

## The Newsletter of The Northern California Branch

NO. 127

Nov, 1988

The story of the most remarkable series of Motor Cycle successes ever achieved by an individual manufacturer with full descriptions of the complete "Road-Holder" range for 1936



"The Road Holder" 1936 Edition published by NORTON MOTORS LTD of Birmingham

## THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTHERN CALIFORNIA BRANCH



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

NORTON NOTICE is a reflection of its readership, who are encouraged to submit any stricle, 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

#### £18.50 (pounds sterling) + \$18.00

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 \$18.00 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 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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# NORTON OWNER

(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 guaranuse 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' wiews 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. The object of the Northern California Branch of the Norton



1963 catalog drawing of Manx 30M and 40M

## UPCOMING EVENTS

# CLUB RIDES: Coordinated by Margie Siegal

November 13 Your faithful Editor leads a rambling ride through the wilds south of San Jose, to Tres Pines for a gourmet lunch (if the place is open - I'll check beforehand). Departure will be 10 am from Rabers on Old Almaden in SJ. The ride may be over by the time you read this. since it's already the 7th. Sorry folks.

December 3 David Hedges will host a Spagetti Feed, prepared by Maya Abe. The ride begins at Alice's on Skyline at 12 Noon. This is a joint event with the European Motorcycle Assoc., so the turnout should be pretty good, Note also that this is a Saturday event, giving us an extra day to recover from the red wine. Overnighters welcome. If you miss the ride down, David lives at 8325 Fremont Avenue, Ben Lomond, Ca

January ?? Mt. Hamilton freeze ride or some such winter wildness. Get yer longjohns and woolen sicks out....

> Harry Bunting 1165 Crandano Ct Sunnyvale, Ca 94087 (408) 736-6492

#### Club Meeting Schedule

The club meets on the 2nd Thurs. of every month. Meetings begin at 7:30 pm unless otherwise noted.

(South Bay) Nov. 10

New Meeting Location

Harry's Hoffbrau

399 E1 Camino (near Castro St.)

Mtn. View. Ca

Dec.?

Location to be determined

This will be the Cristmas Party
and Annual General Meeting.

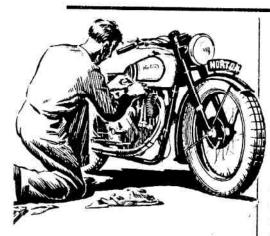
I've heard from several
members that they prefer a
peninsula or SF location, so I'm
proposing that we reschedule
for Harry's Hoffbrau for the
9th or 16th of Dec (both
fridays).

#### MORTHERN CALIFORNIA BRANCH TOOL LOAN-OUT PROGRAM

Get in touch with Harry Bunting if you need one or more of the following tools for working on your Commando. A refundable deposit equal to the replacement cost of the tool is required at the time you pick it up.

TOOL DEPOS		POSIT
exhaust lock ring tool		-\$10
timing cover oil seal quide		
clutch spring compressor		. 12
clutch locking tool		. 18
valve spring compressor		
rocker spindle puller		. 25
crankshaft sprocket puller		
tining pinion puller		
gearbox layshaft bearing extr	actor.	. 15

# Alan's Wrench Tech tips and gossip from The Editor



The Dick Mann rally was simply great. I counted at least 25 Nortons including several I have never seen at local events, amongst a truly splendid array of British, continental and donestic classics. Five Vincent twins were parked in a clump off to one side and many Triumps and BSA's, along with the odd Matchless, Velo, Greeves, etc. As usual, the Norton parts pickin's were pretty slim as nobody seems to be parting them out these days. Or maybe Phil has cornered the market basket-cases. Anyway. the parking-lot show was great, the trials was great, and the sound, sight, and smell of the flat-track racers was heyond description. Even the hot dogs tasted good. By three pm the heat got to me though, so I beat the rush home, taking hwy 84 all the way from

Livermore. This road is beautiful east and west of Fremont and real ugly in town, but still a good alternative to 580 if you live in the South Bay or Peninsula. All in all it was a memorable end to the summer riding season

You may have wondered why the last few Notice covers have lacked a caption or description. Well, the cover is the last, and usually most difficult page to be filled and with the press of time, I'm seldom able to get back to the computer just to type and print one line. In addition, if the cover is a photo it is necessary to get a half-tone screen done. This puts the picture in the form of little dots which can be properly offset-printed. The process costs about \$10 per page and takes a day or two, which I usually don't have. Now, if I several useable pictures. I could screen them as a batch and have something ready in advance, but submissions of photos have been notably absent this year.

