and oil lines were installed.
- A cool Earl’s oil cooler was installed.
- Norman Hyde fork brace (not worth the trouble!)

Ultimately, I got the bike to where I could take it pretty much anywhere. When I attended Hansen Dam events, I would simply ride the bike to and from the event. Two hundred mile trips were pretty much routine. The bike wasn’t quite up to Jap bike reliability standards, but it was damn close! At freeway cruising speeds, Commando really are as smooth as any 4-cylinder Jap bike. Amazing!

A.D 2003:

Once I got her dialed-in, life with Black Mariah was pretty good. She was pretty much bullet-proofed, and I was learning to accept some of the Commando’s idiosyncrasies such as the infamous 19” rear wheel and the inability to mount a modern O-ring drive chain. It turned out that the only 19” rear tire sold in the U.S. was the super-soft Avon Super Venom. It’s a great tire, but when Barb and I rode two-up, the tire would be thrashed in only 4,000 miles, and that was while riding slowly! Chains would be thrashed in less than 5,000 miles.

I had gotten to the point where Black Mariah was my daily rider. I live in east El Cajon, and work in Kearny Mesa, so I was racking up about fifty miles a day. I worked with a number of British engineers and I soon became to be somewhat of a minor celebrity. The coolest thing about riding an old bike on a daily basis, is the way one can get a rise off of Harley riders! It was pretty cool seeing their egos deflate when they realize that they don’t have the coolest bike in the parking lot. Great fun!

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The Long and Winding Road . . . (continued)

Along the way, I had gotten the bike to the point it leaked “virtually” no oil. I did have a recurring problem with the crankshaft oil seal behind the points plate. One day, I pulled the timing cover to replace the oil seal. This required removing the oil lines to and from the oil tank. The whole job was pretty simple and uneventful.

The next day, on the way home from work, I was riding eastbound on I-8. As was my normal modus operandi, I was in the fast lane, going about 80 mph. All of the sudden, the bike started to lose power, as though it was out of gas. This was really confusing since I had just gassed up, but I switched to “reserve” nonetheless. No improvement! A few seconds later, I had lost so much speed that I had to pull in the clutch, and coast to a halt on the shoulder, next to the center divider. I don’t even want to think about what would have happened had I flamed-out about a mile earlier, where there was no shoulder between the number one lane and the center divider.

With cars and trucks whizzing by, literally inches away, I tried to restart the engine. The engine cranked for a fraction of a second, and then wouldn’t budge. At this point, I theorized that my battery had suddenly gone dead. I then tried to kick the bike over, but the kick lever wouldn’t budge an inch. I dismounted, and saw a major puddle of oil beneath the engine. . . OH SHIT!!!

By a stroke of luck, a tow truck was just completing a tire change about 100 yards away. I was able to get his attention, and through a brief sign language conversation, he agreed to pick me up. The tow truck was one of those tilt bed jobs, and the driver winched the bike up the incline, when I walked beside the bike to keep it upright. Everything was cool until I got to where the tilt bed was covered with spilled engine oil and coolant. I almost fell on my ass, trying to keep the bike upright. He finally got the bed horizontal, and then did a half-assed job lashing down the bike. A hundred bucks later, we arrived home.

Once I got the bike into the garage, I realized what happened. The bottom-line is that I botched the oil seal replacement from the day before! Even though the hose clamps were cinched down, somehow one of the oil lines had come loose, and the engine had been starved of oil. It was obvious that what felt like an engine running out of gas was actually the engine seizing up. I was so pissed off at myself that I didn’t have the stomach to even look at the bike.

After spending about two weeks saying to myself: “I am the cause of my own experience” (along with various other 1970’s pop psychology aphorisms!), I started the tear-down/post-mortem process. Once I got the head off, I could see that both cylinder bores were scored. Not too badly, but I’d definitely have to re-bore the cylinders, and slap in some new pistons and rings. Just as I was patting myself on the back, I realized that I could have also tweaked the hell out of the bottom-end! GULP!!!

With a little persuasion (a block of wood to tap on the piston crowns), the barrel came off. After eyeballing the connecting rods, and by spinning the crankshaft, I was confident that the bottom-end didn’t suffer (much) from the oil starvation. At that moment, I was feeling pretty good about myself. A couple of new pistons, a bore job, and I’d be good to go! I put the barrel on one of those plastic milk crates, and decided to call it a night.

