

Norton Notice

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTHERN CALIFORNIA BRANCH

NO. 106

FEB., 1987

THE TWINS

- 1949 Dominator
- 1951 Model 88
- 1955 Model 99
- 1956 Model 77
- 1957 Jubilee
- 1961 Navigator
- 1962 Model 650
- 1962 Atlas
- 1959 Nomad
- 1963 Electra
- 1967 P11
- 1969 Commando 750
- 1962 G15
- 1972 Combat
- 1973 Interstate 850
- 1973 Roadster
- 1974 Production Racer
- 1974 JPN
- 1974 Cosworth JAA
- 1974 Interpol
- 1975 MKIII
- ???????
- ???????



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTHERN CALIFORNIA BRANCH



Norton Notice

is published by the Northern California Branch of the Norton Owners Club. Its purpose is to inform and entertain members regarding all aspects of the Norton motorcycle, including history, technical advice, and preservation of the marque.

NORTON NOTICE is a reflection of its readership, who are encouraged to submit any article, technical tip, photograph (original or otherwise) as long as it is in good taste, so that other Norton enthusiasts may enjoy it. For Branch members who cannot attend club meetings or club rides, the NORTON NOTICE affords an opportunity to share experiences and information with the membership of the Branch, and to bring the Branch members closer together.

The deadline for items to be submitted for publication is the 15th of each month.

Membership in the Northern California Branch of the Norton Owners Club is available for \$25.00 per year.

Membership dues are payable to the Branch Secretary/Treasurer.

Renewal dues are payable at the end of the individual's membership year, that month being designated by the last number of the individual's membership number as located on the mailing label of the NORTON NOTICE or the membership card. For example, 745/2 denotes member 745 with dues expiring on the 1st of February.

All changes of address should go to the Branch Secretary/Treasurer, not the NOTICE Editor.

Subscription to the NORTON NOTICE only is available for \$15.00 per year. This does not include membership in the Northern California Branch of the Norton Owners Club, nor does it afford any of the rights or privileges of membership in the NOC.

Membership in the Northern California Branch of the Norton Owners Club entitles a member to monthly issues of the NORTON NOTICE and bi-monthly issues of ROADHOLDER magazine, which is sent directly from England, keeping members informed of Norton owners' activities worldwide. Membership provides voting privileges at all NOC and Branch meetings, and allows one to purchase Norton spares directly from England, at significant savings, through the NOC Spares Program.



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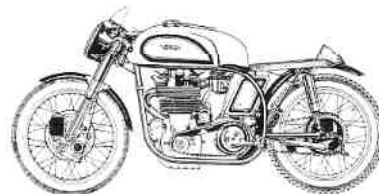
Margie Siegal
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Important!

(Please take note of the following fine print.)

The object of the Northern California Branch of the Norton Owners Club is to promote, encourage and develop all motor-cycling activities. The Club's members are owners of Norton motorcycles, and they often submit for publication in the Norton Notice technical tips pertaining to motorcycles of the Norton marque. Technical tips so published have been reviewed for technical content and are believed to be both acceptable and workable, but no guarantee is made or implied that they will work correctly, nor is any liability assumed by either the Norton Owners Club or the authors for any problems resulting from use of these technical tips. The Club also assumes no responsibility for the acts or omissions of its members in connection with Club activities. Norton Notice articles or other material express the authors' views only and not necessarily the official policy of the Norton Owners Club or its Northern California Branch. The editor reserves the right to accept, reject or alter all editorial and advertising material submitted for publication. Advertising published does not imply endorsement of products, goods or services. Now you know.



1963 catalog drawing of Manx 30M and 40M



TWISTGRIP TWADDLE

The January club meeting was held in Oakland at Margie Siegal's house, the first time within recent memory for an East Bay venue. In the circumstances (i.e., first time there, unfamiliar surroundings, short notice), attendance was pretty good and it was a productive meeting with several new ideas batted around. First among these was the notion of holding future club meetings on more of a rotational basis say, South Bay in February, West Bay in March, North Bay in April, East Bay again in May, something like that. Maybe a new place in Palo Alto for the February meeting--see elsewhere in this Notice to learn whether that's been worked out (Don Danmeier found a possible good spot). I encourage all members in the Bay Area to be on the lookout in their own vicinities for likely meeting places, because I know we can improve upon the past situation. Bring your ideas to the next meeting, or at least give me a call.

Second idea is actually a continuing one: Let's get some guest speakers lined up for monthly meetings to make them more of an event than a talkfest/booze-up. It's been great when Vance Breesse came, and I'm sure that amongst ourselves we know some interesting people who'd like the opportunity to talk about motorcycling and Nortons to an attentive audience. (Art, how about fronting the money to fly Bert Hopwood over?) There are things we could do besides just speakers, too. Ideas, anyone?

We're going to try to get a Members Roster out this year, and we want to include in it an enlarged version of the West Coast Dealers Directory that appeared in the Notice a few months ago. There are two things each member can do to assist this project: (a) Let Alan, our secretary-treasurer, know the name, address and details of the dealer(s) in your area (as to what bikes and repairs they can handle and how good their stock of spares seems), and (b) Ensure Alan has your correct address and phone number. (If for any reason you want only your city and phone number to appear in the Roster, be sure to let Alan know that, too.) As anyone who's ever been in unexpected difficulties can attest, an up-to-date roster is worth its weight in spark plugs, so please help us ensure it is accurate and comprehensive.

Further to the alert published on page 11 of last month's Notice, a straw poll was taken at the January meeting on whether I on behalf of the Club should write a letter to Sacramento expressing our members' opinion on Assembly Bill 36, which would make the wearing of a helmet mandatory for all motorcyclists in California. The result of said poll was (1) the members in attendance were generally opposed to the measure, and (2) before anything is written for the Club, the broader membership should have an opportunity to comment. Therefore, all Branch members are requested either to attend the February meeting and express their opinion on the subject or to write or call me for the same purpose. The poll taken at the last meeting is presumptively representative of the feeling of the members as a whole, so I am particularly interested in hearing from you if you disfavor the writing of such a letter (i.e., if you think a helmet law is a good idea). The rationale when the issue was discussed was that helmets are a good idea but whether or not to wear one should remain an individual choice rather than a legal requirement. That crashed, impecunious motorcyclists are a drain upon the public purse is doubted, but even if they were, they more than make up for it in organ donations, right? Let me know what you think, and by all means do write directly to your assemblyman yourself to make your feelings known. I plan to write a letter from the Club about mid-February if a contrary intention has not become plain by then.

This column's getting kinda long, so I'll throw out one last idea that came up and then sign off. The observation was made that, for some incompletely understood reason, the members of the Norton Owners Club are a suspiciously diverse lot, and that it would be very interesting to run periodic biographical sketches on members in the Notice (with perhaps a one- or two-word note in the Roster as to each member's sbtck), possibly in interview form. Comment?

We had a good ride to Mt. Diablo on January 18th, of which undoubtedly more elsewhere--hope you made it. See you around the next bend.

JOIN THE RIDES THEY'RE FUN!!!

TRAVEL THE CONTINENT

FEBRUARY RIDE: SOUTH BAY SORTIE

DEPARTURE POINT: RABER'S, 1615 ALMADEN RD, SAN JOSE
LEAVE 10:15 AM
DESTINATION: FLYING LADY RESTAURANT AND MUSEUM
15060 FOOTHILL AVE, MORGAN HILL

It seems like enthusiasm and participation in club events has been "sagging" a bit lately, so when Ms. Margie sweet talked me into putting on the February Ride I agreed, with the thought that we could have some fun as well as conduct a check on the club's vital signs. I'd like to see fifteen Nortons on this ride and no Jap machines. This is a challenge on what is usually the rottenest, coldest, possibly wettest months of the year. REAL Norton men and women will rise to the occasion and the Nort's love it -- they think they're back home! So, if we get fifteen Nortons on this ride, I'll buy the champagne at the Flying Lady and give a talk at the next club meeting on "How to Buy and Sell Your Norton and Still Be Friends With the Other Guy", dedicated to Phil Radford, of course.