I think I have solved this problem for some time into the future, beginning with this months' cover. Art Sirota has a copy of the 1936 Roadholder magazine, which began as a factory sales publication. The printing quality of the original is superb (litho-engraved), so good in fact that it can't be copied by today's offset printing technology. After



#### Alan's Wrench - continued

several failed experiments, I have succeeded in photographing the entire magazine so that it can be rescreened and properly reprinted.

About half the contents are reviews of Nortons racing success (20 GP wins in 1935 alone). The rest is photos and data sheets for every Norton model in production at that time. I will be reproducing one of these each month as a cover during 1989 unless of course, some kindhearted NOCCER volunteers to lift the Editor's burden from my weary hands. If I can get all the copy ready in time, I will also assemble the 12 covers into a club calendar which would be available around the first of the year at about \$10.

Of course, if a good quality photo is made available to me (hint, hint), I will happily use it on an inside page. Such photos should be black-and-white prints of proper size to fit in a page of the Notice: I don't have time these days to do extra darkroom work as I used to. Submissions of articles have been good lately which is a great help to me. I'd like to thank Art, Louis, Chris Nichols and Andy at Munroe Motors for recent submissions.

As those of you who attended the October meeting already know, the Editor of the Chicago Norton News James Baker, died on his bike in late August. I never met Jim but have been enjoying his newsletter for several years. Our club and its

members have contributed \$50 to an educational fund for Jim's son Charlie, and I encourage any of you who are so inclined to make an individual contribution to Babette Goldhammer, Room 1135-Tech Institute, Northwestern Univ., Evanston IL 60298.

This being an election year, all kinds of special-interest groups are active. Several of these which are involved with motorcycling have come to my attention.:

Bikers Against Manslaughter is a group devoted lobbying supporting bikers civil rights and opposing legislation & advertising detrimental to bikers in general. Now that the helmet law has been veto'ed (at least for the time being) they are focusing on prejudicial advertising, including adds for California Dates, American Express and Scott Lawn products. For more information, contact Bill Bish at (800) 424-5377

The International Christian Classic Bikers Association offering the First Book of Motorcycle Poetry. This is an international collection that covers a wide spectrum of motorcycling experience: legendary marques, humor, racing, etc. "Come, restless pilgrim, that would depart this day of generic modernity; take up the leathern gauntlet, roll back the years with me." At \$5, 73 pgs, this might be a good Christmas gift.

(continued on page 14)



### THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTHERN CALIFORNIA BRANCH

#### TWISTGRIP TWADDLE

As the year draws toward its close, thoughts turn to how we're going to wrap it up. Aside from the usual events (i.e., meetings and rides), there are a couple of special annual things.

First, the December meeting is, traditionally, supposed to be a big blowout, not just another monthly get-together. Unfortunately, the past couple of years have not really been as good as we might have made them if more planning had gone into it. Some problems with the venue, too; be assured, a new location is being lined up. East Bay member Burton Kranzel is currently negotiating for the club to use the Lake Merritt Boathouse in Oakland, and if it comes through as expected (still undetermined at this writing), it'll be nice. Good setting and facilities, quiet (we provide our own noise for once), and private. At the November 10th meeting in Mountain View (also a new site) we will be deciding the particulars of this Holiday Party / Annual General Meeting, so all members are encouraged to attend and contribute ideas for how we can make it one to remember. Catered? Potluck? Brown bag? Let's do it!

Secondly, the annual hand-off by your club officers will be occurring in December, meaning that your 1989 prez will be determined at that meeting, as well as next year's secretary-treasurer, Norton Notice editor, VP-Rides Coordinator, etc. Believe it or not, these positions do need to be filled for the club to function as a club, so please give serious thought to whether you'd like it to continue; and then step forward when nominations are called for. It's easier than it seems, and when you've done your turn you will have stacked up a lot of satisfaction for your effort. 'Nuff said.

I've been reading through the copies of the **Norton News** sent me since I subscribed to the INOA in August, and I have to say that they put out a good Norton magazine. The level of contribution from their (admittedly large) membership is impressive. The "Letters" department is only a few pages rather than being the whole mag (R.H. editor take note), and there are regular columns on products, legislation, etc. Check it out.

At the October meeting in San Francisco, it was decided that the club would, for the cost of \$5, put a listing into the Norton News as an affiliated club or chapter. Unsettled as yet, however, is the name we are to use; as an independent club, it would be disingenuous of us, I think, to continue calling ourselves the N.O.C., Northern California Branch-but then what? NorCal Nortons? Northern Nortons? Norton Club of Northern California? Come along to the November meeting and let's decide. Your 2¢ is worth a lot more than you think!

'Til then, keep the rubber side down.