Did I mention that this tear-down process was performed during one of San Diego’s heat waves? When I got home from work the next day, I opened up the garage to continue working on the bike. Guess what. . . That piece of shit plastic milk crate (probably from Harbor Freight!) collapsed under the weight of the cast iron barrel. I picked the barrel up and found that a large chunk of one of the cooling fins had broken off. My lucky streak was continuing. . . No sweat, Sal Peluso, the owner of Kearny Mesa Welding (and a former AMA pro flat tracker), reattached the broken fin. While he was at it, I had Sal sandblast the barrel.

When I got the barrel home, Barb hadn’t yet gotten home from work. This was my chance to clean the barrel using the (I mean her) dishwasher. Like a dumb-ass, I let the dishwasher go through its complete wash/dry cycle. I removed the barrel from the dishwasher, and found that while it was free of dirt, grit and grease, it was also lightly rusted!! I was too embarrassed to take the barrel back to Sal for another sandblasting, so I simply used a wire brush, and was able to remove about 99% of the rust.

While the “Broken Fin Affair” was going on, I had ordered a set of genuine first-over Hepolite pistons from Doris Chavez, up at British Marketing. There was a hot-shot company in Escondido (that shall remain nameless) that advertised heavily as a cylinder boring specialist. When the pistons arrived, I immediately took them, along with the barrel up to this shop. The pistons were furnished with their clearance specifications. When I presented the specs to the machinist, he sort of “blew them off”, stating that he worked on British bikes all the time, and that knew exactly what was required. A couple of days later I got the freshly bored cylinder and pistons back. Before I slapped everything back together, I performed a quickie valve grind job, and replaced the valve guide seals.

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The Long and Winding Road . . . (continued)

Since I had the special wrench and the special socket (you Norton guys know which ones I mean!), the top-end went back together without much difficulty. After making the sign of the Cross, and after taking a swig of Holy water, I started up the old girl. She sounded great! After letting her idle for about two minutes, I decided to take her around the block. I wasn't on the road more than thirty seconds when the engine slowed to a halt. NOT AGAIN!!! Sure enough, the bike wouldn't kick over. Just like before, she had seized. . . I immediately checked the oil tank, and found the oil quite aerated, so I knew that at least the oil had been circulating.

I took the barrel and pistons to a machinist that I knew was competent, to perform a diagnosis. It turns out that the "ace" machinist up in Escondido had given me one thousandth of an inch of clearance. After reviewing the factory specs, we calculated that the pistons needed seven thousandths of clearance. No wonder the engine seized after only about three minutes! This machinist had one of those high-buck Sunnen hones, and was able to provide the necessary clearance. He said that while the piston skirts were a little scuffed, they were probably okay to reinstall. After so many screw-ups, I decided to not cut any more corners. British Marketing sent me a second set of first-over Hepolite pistons. By the way, the Escondido machine shop has since gone out of business. . .

After the second rebuild, the bike was running great. I spent the first week or so terrorizing various Blossom Valley and Alpine neighborhoods, trying to rack up a hundred or so break-in miles. Everything was cool. The following weekend, the club had an oldies ride that left the Waterfront and then east towards Ramona. When we got to Lakeside, the bike started cutting out badly. Barb and I were forced to abandon the ride, but we were able to limp the five-or-so miles back to the house. I was a beaten man! Black Maria had gotten the better of me. . .

FIVE YEARS PASS . . .

A.D 2008:

It took about five years to get over the trauma that Black Maria had inflicted upon my psyche. By this time I was pretty sure that it wouldn't take too much effort to get her running, but I just didn't have the heart. A better man than me would need to get her going. Luckily, fellow club member, Tim Johnson, was just getting his bike repair business going so I asked Tim to get the bike running. A new battery, some minor rewiring, a carb cleaning, and a new throttle cable were needed. Tim had done the impossible! Black Maria was back (with a vengeance!).

I got her home, and took her for a spin. I had forgotten how cool it was to ride an old Brit bike. Life was good. . . Well, for the first ten miles or so. . . The bike kept cutting out, just like it had done before I parked it for five years! SHIT!!!

I checked the battery voltage to the ignition. I checked the wiring. I screwed with the carburetor so many times that I could disassemble the sumbitch blindfolded! The bike would run great for a while, and then would run shitty. At one of the club meetings, I was venting my frustrations. Frank Seckner, feeling pity for me, volunteered a spare Boyer ignition module (thanks Bro!). When I installed Frank's module, the bike had the exact same symptoms. Since I had already replaced the plugs, coils, H-T leads, and all of the ignition-related wiring, my problem had to be the ignition pick-up or the magnetic rotor, since they were only two ignition components I didn't replace.