The ride will start at Raber's where Bob volunteered to have some hot coffee and donuts for us and open up the showroom. Be sure to get there early, say about 9:15 and DO NOT EAT ANY BREAKFAST UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES! After kicking tires and drooling over some of Ed's classics, we'll head out for about 45 miles of scenic South Bay hills and lakes before arriving at the Flying Lady at about 11:30. Maps of the route will be handed out at Raber's. The Flying Lady is a restaurant and museum with the best Sunday morning brunch in the county. You simply get all you can eat of the best kind of breakfast stuff you can possibly imagine plus all the champagne you can drink for a paltry \$8.95. I think if you stop eating about Thurs day you'll be OK. The decor is pretty outlandish. More than a hundred airplanes hang from the ceiling with six of them full size genuine articles. It's on a hillside with a nice view of the lower valley if the weather's not too rotten. There's a free museum there too with old cars, airplanes, buggys, a bike or two, and other wierd old stuff. So get off your lazy tired old butt, fire up the old soldier and come get reacquainted with your old buddies. This means you, Scott, Gene, Phil, Ed, Ralph, Margie, Alan, Tim, Suran, John, Lou, Mike, Tom, Bob, Alex, Wayne, Harold, Dave, etc,etc,etc,etc,etc,etc,..... See ya there!

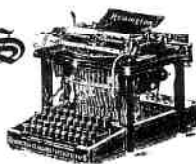
"Keep 'em Upright!"

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

William Ball	NUTS
Kenneth Hyde	O
	R
Guy Martin	T
	O
	NUTS



EDITOR'S NOTES



Hi folks,

LA CARRERA RESULTS

Many of you no doubt read that the 1st place overall motorcycle finisher at La Carrera was Fred Eiker aboard a JPN. What I was never able to figure out from all the garbled news reports (Do newsmen stay sober at this event?) was who finished where in the various classes. According to the latest British Car and Bike (Jan/Feb) there were no less than FIVE, count 'em, FIVE! Nortons in the top six places of the Vintage Open. Eiker's winning average speed was 111.19 mph while Paul Blouin's 6th place Norton cruised on in at 59.37 mph. A Triumph managed to snatch 4th at 86.96 mph.

DIRECTORY TAKING SHAPE

Plans are underway to update the Membership Directory. The current roster will be used as the basis for the new edition with some additional features thrown in including an updated (and possibly expanded) dealer directory. Club members present at the January meeting agreed that the Directory could serve Norton owners as an on-the-road aid, much as the BMW and Guzzi Owners Clubs' Anonymous Directories serve their members.

In addition to the roster and dealer directory, we are exploring the possibility of adding local tradesmen who club members have used and who have provided satisfactory (or outstanding!) services. You can help in our efforts by acting on the following:

1. If you have had paintwork, welding, reupholstering, machinework, etc. completed satisfactorily by a local craftsman or shop and think others in the club could benefit from the service send me [Lou] the

- Name of the shop or person who did the work;
- Current address;
- Current phone;
- Type of service(s).

If we receive enough information we'll include these services in the 1987 Directory. Also,

2. If you don't want your address or phone number listed in the Directory send me [Lou] a note to that effect.

SEND RENEWALS TO ALAN

It's too early to say when the Directory will be published but I, for one, will welcome it as my current one is about to bite the dust.

RIDE SUGGESTIONS WELCOME

While it appears that we are off and running through the Spring with club rides, we are still looking for club members who would be willing to organize a ride through their favorite territory. The task basically involves three steps:

1. Give us a starting point;
2. Give us a destination (and a campground if an overnighter) with a map to show the way;
3. Have in mind a restaurant along the route where everyone can relax and enjoy a decent meal at a decent price.

Margie will be more than willing to talk to you. In addition we need a team (or one hardy volunteer) to plan the Annual Rally. Start thinking about it now; campground reservations need to be made early if we want something worthwhile.

How about it, ride fans?

REBUILDS

At the January meeting it was suggested that club members try and keep track of who is rebuilding what so that we could share information about problems and techniques. Let the NOTICE know what you are currently working on and perhaps we can begin to pull together people who are facing similar jobs.

DOWN THE ROAD

The staff of the NOTICE is hard at work putting together a tech bonanza for club members. We've arranged for six sober and dedicated Norton nuts to get together to exchange views about all of the systems of the Commando. The focus for the meeting(s) will be modifications to improve a- reliability, b- performance, c- both a and b where possible. Although it is too early to predict the success of this venture, I'm looking forward to bringing you our best efforts. Hopefully the first installment will be ready for the March issue.

DEALERS

Local dealers need to know that you are aware that they advertise in the NOTICE. We recently lost Hall-Burdette because they felt that their Day Area business was insufficient to support their ad. They may be right; but if none of the dealers ever hears their name associated with the NOTICE they may begin to feel the same way. I have in the past asked if some of them would be interested in running specials for club members but have received little enthusiasm for this. As it stands, they support us with ads and donations-- let them know you appreciate those efforts. *Continued on page 10*



\$ WANT ADS

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ALL ADS WILL RUN FOR TWO MONTHS UNLESS YOU RESUBMIT THEM IN WRITING TO THE EDITOR.

FOR SALE

Tired of sitting on a cold concrete floor? Now you can rebuild your Norton gearbox, do a valve job, or just polish the hell out of your primary case in the comfort of your favorite easy chair (well almost). How, may you ask? Just by buying my pneumatic motorcycle lift. It lifts your Norton to a comfortable working position with just your home compressor (You all have one of those, don't you?) It measures 2' X 9' and is semi portable (no wheels). Only \$50. while my supply (one) lasts.

Tom Keeble
(415)969-0668

FOR SALE

1. John Tickle dual disc front end. Includes discs, sliders, pads, hub, new Boriani rims (WM2X19), and all hydraulics. \$225.
2. Complete Dunstall Sport Glass kit. Tank, fairing, seat, fender, sidecovers, etc. Black w/gold stripes. Mint. \$350.
3. Benelli 759 Sei, 1979, 5K mi. As new except for electrical short. \$1500, you fix it; \$1850, I fix it.

Harvey Loucks
(408)255-7356

FOR SALE OR TRADE

1. MKIII bottom end, rebuilt. \$ or trade for MKII bottom end.
2. MKIII primary covers--inner/outer. \$ or trade for ?
3. MKIII inner/outer gearbox covers. \$ or trade for MKII covers.
4. MKIII rear disk assembly, complete. Trade for Std. MKII rear assembly plus \$

Chris Nichols
(415)965-4611

FOR SALE

750 Commando. Dunstall tank, seat, fairing, front and rear discs, clip ons, rearsets, many updated parts. Just had major service done. Fast, clean, handles great. Needs slight cosmetic to be perfect. \$1500/B.O.

Call Tom (408)725-0913
18840 Newsom Ave.
Cupertino, CA 95014

P.S. Does anyone know where to get a belt (inner, for 2 belt model) for a Norton Drivin supercharger? Call Tom.

FOR SALE

750 Commando. Fresh motor (cam, pistons, main bearings), Fox gas shocks, rearsets, new disc front end, cherry paint, SS pipes, many updated parts, very fast. \$1500/B.O.

Call Eric (408)725-0913

WANTED

Rearsets and fairing for '72 Commando.