Yrs, John

# H

## Art Sirota's Shoptalk

three things to function: fuel, ignition, and compression. The Chilton repair guide for Norton twins recommends checking engine compression at least every other tune-up in order to determine when some part related to the combustion chamber is wearing out. These parts include valves, rings and head gasket. The good news is that a compression check is easy to carry out. provides a wealth of information about internal engine parts, and does not require any major disassembly.

There are many different types of compression gauges available through local auto parts stores. You can purchase a good one for about \$25. I always prefer to use a gauge that threads into the spark plug hole rather than one which requires you to hold it against the hole with your hand. My gauge has a 19 flexible hole and came with adapters to fit both 14mm and 18mm spark plug threads (Norton uses 14mm),

Begin by warming up the engine until it is at regular operating temperature. Next, remove both spark plugs. Screw the gauge into one of the spark plug holes. Hold the throttle open and kick the engine over several times. Note and record the readings after the first stroke and after the final one. The important thing you are measuring here is differential pressure. Cylinder pressures should not vary more than 15 p.s.i.

If you discover that one or both of the cylinders have low compression, squirt a shot or two of motor oil into the cylinder(s) and recheck the compression. If this reading is higher,

your problem is worn or sticking rings. If the new reading is not higher, check valve adjustment to make sure that the valves are not too tight. If the valves are not too tight, the next most likely cause is a leaking head gasket or worn valve seats.

By the way, if you are wondering about how tight you should be screwing the spark plugs down, the recommended torque setting is 20 ft-1bs in aluminum heads for all 14mm spark plugs.

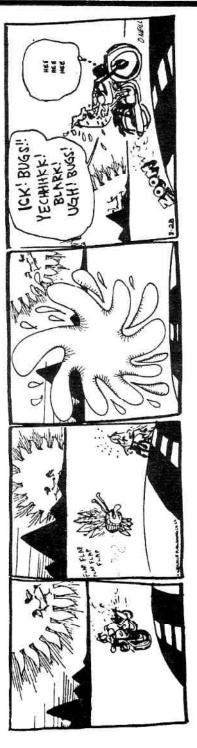
One thing Art doesn't mention is the relationship between compression ratio and compression gauge reading. Assuming that the valves and rings are in perfect shape, the pressure should be equal to the compression ratio minus 1. times local atmospheric pressure. At a nominal sea-level pressure of 14.7 p.s.i., a stock 850 Commando with 9:1 compression should measure 118 p.s.i. A Combat motor with 10:1 should measure 132 lbs. Note that if you are at a higher altitude, the pressures expected will be lower. For example, at 5000 feet nominal air pressure is about 17% lower, or 12.25 p.s.i. compression measurements in Denver would therefore be 98 psi and 110 psi for an 850 and a Combat 750 respectively. Variation of atmospheric pressure due to local weather may add about 5% uncertainty to these readings.

As a final note, if you should get readings higher than those expected, get your head examined, it probably needs to be de-coked. This can be a major cause of pre-ignition (pinging) and subsequent engine damage.



# **TEN YEARS AGO**

(REPRINTED WITH THE PERMISSION OF DAN O'NEILL)





# THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTHERN CALIFORNIA BRANCH



Harley can keep up with Big Norton. Does he stand a chance? Next month, look for Bruce the highway patrolman to take on Hugh in a one-on-one road race to find out whether a



# Dirt Riding and Riding onto Dirt by Louis Mendelowitz

It's not uncommon, we are on a club ride and some part of the road is dirt. Not a vast unexplored wilderness but a graded dirt or gravel road and the NOC is dismayed. Some of us don't want to have to wash our bikes. Some don't fancy the extra chain maintenance. But for the most part I think there is a certain insecure feeling which comes to many of us when the black top stops.

I learned to ride on a NSU Supermax. not a dirt bike. The Matchless which was my own first owned motorcycle was dirtable but I wasn't. Really, I wasn't ready for the responsibility of a motorcycle and I proved it by riding that poor Matchless for almost a year without adding oil, adjusting valves, or cleaning filters. Really surprised me when it seized.

But my point is that it wasn't till a few years ago that I started to realize that dirt riding made all of the things that scared me on the road, excepting idiotic drivers, normal. I would learn to skid, even to fall down. And although I haven't become an expert I have found that the experience of dirt riding has made me much more comfortable when the road got distinctly uncomfortable. So just for a few minutes lets look at dirt riding and also at riding onto dirt on our street bikes.

When I go dirt riding I know what's coming up. I have armored clothes on. I ride a two hundred and fifty pound motorcycle and I wish that it weighed fifty pounds less. I have tires that give such good traction that I use my front brake with almost the same force as I would on pavement. The motorcycle I am riding is well designed for falling down. It is rare that anything breaks and when something does I just replace it, usually a brake lever.