I had gone to all of the usual Internet sites to get information on Boyer ignition problems. Ultimately, I dug up some information about a competing ignition system from a company called Pazon. It turns out that the founders of Pazon were former Boyer-Brandsen engineers that wanted to improve on Boyer's offerings. According to their literature, the Boyer ignition had a couple of serious shortcomings. First, Boyer systems require relatively high voltage readings to operate properly. Below a certain voltage, they won't even fire. Pazon claimed that their unit would function properly at a significantly lower voltage. Second, in low voltage conditions, like when electric start bike is cranking over, Boyer ignitions go to full advance, which can cause the engine to back-fire. These back-fires are particularly bad for Mk III Nortons since they can break the electric starter's sprag clutch mechanism. (Hm mmm. . . So that's why my starter would occasionally sound like it was going to explode!).

In a week or so, the Pazon system arrived. The quality of the unit appeared to be significantly better than my old Boyer unit. One of the things that I really liked was that the Pazon unit's pick-up plate had degree markings. This made it really easy to get the timing spot-on. With the new ignition, the bike ran perfectly. Well, I mean that it ran as good as it ever did. So now I'm a happy camper. Thanks Tim. Thanks Frank.

It's common knowledge that Nortons, ridden infrequently, suffer from wet-sumping. To combat that potential problem, I purchased a really slick looking check valve from Walridge's in Canada. It was a really cool looking part,

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The Long and Winding Road . . . (continued)

half aluminum, and half plastic. In the middle was a clear plastic section, so that you could make sure that oil was flowing properly. The installation was simple. Per the instructions, I let Black Mariah idle for about two minutes while I insured that oil was flowing properly. Just for the helluvit, I peeked down at the valve, and much to my horror, I found that the valve was hemorrhaging profusely. The f@#\$in' thing had split apart where the aluminum section joined the clear plastic section! Obviously, I was fortunate to not seize the engine for a third time! I'll be settling-up with Walridge's in the very near future. . .

Now that things have settled down, I decided that Black Mariah needed a new paint job. While stately, her black paint job is a little boring. I decided on Ford's "Grabber Orange". I think I'll have to re-christen her. How does "Barbie Doll" sound???

Oh, I just remembered. . . I have one last minor repair to do. There's a little bit of oil leaking from the crankshaft oil seal behind the points plate. . .

Ron Caudillo

The Few, The Proud on Pierre's Turkey Day Ride. . .





San Diego Antique Motorcycle Club

Membership Application

Purpose of Club

The San Diego Antique Motorcycle Club is a non-profit mutual benefit corporation organized and dedicated to the preservation of antique motorcycles, and in furtherance of such purposes, the sponsorship of antique motorcycle rides, exhibitions and related activities, and the encouragement of social, fraternal and educational activities among its members and the public, with membership open to all persons having an interest in antique motorcycles.

NAME: _____

SIGNIFICANT OTHER: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY : _____ STATE _____ ZIP: _____

PHONE (H) _____ (W) _____ (C) _____

E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____ (FAX) _____

May we include your name, phone numbers and e-mail address in our Club Roster sent only to SDAMC members?

YES NO NOTE: HOME ADDRESS IS EXCLUDED

Note: THIS IS A RELEASE OF LIABILITY. DO NOT SIGN UNLESS YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THIS RELEASE. The San Diego Antique Motorcycle Club, Inc. hereafter referred to as SDAMC, Inc, the board of directors and members shall not be liable or responsible for damage to property or any injury to persons, including myself, during any SDAMC, Inc. meeting, activity, or event even where the damage or injury is caused by negligence (except willful neglect). I understand and agree that all SDAMC, Inc. members and their guests participate voluntarily and at their own risk in all SDAMC, Inc. meetings, activities, and events. I RELEASE and hold SDAMC, Inc. its board of directors and members harmless for any injury or loss to my person or property which may result there from. I understand this means I agree not to sue SDAMC, Inc, its board of directors or members for any injury resulting to myself or my property in connection with any SDAMC, Inc. meeting, activity or event.

Applicant's Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Annual dues are \$25. Please make checks payable to SDAMC

Mail Application to: SDAMC Membership

c/o Daryl Nelson

13450 Hwy 80 Bus. #101

Lakeside, CA 92040