Rick Pearson
6341 Port Gibson Ct.
Citrus Heights, CA 95621
(916)722-7677 (eves)
(916)783-4387 (days)

ATTENTION! FRIENDS OF WAYNE MANGES

We do not have an address for Wayne. If you know Wayne please have him send it to Alan so he can begin receiving his NOTICE.

This message brought to you by our subscription department.

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NORTON PARTS FOR SALE

1. ~~3 sets brand new Fastback gas tank, seat, and tail section-- choice of BRG and Signal Red. \$325/set, without seat \$250/set.~~
2. ~~1975 MKIII frame, straight and true with title. \$100.~~
3. ~~One pr. Superblend main bearings, low mi., exc. cond. \$40.~~
4. ~~Brand new stainless steel rear fender for 1973 and later Commandos. \$35.~~
5. ~~Late style Lucas tail-light assembly, gd. cond. \$25.~~
6. ~~1975 MKIII engine complete w/carbs, cables, choke, and throttle. This motor is oil tight with only 8,000 mi. use. \$350.~~
7. ~~MKIII rear disc brake setup includes master cylinder, hoses, caliper, rotor, wheel brackets, axle, swingarm, and brake pedal. \$180.~~
8. ~~One pair cable operated choke conversion kits for Amal MKII carb, brand new in package. \$25.~~
9. ~~One set MKIII front fork yokes, straight and true, freshly chrome plated by Brown's Plating Service. \$55.~~
10. ~~One set MKIII handlebar switch assemblies, levers and master cylinder, all parts with new chrome plating by Brown's. Master cylinder has also been rebuilt. ex. cond. \$100. for all.~~
11. ~~Hi-Rider handlebars, gd. shape. \$10.~~
12. ~~MKIII speed drive, gd. cond. late. \$25.~~
13. ~~MKIII 180 watt alternator, half-wave rectifier with matching Zener diodes-- will also include wiring diagram for retrofitting into older bikes. ex. cond. \$100. for all.~~
14. ~~One pair handlebar lever and switch assemblies for 1971 & 1972. \$30. for all.~~
15. ~~One pair 1973 Commando shocks, gd. cond. \$20.~~
16. ~~Two sets drum brake Norton Commando lower front fork legs, gd. cond. \$15/pr.~~
17. ~~Two sets Commando front fork damper tube and spring assemblies, gd. cond. \$12/pr.~~
18. ~~One pair brand new Hepolite .850 std. bore pistons w/rings, still in box. \$70.~~
19. ~~One pair almost new (.8,000 mi. use) 750 std. bore Hepolite pistons and rings. \$50.~~
20. ~~4 sets Norton Commando piston and ring sets of Oriental manufacture in the following bore sizes: 750 +.030", +.040", 850 +.020", +.040". \$50 /set.~~
21. ~~Brand new Norvil Dual alloy top fork bolts, damper tubes, and fork seal retaining collars, one pair of each. \$55. for all.~~
22. ~~MKII swingarm, ex. cond. \$30.~~
23. ~~Two MKIII cylinder head studs, v. gd. cond. \$10./each.~~
24. ~~1970-74 style Commando outer primary cover, gd. cond. \$25.~~
25. ~~MKIII outer primary cover, gd. cond. \$30.~~
26. ~~MKIII Roadster seat, brand new. \$85.~~
27. ~~1971 Commando oil tank, gd. cond. \$10.~~
28. ~~'68-'70 style oil tank. \$10.~~
29. ~~One pair genuine Norton fork stanchions (upper tubes); brand new. \$80.~~
30. ~~Norton v. gd. cond. \$30.~~
31. ~~750 Commando engine cradle and swingarm. \$25.~~

32. ~~MKIII Hi-Rider headlight assembly, ex. cond. \$50.~~
33. ~~Hi-Rider headlight assembly.~~
34. ~~400cc Electro gas tank, gd. shape. \$20.~~
35. ~~MKIII headlight shell, dinged but still good. \$15.~~
36. ~~Brand new Fastback seat cover. \$35.~~
37. ~~Brand new Milo motion detector type motorcycle alarm for positive ground motorcycles. \$80.~~
38. ~~Brand new genuine Norton valves, Intake \$10 /ea., exhaust \$12 /ea.~~
39. ~~Brand new MKIII style centerstand and spring for 1971 and later. \$39.~~
40. ~~Brand new Q.P.D. "competition style" belt drive unit for MKIII models. Necessitates removal of electric start drive parts. \$300.~~
41. ~~Brand new 71-73 Commando lower fork yoke with good straight used upper fork yolk. \$40. for the pair.~~
42. ~~Two brand new Smiths speeds drives for 1969-1974 Commando, \$60./ea.~~
43. ~~Two Commando front axles and one drum brake rear axle-- all straight. \$5./ea.~~
44. ~~1974 Commando rear wheel--straight and true, all spokes tight. \$35.~~
45. ~~Two MKIII headlamp wiring harnesses, both ex. \$15./ea. Main harness for MKIII \$15.~~
46. ~~Two Norton spin-on oil filter assemblies, gd. cond. \$20./ea.~~
47. ~~1969 fiberglass Roadster gas tank with gas cap and petcocks, gd. cond. \$40.~~
48. ~~Commando rear brake plate with brand new brake shoes, with brake lever and cable adjusting rod. \$25.~~
49. ~~Brand new Fastback Gas tank-- Fireflake Golden Bronze. \$75.~~
50. ~~Lucas RM 31 alternator, gd. cond. \$45.~~

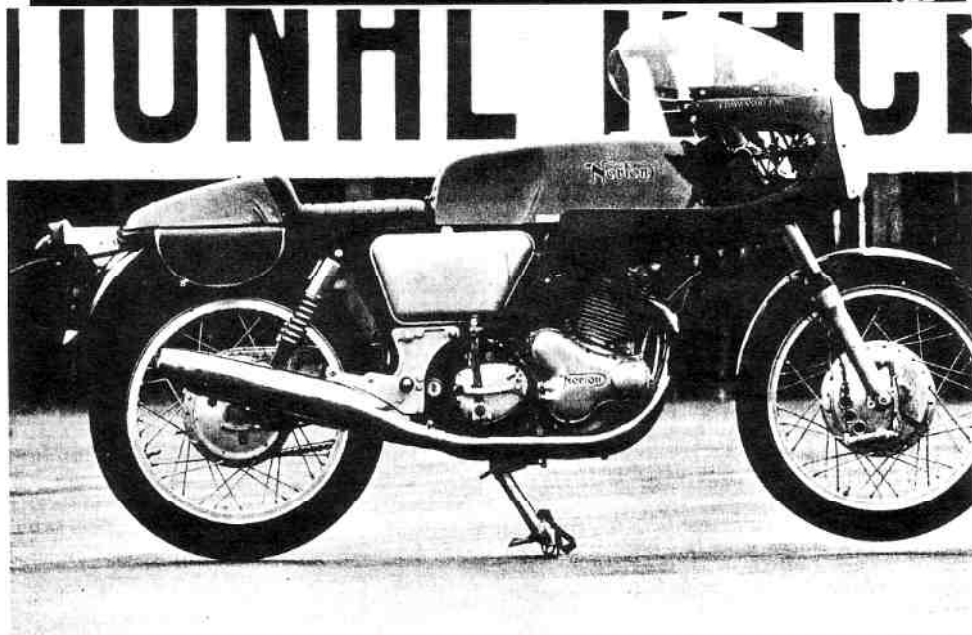
PARTS WANTED

1. Hi-Rider Gas tank and side covers, cond. of paint not important.
2. Headlamp position (pilot/mainbeam) switch for 1971-72 Triumph or BSA.