This is not the case with my street bike. It weighs over four hundred pounds and is somewhat skittish on loose dirt. When it falls over bigger things than levers break. My left footpeg will knock a hole in my primary case and my handle bars will bend and hit the gas tank and that will dent. Headlights shatter and none of those things are trivial.

So if I am riding my street bike I approach the dirt with great trepidation and I do not think that this apprehensive attitude makes for a good beginning. I hover about the front brake, an apparatus which works well for me on the street but which can be user unfriendly in a big hurry on loose dirt with street tires. Especially going anything straight ahead. Those big knobs on dirt tires don't mean that the tires stick, just that they slide very predictably. If one thing impresses



#### Riding Onto Dirt - continued

me about dirt riding it is the way in which I've become used to sliding about on the riding surface and how my habits change. On the street I seldom think of steering with the rear wheel. In dirt I often do.

Perhaps my rambling shows some of the difficulty in riding onto dirt. It's a real transition. And when you are on your street bike and cross that dirty line the riding rules change and you should be ready and willing and know that they have changed. One thing that may help you judge your speed is to ask yourself if you have finished braking before you are on the dirt. All front braking should be over with and the rear should be sufficient. If it is not, then very likely the experience will not be a success.

Little things such as seating position will count is a big way. Your motorcycle will respond to the weight transfer. Going up hills sit forward enough to keep the bike from looping yet not so far forward as to load the front wheel. Down hills hang your weight off the rear end of the seat. Dirt bikes are made to facilitate these weight transfers, the Norton isn't.

Sometimes we have to train ourselves to do things which seem wrong, like learning to counter steer a car in a slide. One such case is when you are going at about what feels like the correct speed and the front end starts weaving. Slowing down will only make the problem

worse; if you sit further back on the seat and give your bike a bit of throttle the steering should improve. Often the front end won't steer if the riding surface is loose and too much weight is on the wheel. It just sort of plows around. Lightening the front by shifting your weight and accelerating reduces the plowing affect and keeps the bike more stable.

So take it easy on dirt, not "the slower the better" but "the smoother the better". Keep up your momentum if you are going uphill, take it easy going down; remember that breaking loads the front wheel and try to roll along keeping an eye out for loose things, like big rocks. Go around them. And although this may seem obvious, look where you want to go. Oh, you will see the rocks or the ruts, but look at the part of the road that you are intend to ride on. Try to keep your weight at least a third on the foot pegs, half might be even better. Many riders like to stand on the pegs and that's a tried and true method for adding at least a foot to your suspension. Also when you hit a really big bump this knee action suspension will help keep you from being launched over the bars. If there is a lot of dirt road to travel you might want to reduce your tire pressure, the thirty two pounds that we usually use can be dropped to fifteen. Just remember to re-inflate before blasting down the pavement. And don't panic.

#### Alan's Wrench - continued

Contact Paul Arbiaster, 1390 Bond Lane, Eugene OR 97401 (503) 342-3090.

The American Motorcycle Heritage Foundation publishes a free newsletter covering antique, vintage and classic bikes, motorcycle museums and events. Contact AMHF, p.o. box 6114, Westerville OH 43081.

Finally, the many insurance related propositions on the ballot have me thoroughly confused. I thought I was in favor of no-fault until I read the following editorial by Barry Smith, in the October Piled Arms (S.C.BSA O.C. newsletter):

"No-fault is no bargain for motorcyclists, as it means that your premium will reflect the amount that YOU are at risk...with No-fault the rules are different, MY insurance will have to cover ME, and as a motorcyclist, I am vulnerable and at high risk. My premiums will skyrocket accordingly, as they have done in other places where no-fault This has been introduced." convincing argument has swayed my vote and I will accordingly give each and every proposition the thumbsdown. Seems to me we can't win no matter what happens.

Lou Caputo sent me the following: "This notice is to inform you that Dairyland Insurance Company has decided to cease writing Automobile and Motorcycle Insurance in California". This will affect many

Iolks here in the Bay area since Dairyland has been the company favored by local cycle-insurance specialist Daniel Sui. Lou also sends the following tech tip: If you carry an aerosol can of "fix-a-flat" or similar product, make sure that your valve stems don't have flattened surfaces on the sides. If they do, the can's nozzle won't seal properly and you'll lose most of the contents onto your wheel rim.