TRIUMPH MOTORCYCLE PARTS FOR SALE

1. Disc front brake wheel and tire. \$35.
2. Trident/Rocket 3 rear wheel for 1971-74, gd. cond. \$35.
3. 1963-70 front wheel, gd. cond. \$25.
4. 1971-72 front wheel, brakes, and axle, gd. cond. \$30.
5. 1972 T-140 frame, swingarm, center and sidestands, motor mounts, battery and coil trays, gd. cond. \$45.
6. 1971-74 16" rear wheel, brakes and tire in gd. cond. \$70.
7. 1960-70 brand new chrome plated 18" rear wheel, brakes, axle, and tire. \$160.
8. 1963-70 850 gas tank in ex. cond. \$35.
9. 850cc gas tank, has two small dings, otherwise gd. \$35.
10. One pair 1971-78 gas tank emblems, v. gd. cond. \$10.
11. Brand new stock petcock. \$10.
12. Brand new Q.P.D. brand belt drive unit for 1963-65 Triumph 650 and 750 twins, cost \$260, sacrifice \$300. Comes complete with special heavy duty clutch.
13. Brand new Roger-Granger electronic ignition system for 12 volt British twin cylinder bikes. \$80.

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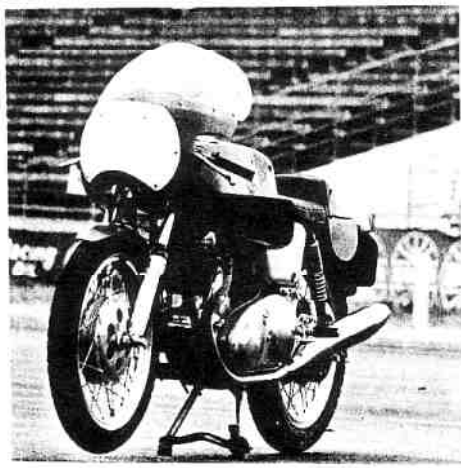


NORTON COMMANDO PRODUCTION RACER

Copyrighted from
CYCLE WORLD MAGAZINE
March, 1973
CBS MAGAZINES

We Sample A 130-mph Speedster, Try Ourselves, And
Track-Test Two Tracks.

CYCLE WORLD
ROAD TEST



RARE IS THE ROAD RIDER who has not, regardless of what he is riding, twisted the throttle just a little harder than is necessary to get from Point A to Point B. In every rider, there's a little bit of a racer. The road, fraught with perils real and imaginary, public and private, becomes a temptress at every curve.

That's what riding is all about. Not the fact that you get there, but how you get there. Some guys get quite good at it. Those that aren't, think they are. Even the squid who has been on a motorcycle for only three days of his entire life just *knows* he is the fastest thing that ever came 'round a bend.

Only the race track can give a man proper perspective, with a good dose of exhilaration thrown in. It's unique—the reason why the **CYCLE WORLD** staff jumps at the chance to rent a track and go play racing with a properly fitted machine. It's an absolute ball, all of it tax deductible.

Take away the roadside grit, the greasy, traveled surface, the imagined cop in every dark cranny, the family sedan coming at you, straddling the center line.

Take away the speed limit, which is always in the back of your mind even when you exceed it. Take away the yellow

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line. Both sides of the road are yours, not just the one lane. Blind corners are free for the shooting. Going fast is all up to you, the laws of physics, and how well your "huevos" are wired to the throttle hand. With nothing extraneous to impede your progress, about 98 percent of the action will be above 60 mph, not below it. The world goes by much faster now, as the physical penalties for sloppiness go up by the square of the speed, rather than in direct proportion...

Cool morning fog was just beginning to clear at Orange County International Raceway. A 745-cc Norton Commando sat on its stand in the middle of the tower bend. Click, crank. The photographer was using lots of film, very carefully. We were getting impatient. Brian Slark of Norton-Villiers quipped, "He must have shares in Eastman-Kodak."

CYCLE WORLD has already tested the original Commando (Sept. 1968), but this one is a bit different. It is an FIM-style production racer. The engine, frame and rolling gear must be over-the-counter items, although certain engine components will usually be hotter than standard fare. It must be more or less legal for the street, so it has silencers and lights. For safety, and comfortable operation at high speeds, the machine may have rear-set pegs and seat, large capacity gas tank, racing tires and a partial fairing. The gearing, internal and overall, may be changed to suit the circuit. A typical race for this machine would be the 750-cc production TT at the Isle of Man.

It is a Commando, but it is not a Commando. It could be ridden on the street, but to do so would be a waste. The engine varies little from standard, but has been assembled with "tic"—tender loving care. Good old tic, and a few appropriate parts. That's all it takes to introduce the rider to a demanding and competitive sport.

Norton's production racer is ideally suited to learning this pastime, because of its flexible nature. The long-stroke (73 by 89 mm) vertical Twin delivers its torque in a broad power band, with a claimed peak of 66 bhp at a modest 7000 rpm, up 6 bhp at 6800 rpm. There is no embarrassment if you forget to downshift. Turn on the gas and the bike levers itself away at anything above 3000 rpm.

Surprisingly little has to be done to a machine to make it run fast. In the case of the production racer, all the parts

necessary are on Norton's shelf. According to the Norton-Villiers distributors on the West Coast, they will be made available to U.S. buyers in early 1970. Alterations to the standard Commando engine consist of: raising the compression ratio from 8.9:1 to 10.4:1 with a pair of new pistons, the flat tops of which protrude into a head with recessed squish area; larger valves; heavy duty valve springs; lightened and polished rocker arms; and a sports cam.

Cam timing is moderate. Inlet opens 44.5 (precise fellows, those British!) degrees btc, closes 63.4 degrees abc. Duration is 288 degrees. Exhaust opens at 63 degrees bbc, closes at 28 degrees atc; resulting duration, 271 degrees. The duration figures are comparable with the run-of-the-mill big bore sports roadsters, such as the Triumph 650 or the BSA Three. In practical terms, this cam is perfectly adaptable to street operation and doesn't even make the engine go "rump-rump."

The rest of engine and transmission remains unchanged. This includes pushrods and tappets. The exhaust system is the same one on the street bike, complete with effective silencers. The eight-plate (four drive, four driven) diaphragm clutch is unmodified and takes the extra "pressure" without a whimper. Carburetion is also standard—two 30-mm Amal Concentrics fitted with 240 main jets for OCIR, which is near sea level.

The racer fired immediately on a run-and-bump start. In the first few tuning laps, it became quite evident that Orange County was much too small a course to the Norton Commando. We had on our hands a machine that wanted to do more than 125 mph, but lacked enough straightaway to find out just how much more.

Drag racing plays the major role at OCIR, and the AFM people who run there from time to time must make do with a layout none too conducive to good road racing. Running the Commando counterclockwise from the tower, you negotiate a half-mile straightaway at about 120 mph, then haul down in hurried fashion for a 40-mph hairpin.

It was at this point that some of the stock running gear components began to complain. The standard 8-in. double leading shoe front brake had racing linings installed, but grabbed mercilessly and then proceeded to fade in the next few laps, reducing stopping power to an uncompetitive level. Careful installation could cure some of this problem. The rear



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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTHERN CALIFORNIA BRANCH



brake was not so grabby, but indiscreet foot pressure, combined with soft rear suspension (and damper travel inhibited by the forward cant of the units), could produce rear wheel patter. Handily, if you overshoot the turn, which we did once, Orange County has a nice, long sandbox for you to play in.

If you make it through the turn, entering wide to avoid running across a false apex with resultant wide and sloppy exit, the best part of the course follows. Accelerating all the while, you bear to the left side of the pavement and set up for a gradual 30-degree right-hander, feeding to a short straight and an identical 30-degree left-hander. This is a classic Keppel Gate, Isle of Man, situation. Use the whole road through the right-hander and you are on the wrong line to get the best speed exiting from the left-hander—an important point as higher speed on the following straightaway will net you better lap times.

The basically good Commando handling, the compliment of a road racing layout and an excellent, rigid double cradle frame and wide swinging arm mounting, showed itself well here. It is a heavy machine and has to be cranked hard, but it tracked true through this S-bend, held to line well, and showed no sign of front end wobble, in spite of speed through the latter bend ranging from 100 to 105 mph.

The rest of the course is straightforward and dull. A brief straight, a quick jog left and then right moving the rider about 20 feet over from his original path down the back straight. Then a sweeping left-hand turn through an oil-impregnated

parking lot back to the tower and the front straight. Basically, this adds up to a horsepower course, with only two turns requiring braking, and one S-Bend requiring impeccable handling. A mere hors d'oeuvre. But our appetites were whetted, so we moved to the entrance...

Riverside yawns at you. Turns disappear into the yellow haze. They are sweeping and wide. The back straight seems endless, the high speeds insignificant. Rider and machine—a germ swimming trancelike across an uncaring set of tonsils. A true International Raceway.

First on the agenda was a top speed run, utilizing the entire back straight. It runs for almost a mile, adding impetus with a downward dip onto a certified flat where the times are measured. After a switch to 230 main jets to compensate for the 1500-foot altitude, the racer ran through at 131.02 mph at 6500 rpm, pulling a 3.83 top gear. The Commando is thus the fastest "production" machine ever tested by CYCLE WORLD. At this speed, surging in the carburetor float chambers became evident, probably induced by a sympathetic engine vibration working the floats up and down, alternately causing too much or too little fuel to enter the float chamber. Isolating the carburetors from vibration on rubber extensions would probably correct the surge and result in a few mph increase.

A 130-mph machine is an excellent match for the Riverside circuit, as it reaches speeds that require the rider to make full use of the wide paving. The entire course had just undergone complete renovation at the time of our visit, with new paving, a redesigned Turn 9, and new stands for 10,000 people at the starting straight and in the famous Riverside S-bends. The only racers to run on it so far were Dan Gurney, in a Trans-Am sedan, and a gaggle of Formula III drivers, so the pavement was fresh and clean. Track manager Dave Berg alerted the land-mover jockeys to keep an eye out for our little red speedster and graciously told us to let her rip.

Gathering speed through the right-hand 450-foot radius Turn 9, which was widened and enlarged by adding a dogleg to the left off the back straight, the Norton is rock steady, leaned well over and beginning to drift at about 80 mph. The triangular section K81s were just getting scrubbed in and seemed to offer much more feel at Riverside than they did at Orange County.

After Turn 9, a thousand-foot straight slings the machine at well over 100 mph in fourth gear towards Turn 1, a scary, slightly uphill left-hander—scary because you can't see where it goes. Naturally, it is approached from the right-hand side of the straight. You peel off late, but at full throttle. There's a bump near the apex of this turn that lightens the bike at about 110 mph and gives a good reading of the suspension.





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The front end of the Commando tracked perfectly over the rise, and the rear, with the spongy springing, reported back in fairly good shape, yielding only a small oscillation that ceased quickly.

Then on to a short straight, brake to about 80 for a 30-degree right, the first turn in the Esses. The lack of sure braking was a deterrent here, as the turn may be baniaied much faster than first appears possible. The best riders go through fast enough to create an extra turn requiring a leftward flick of the machine before going right for a quickly following Turn 3.

The 420-lb. weight of the production racer is somewhat of a disadvantage in the Esses, as it resists the nine, deft flicking back-and-forth movements required from the entry of Turn 2 to the entry of the slow 180-degree Turn 6. That last turn is the one most likely to cause trouble to bikes with marginal ground clearance as it slams the decelerating machine sharply uphill, compressing suspension just about the time you must shove the bike over hard to the right at 60 mph. With no centerstand, the Commando passed this test well, the ground working against the rider's toe like a belt sander, foot pointed down on the pegs.

Then follows another third gear straight to Turn 7, the hairiest spot on the 2.55-mile "short" course used for motorcycle racing. The world gets very large and the rider very insignificant here, as the machine swoops downward and then back upward to a distant turn, invisible behind the crest of a hill. The rider must calculate his shut-off points precisely from the 4-3-2-1 markers on the shoulder. Just before the crest, a set of violent squiggles painted on the pavement reminds late-brakers that "it's all over, jack." Behind the crest awaits a steep drop and a slow first-gear left-hander, which becomes an adverse camber, because the line cuts across from the extreme right at the crest to an apex at the bottom of the hill.

Approaching Turn 7 requires two neat downshifts and hairline full-force braking. Not having the latter, we would have preferred backshifts on the Commando to be made with a positive downward jab of the foot, rather than the old-style upward toe pull. Apparently, someone who was used to the old pattern installed a reversed cam plate in the gearbox. Fortunately, reversing the lever to reach a rear-set peg on a stock Commando gearbox (which shifts one-up-three-down in normal position), makes it shift in the more preferable one-down-three-up pattern.

After a wide approach to Turn 7-A (Turn 8 is part of the long 3.3-mile big car course), you enter the back straight halfway in the middle, with a 2170-ft. run to Turn 9. Approaching peak revs in fourth gear, the rider has time to listen to the engine. The feeling on the Commando is fantastically smooth for a big Twin, as the rubber engine mounting isolates the engine, preventing vibration from getting through to the frame, bars, seat and pegs. Hence the name "isolastic." Displacement of 750 cc is the present practice maximum for a vertical Twin, and it is nearly impossible to balance it to run smoothly at all speeds. Norton found the answer: if you can't stop it from shaking, put it in quarantine.

Finally comes the rapid right-hand Turn 9, entered by bearing left through a dogleg at about 115 to 120 mph. Easy stuff on the Commando. The dogleg is hardly a turn as it is extremely wide and allows plenty of room for error. Then another 1000 feet to Turn 9, shift down to third and get ready to peel off at the "Good Grief!" sign following the distance markers.

Then, confidence inspired by the machine's stability, you are ready to go around again, and again. Only next time, maybe, you'll try the Esses just a little bit harder... ☐

NORTON PRODUCTION RACER

SPECIFICATIONS

List price	n.a.
Suspension, front	telescopic fork
Suspension, rear	swinging arm
Tire, front	Dunlop K81 3.60-19
Tire, rear	Dunlop K81 4.10-19
Engine, type	ohv vertical Twin
Bore x stroke, in., mm	2.87 x 3.50, 73 x 89
Piston displacement, cu. in., cc	45.5, 745
Carburetion	(2) Amal Concentric 30 mm
Ignition	12V battery-coil
Claimed bhp @ rpm	66 @ 7000
Oil system	gear pump, dry sump
Oil capacity, pt.	6.0
Fuel capacity, U.S. gal.	4.5
Recommended fuel	premium
Starting system	kick, folding crank

POWER TRANSMISSION

Clutch	multi-plate, wet
Primary drive	triplex chain
Final drive	3/8-in. x 5/8-in. chain
Gear ratios, overall: 1	
5th	none
4th	3.83
3rd	4.21
2nd	5.10
1st	8.35

DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase, in.	56.7
Seat height, in.	29.5
Seat width, in.	11.0
Handlebar width, in.	23.0
Footpeg height, in.	12.0
Ground clearance, in.	5.0
Curb weight (w/half-tank fuel), lb.	420
Weight bias, front/rear, percent	46/54

PERFORMANCE

Top speed, mph	131.02 @ 6500 rpm
Piston speed (@7000 rpm), ft./min.	4080

TEST CONDITIONS

Air temperature, degrees F	78
Humidity, percent	60
Wind velocity, mph	none
Strip alignment, relative wind:	



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTHERN CALIFORNIA BRANCH



15. Three brand new sets of pistons with rings, one set each: 650 twin std., 650 twin +.020" and 750 twin +.020" \$45/set.
16. One set 650 twin cylinder barrels with fresh bore job and new piston and ring set. \$100.
17. Front master cylinder. \$30.
18. 1973 78 T 140 rear fender, gd. cond. \$25.
19. 5 speed trans, complete in v. gd. cond. \$125.

21. Two 4-speed trans, complete, gd. cond., 1963-67 \$45; 1971-72 \$50.
22. Trident cylinder barrels, std. bore with tappet guide blocks and five tappets, v. gd. cond. \$50.

24. One pair 1971 Trident T-150 crankcases, gd. cond. \$20.

26. One pair brand new stock exhaust pipes for 650 Bonneville or Tiger 1963-71. \$50.
27. Stock seat for 1972-78 oil frame 650 and 750 twins. ???

28. Brand new Corbin-Dentry custom seat for 1971-78 Triumph and BSA oil frame twins. cost \$130, sacrifice for \$95.

29. One set of brand new clutch plates (6) for 500, 650, and 750 twins. \$25.

30. ~~Two~~ reconditioned cylinder heads, ~~which~~ been glassbeaded, new guides installed and valves and seats ground and valve springs shimmed. ~~1973-78 TR-7, \$80.~~

31. ~~One~~ good used cylinder heads for ~~1973-81~~ 1973-81 T-140 Bonneville. \$55.

32. Std. bore cylinder barrels with pistons and rings for 1973-81 T-140 and TR-7 750cc twins. \$70.

33. ~~Two~~ crankshafts, all std. journal size and in gd. cond. ~~1968-71 650 twin, \$25; 1973-81 750 twin, \$35.~~

34. 1971-72 650 chrome grab rail and fender support, v. gd. cond. \$12.

35. 1968 650 engine bottom end and trans. \$80.

36. Taillight for 1973-80 750, v. gd. cond. \$25.

37. Headlamp assembly for 1969-70 and 1973-78 model 650 and 750 twins and triples, ex. cond. \$40.

38. Two sets of air cleaner covers with Bonneville 750 emblems for 1978-79 in gd. cond. \$20/set.

39. Smiths tach for Trident and BSA Rocket 3. \$1. cond. \$28.

40. Smiths speedo and tach for 500, 650, and 750cc twins, ex. cond. \$30/ea.

41. Lucas alternator for models with energy transfer ignition, gd. cond. \$50.

43. Brand new valves for 650 and 750 cc twins, intake \$7 50/ea.; exhaust \$9 50/ea.

44. Wiring harness in v. gd. cond. for 1978 TR 750 T-140 and TR-7 Bonneville and Tiger. \$30.

45. ~~Two~~ brand new Lucas wiring harnesses for 1973-74 750 twins, 1966-67 650 twin, and ~~1973-74 750 twins. Cost \$100/ea.; sacrifice for \$55/ea.~~

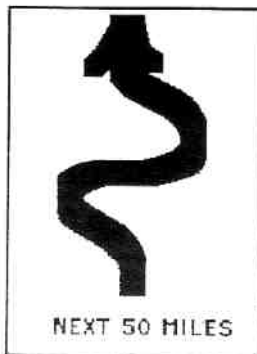
46. Brand new stock air filter assemblies for 1960-70 650cc Bonneville. \$12/ea.

BSA MOTORCYCLE PARTS FOR SALE

1. Wiring harness for 1971-72 A-75 Rocket 3, ex. cond. \$35.
2. One pair brand new fork tubes for 1960-68. Cost \$85., sell for \$60.
3. 1971 A-75 Rocket 3 frame, swingarm, battery tray, oil tank and toolbox, gd. cond. \$35.
4. 1972 B-50 Goldstar frame, swingarm, battery tray, air filter and sidestand with title, gd. cond. \$40.

5. One set genuine Hepolite brand A-65 650 twin pistons and rings, +.020" bore. \$85.
6. 1963-68 A-65 lightning grab-rail and rear fender brace, gd. cond. \$5.
7. Clutch assembly for 1963-73 A-50 500cc and A-65 650cc, gd. cond. \$35.

Charlie Kuss
1671 Electric Ave.
Lackawanna, N.Y. 14218
(716)824-7887



NEXT 50 MILES

BARGAIN WORTON?

For Norton fans who feed on the rumors that Sherstone may again start producing complete Commandos, here's a bit of hard news that's closer to home. Sonny Angel, owner of a National City (and the other side of San Diego) cycle shop specializing in Nortons, Royal Enfields, and Moto Guzzis, said he has a new '75 MKIII that he's finally decided to sell for a price. Sonny and the bike, still in its original shipping crate, can be had for about \$6,000. He figures it's the last new one in the country. Price doesn't include shipping, but it does include the crate. If you're interested, call him at (619)472-8150.

John Harbord

THE NORTON NEVER
BREAKS VALVES.

Send renewals to Alan



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTHERN CALIFORNIA BRANCH

NEW FREE PUBLICATION

What with the snow, sleet, hail, ice, and rain upon us, club members may just wish to curl up with a book or newspaper rather than brave the elements. A new free newspaper has just started up-- American Roadracing-- and, judging from the first two issues which I have seen, they have an inside line on what's going on in racing all over the country. Send your name and address to:

American Roadracing
41 U.S. Highway 17 South
Hardeeville, SC 29927

and tell them you'd like to receive their publication.

In their January Issue I was struck by a horror story from a local fellow:

When racing enthusiast Harry Walker of Alameda, California, went shopping for a new motorcycle recently, he discovered that liability and comprehensive insurance on a 1986 Kawasaki Ninja 1000 would cost him \$1,600 per year; the same insurance on a 1986 Yamaha FJ1200 would cost him \$500. As Walker's insurance agent told it, the crash rate for Ninjas is very high, and repairs are expensive because fairing decals and detail parts are not available from Kawasaki, which turns cosmetic fairing damage from a paint-and-decal repair into a fairing replacement. Walker is no irresponsible kid; he's 44 years old, married with one son.

Yet another reason not to fool with hyperbikes.

Getting There Is **ALL** The Fun

Animal lovers in the NOC won't want to miss this year's opportunity to watch the GREAT PASSING of the gray whales at the Pt. Reyes Lighthouse. The day after the club ride I seized the chance and encountered five (yes, only five) cars heading north in bright morning sunlight on Rt. 1 out of Tam Junction. I arrived at the brand new Information Center at Pt. Reyes and stopped to stretch and pay homage to Mother Nature. The trip from the Visitor Center is about 19 miles, as good a suspension check as you'll find in the Bay Area. People in cars are diverted along the way and forced to wait for vans or for parking spaces to free at the lighthouse but motorcyclists get a friendly wave on through.

The whale watching was nothing to write home about. While sightings are currently running at 90 per day, I saw only a bunch of spouts and the slimmest of whale parts. Which brings us back to the ride. The journey home through Fairfax was crowded (3:00 P.M. avoid-the-commute-rush). Of course there is that satisfaction from lane splitting and passing where cars never dare.

Weekends are bound to be crowded through February but with the right weather and preferential treatment at the lighthouse it's a short trip you might consider. Give the weatherman a call first.

SIX WHEEL TRAVEL

Road and Track has done it again! Ted West, their East Coast Editor, recently toured the Tryolean Alps ("Six-wheeling the Alps", Feb. '87 issue) using both a BMW 325i and a K75C. His article contrasts the sensations of travel in/on both vehicles and hits a nerve of anyone who enjoys sports touring in either mode. Members of the BMW auxiliary of the NOC in particular will find it indispensable reading.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

*****The motherfucker bombed. Fortunately my short-term memory is still intact so I'll try again.

*****It has been a pleasant surprise to find that some of you are starting to send in material. Not only that, we actually had an offer for a ride writeup! Thanks, Jon, and send it in for the next issue. I actually have a backlog of articles again and if your contribution doesn't appear right away hold on. We appreciate all of it.

*****I neglected to include a report on the Christmas Party (Tim, are you there?) in the last issue but better late than never. John Gallivan donated (unsolicited, by the way) a racer's tips booklet which was won in a raffle by Mayo Peterson. That raffle poured \$24.00 into the club coffers. Chris Nichols donated a color photo of the Ron Woods Norton flatracking at the S.J. Mile. Len losty brought the official club cake which was attacked mercilessly by those present. Members watched some great videos loaned by Tom Keeble. And Art received a priceless collector's treasure donated by the NOTICE staff. Stunned newly elected officers attempted to deliver acceptance speeches but, owing to the raucous laughter, nobody was able to hear what they have in store for us in '87.

*****In a weak moment I wrote away to R.A.T.S. (Riders Advanced Training School) to find out about their 1987 schedule. They received rave reviews in the BMW Club News and certainly had a good turnout of participants at Laguna this past year (at the BM rally). While it's a bit pricey (no price is given but it's in the hundreds I think), it sounds like a worthwhile weekend. Unfortunately Saturdays are BMWs only. They'll be running at Sears May 8-9 (or, for those of you with wanderlust, Willow--date not set yet). For info: R.A.T.S., 2763 West River Pkwy., Grand Island, NY 14072. Also available is the Superbike School which Wayne Seymour raved about at one of the club meetings. If you're up to race prepping your

Continued on page 11



mount you might try the AFM's Riders School which is cheap and, according to several I've talked to, well done. Schedule as soon as AFM releases it.

*****Those of you who have seen the ads for the new magazine VINTAGE MOUNTS may not have seen that it's priced at \$53/gear. Ouch! Frankly, the quality of the color photos isn't anywhere near what it should be for that price and I was disappointed in the excerpt from one of their articles. C'mon, guys, give us a break.

*****If you followed the insurance crisis at Sears this past year you'll be interested to know that similar problems are afflicting race promoters in the Motherland. According to MCN, insurance increases will be 160% for both clubs and individual riders due to promoters' legal liabilities. Broker Roger Lindley said, "The increases are necessary because of the amount of claims. For every £100 taken in premiums in road racing £142 has been paid out. And in moto cross, £200 was paid out for every £100 taken. We are in a money-motivated society. With legal aid, some people have little to lose making a claim. Another new phenomenon is that riders are now starting to sue clubs or other riders."

*****Also appearing in MCN is an article which proclaims that a Rotary has "slipped through the net of officialdom and reached public hands." Apparently a police model with 71,338 miles on the clock and with "some wear on the engine and a noisy gearbox" was quietly sold at auction (only 2 bids) for £720. The lucky owner thus becomes the first private individual to claim ownership of a complete Rotary (an ex-factory test bike is already in private hands as is an ex-RAF model which was wrecked and offered for sale in the NOTICE a while back, but this new Rotary is apparently ready for riding). Spares will be available through any Norton dealer. Jeff Jones, a club member who visited the Norton factory this past summer, has promised us an article on his trip-- perhaps he can shed some light on rumors that Norton is planning civilian release of the Norton.

*****Charlie Kuss' ad is back in with items which have been sold lined out. Several members expressed concern that Charlie was running a business and therefore misusing the free ad feature of the NOTICE. I talked to Charlie and he assures me that this is not the case-- he is moving and slimming down his inventory of parts. Members who do run a business and wish to advertise are encouraged to run an ad-- see the rate schedule on page 6.

*****Off to the printers. I am experimenting with types and hope that the printing is dark enough this issue. Sort of like setting off on a trip aboard a Nort; I wonder how much will be lost on the way.

LOU

KEEP THOSE FEET WARM!

Dear Editor,

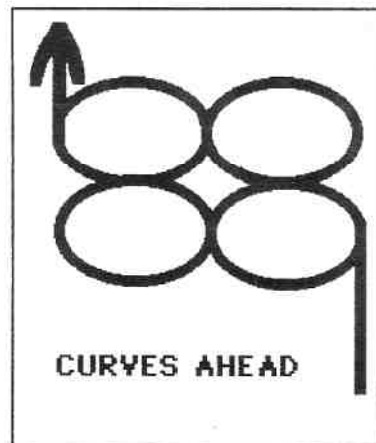
I am a 60-year-old grandmother who has only been riding since 1976. We do a lot of riding in cold weather. I would like to pass along my idea about using antifreeze in my boots. You, I suppose, will think I'm nuts too. You can imagine the looks when I tell people I put antifreeze in my boots. You can't imagine all the expressions.

I'm a nut on health books, herbs, etc. In reading an article on cayenne pepper (that's the hot kind) it suggested half to one teaspoon in your socks if you have trouble with cold feet. It also stated you can put cayenne in an open cut and it will never blister. Also, if taken internally, it will not harm your insides.

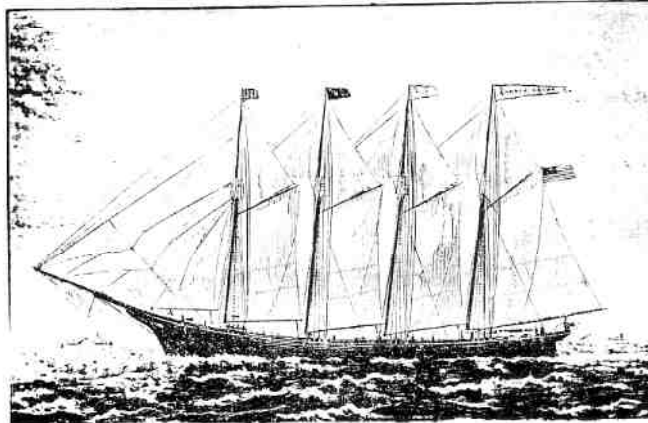
As for antifreeze in my boots, cayenne also works wonders. I might suggest you be careful not to flop or fan the socks around because the cayenne is powerfully potent where one's nose is concerned. Also wash your feet after taking off your boots because once the air contacts your feet and they perspire, the cayenne will have a burning sensation. If once you forget to wash your feet after removing your boots, you will remember forever after. Here's to riding with warm feet.

Name of Oklahoma granny withheld in the interests of decency and fairplay.

[The NOTICE wishes riders who try this novel idea to write in to verify or dispute Grandma's claim. Please send NO boots or socks in the mail.]



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTHERN CALIFORNIA BRANCH



NORTON MOTORS STREAMLINES PRODUCT DELIVERY

Liverpool: Norton Motors new worldwide distribution scheme was highlighted this week with the company's announcement of the purchase of a new high-speed container vessel, the Shenstone Schooner. Current plans call for operations to begin in January with monthly trips to the colonies. The off-load vehicle, Triton, is shown delivering spares to the company's principal receiving plant in South Carolina.

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MT. DIABLO RIDE

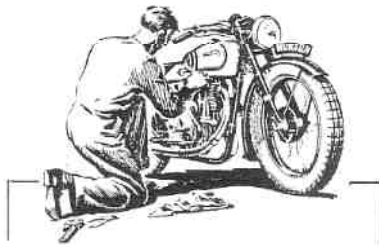
[Elsewhere in this issue I mention that Jon's writeup will appear in the March issue but the bugger laid it on my doorstep in time for Feb. Here 'tis.--Ed]

It was our first time and it was good for both of us, er, all three of us, if you count the British bloke between our legs.

Crawling out of bed early Sunday, Jan. 18, I got my 850 Commando running on the first kick [Must have been stored next to the bed.--Ed] My friend Betsy climbed aboard and we headed toward T.T.

Motors for our first club ride. Seven other members were already there and we barely got a map from Scot Marburger before engines were revving and the group faring to go.

Following the lead of Lou Caputo, who left his typewriter [and exhaust nut wrench.--Ed] at home, eight riders headed up Ashby Ave., swung around behind the Claremont Hotel and swooped up Claremont Ave. The weather was cool, with high clouds, but no one seemed to mind. After reaching the crest of the Berkeley Hills, we turned left on S. Park Drive and motored through Tilden Park. Somewhere along the way, a lone rider on a Triumph Bonneville [Where d'ya go, Eric?--Ed], leaving the ride to eight Commandos.



TECH TIPS

CARE AND FEEDING OF THE COMMANDO CLUTCH

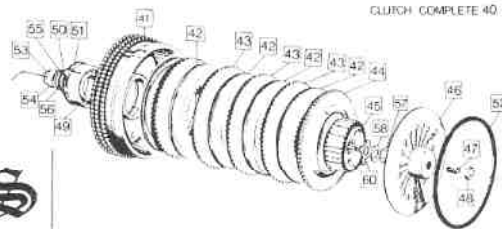
BY

Willy Sandford, former Norton Club member

A persistent complaint of Commando riders is a slipping clutch. Many fixes are tried, with only partial or short-lived success. Very annoying, time consuming, and expensive. In one case the cure tends to be worse than the original problem! I'm referring to the Barnett clutch plates. They eliminated the slip, but due to the cork facing employed, the engagement point and feel would change under different conditions. Also, under extreme usage, the facing would smear, effectively ruining the plates. Due to the above reasons, the Barnett was a major contributor in the crunching of many a Norton gearbox.

To better understand the Norton clutch problem, some facts about the Commando drive train should be examined. Most engine to rear wheel drivelines have at least one or more shock absorbers. These may consist of a spring clutch plate or clutch hub, a coil spring and ramp input or output shaft or drive shaft, or a sprung or damped rear hub. Sometimes more than one are used. Pre-Commando Nortons use a damped clutch hub with single row chain. In the design of the Commando this was eliminated while converting to a triple row chain. About 1971 the rear wheel hub was changed to incorporate a slight bit of damping. Not nearly enough! With the higher horsepower output and no damping of the early Commandos, trans breakage occurred with alarming frequency. Now comes the reason for the clutch problems: the factory decided to add one more job for the clutch to accomplish-- namely to act as shock absorber for the driveline. It cannot function properly under the load put upon it. About 1970-71 they put in a solid fiber clutch plate-- a slipper special! Two years later they went to a five plate bronze clutch. Not much better on service, but more expensive.

They also made changes in the gearbox. Along



with the fiber plates they improved the surface hardening, material, and running clearances of the gears. More improvements seem to have been made in the MKIII gears also.

When new, the clutches worked reasonably well. However, after a while they would start to slip. This occurred even sooner with a Combat engine. The remedies for this are:

a. radially or eccentrically grooved plates to release trapped oil (both sides) [See NN, March, 1986];

b. the use of a light oil such as ATF, or two-stroke gear oil (preferred)-- these have less of a tendency to build up varnish on clutch surfaces;

c. proper oil level-- too much brings on early slipping. Also, too high a level in the trans can cause problems. Inadvertently overfilling it on a Norton that had only a sidestand created a perplexing situation. Breaking the plates loose before starting in the morning produced a strange feeling, very mushy. Gear engagement rapidly became impossible as the clutch didn't seem to separate very well. After a day or so the clutch was removed for deglazing. It was apparent that a second oil was mixed in the primary by the color. The obvious cause (I thought!) was the crank seal, which was replaced. Two days later the previous scenario was replayed, during which a regained sense of smell pinpointed gear oil as the culprit. This was all caused by the overfilled gear oil getting by worn sleeve gear bushings right into the center of the clutch assembly. After a run, the hot oil easily drained through, aided by the angle on the sidestand;

d. deglazing the plates on a regular basis, or as needed, usually every 1,000-2,000 miles. The easiest method is to buy a can of Brake-Kleen and soak the plates for awhile (overnight is best). A light scuffing with sandpaper before and after soaking completes the job. This works with both the fiber and the bronze plates.

Continued on page 14



RIDE REPORT

THE STATE OF THE RIDE COORDINATION

I will never again touch another drop of liquor at a Club function. If I had not been so inebriated at the Christmas Party, I would have been able to protest loud enough to be heard and some other lucky soul would have been selected for the honor of being chosen as Ride Coordinator.

Being that as it may, here is the schedule for the next few months. Harvey Loucks will lead the February ride on the 15th, a South Bay run. I am planning to chart a course through the North Bay on March 22 including my favorite twisty, the Oak Ville Grade. Jerry Kaplan has generously agreed to lead a ride near Lake Berryessa, which may include a campout and potluck, in April. Harvey may lead another ride in the summer and, of course, we have the Morro Bay run and the Club Annual Rally.

Anybody who wants to lead a ride is more than welcome-- especially newcomers! Let me know where you want to go, what you want to see happen on rides and any other ideas you have-- this is an equal opportunity organization.

Margie

[Ed. See also my comments in Editor's Notes]

MT. DIABLO RIDE cont.

As the sun began to shine through the clouds, we headed down the eastern side of the hills, enjoying the clear road and lush scenery. To the left, San Pablo Reservoir sparkled blue-green in the sunlight as the group rendezvoused at the corner of Dam and Wildcat Canyon roads. With everyone accounted for, the crew roared up Bear Creek Road, finding only an occasional car on the wide two-lane to slow our progress-- but not for long. In one lane lay an opposum, who wasn't playing anymore.

Lou lead the group down Happy Valley Road, the twisty, narrow back road into Lafayette. We ended on Highway 24 and headed east toward Walnut Creek. After riding through town, we turned south on North Gate Road and saw Mt. Diablo looming ahead. We stopped at the park entrance, where everyone stretched a bit, wished they were warmer, and anted up \$2 for a ride to the top. As two members petted a horse, hoping to warm their hands, Lou fiddled with a loose exhaust ring.

THE CLUTCH (cont.)

My favorite procedure actually involves backdating to the 1969 clutch plates. These will outlast any other type of plate. They have a nice, progressive action that is predictable under all circumstances. They do not slip once fully engaged. However, you can no longer let the clutch do your thinking for you, since it will lock up completely under any rpm or load condition at the end of the clutch lever's travel. Apparently they do not glaze, as I have never seen them slip.

As a testimonial, the original clutch plate set was salvaged from a '69 Commando with a blown engine (about 10,000 miles). I installed it in my 750 1971 Commando with a slightly pumped up motor and proceeded to put an additional 25,000 miles on it. These were hard miles, the majority of them using a 22 tooth counter sprocket. When last ridden, the clutch was still working very well.

[Ed: Willy's text ends shortly after this. He was starting a section on installation when either he ran out of ink or succumbed to an unbearable urge to take a ride. If we can, we'll get him to add more. In any case, thanks for the tip!]



The ride to the 3,849-foot summit was easy, with just a few cars, lots of curves, a couple of hairpins, and warming sunshine. At the top, members warmed slowly in the morning sun as they took in a view of the snow-capped Sierras more than 150 miles away. Many lower points were obscured by the clouds, but most of Contra Costa could be seen through the haze. Out came the cameras and the stories and we newcomers were made to feel welcome.

The cluster of bikes drew the attention of several kids, as well as an adult who captured the Commandos with his video camera, working from several angles to make sure he didn't miss any of the chrome.

After half an hour or so, the rumblings of stomachs led to the rumblings of motors as the group headed to San Ramon for lunch. Unfortunately, we had to turn off and head back to Walnut Creek and a day at the office.

Jon Bashor

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