In response to my question last month about club shirts. Steve Coburn replies "When I joined in 1976, the club had shirts much like the ones we have now, except for the words San Francisco in place of Northern California. They were done in several colors, including white on navy blue, black on red and white on red. In 1978 I produced Bob Bausch's tricolor design. We made some tanktops as well as long and short sleeves." I still need information on the shirts from '79 through '83 to complete my list, so tickle your memories please. And while on the subject of shirts, the club owes a big round of applause (and a free shirt) to Tom Dable, who extended himself both financially and physically to get the shirts to the rally this year. Thanks, Tom.

Upcoming events are a bit uncertain after the November schedule. There has been some talk of renting Oakland's Lake Merrit

(continued on page 13)



#### Alan's Wrench - continued

boathouse for the club Christmas dinner and AGM, but no firm details have surfaced. At the last meeting a the date of Friday 9 December was chosen, with the thought that this encourage more family participation and a later event. My feeling is that if Harry's Hoffbrau lives up to its advance billing at this months meeting, we might as well do it there. I think that in the absense of several volunteers to organise and cater a non-commercial location, we must use a place that has good food and table service and a private meeting room. Since advance booking usually required, a firm commitment must be made soon. which I will bring up at the meeting on Thursday.

Meanwhile, if you miss the Tres Pinos ride this coming weekend. I'll see you at Maya's spagetti feed. Since this is a joint ride with the European Mcy Assoc. I expect to ride in the company of Ducatis, Guzzis, Beemers, and who knows what else. In otherwords, it should be a lun ride and a well-attended one too, so get the Nort out and help show the club colors.

#### MINUTES OF THE 10/13/88 MEETING OF NOC

It was a dark and stormy night as the NOC of Northern California meet at the Harbor Lights in San Francisco. Nevertheless, 10 members, more or less, showed up, none imprudent enough to have ridden their Nort' in such weather.

There were two items of business. First, a decision was made to sent check for \$5 10 the International Norton Owners' Association (formerly USNOA) for affiliation. Second, following a motion by Allen Goldwater, it was agreed that the club should donate a \$20 memorial gift to the family of the editor of the Chicago club, who died recently while riding his Norton. members also made individual contributions, raising the total over \$50.





#### CLASSIFIEDS

\_\_\_\_\_\_

1975 Commando Roadster MkIII, all original except for very bright red paint and new Dunlop K81's. Factory manuals and original sales brochure. This bike is in beautiful condition, ask anyone who saw it at the annual rally. Photos available. Asking \$2700. contact Michael Mills, (707) 983 6673

/11

For Sale: Offer or Trade: MK3 Bottom End MK3 Gearbox Covers MK3 Primary Case and internals MK2 & MK3 Footrest, brakepedal MK2 & MK3 Gearbox Cradles Hepolite 850 +.020 Pistons, new Wanted: Disk brake fork sliders Speedo drive, any condition Straight Con.Rod "23258-R10R 850 PreMK3 Crank & Cases Cerriani Roadrace Fork Bushes complete 72-74 Ducati 750s Contact Chris Nichols (415)965-4611

For Sale by original owner: 1971 Commando roadster, orange metalflake. 8978 genuine miles, no crashes. Has drum brakes, oil cooler, low style handlebars. Includes Colortune sparkplug tool with instructions, carrier rack with Craven top box, factory workshop manuals and service notes. Asking \$2000. Also available English Aviakit rain clothing in good condition. Riders wishing to try out must show proof of insurance. Contact Oscar Roberts at (415) 791-7886, 36115 Chelsea Drive, Newark Ca 94560. 18

The following list of parts is for sale or trade. Prices do not include shipping but most items can be shipped within 2 days for \$5-10. All parts are in working condition:

Roadster tank and side covers \$75 Swing arm & trans cradle, g.c. \$40 Dunstall 2-1-2 system, fair cond. painted black \$45 MKIII headlight w/harness, has some dents \$25 Stainless rear fender, g.c. \$25 Front fender, fair cond. \$25 Rear wheel with hub, needs new chrome \$30 750 oil tank, good cond \$15 750 frame w/swingarm, fair \$40 Early commando fork yokes gc \$30 Early commando taillight, g.c. \$15 750 center stand, g.c. \$20 front forks w/sliders, g.c \$50 front sliders only, g.c \$15ea Foot peg & brake pedal, fair \$15 Clutch basket, good \$20 above with chain \$30 Early style light/horn switch \$15 Early model side stand, g.c. \$15 Bill Bernard, 122 Wessels Way. Templeton, CA 93465 or call (805) 434-2797 after 5 pm

For Sale: 1957 Model 77 in very good condition. It's about 80% complete and has a fresh top end. Asking \$1800. Call John Tristad at (408) 279 1816

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Does your MkIII Electric Starter work? Mine does, every time, and yours can tool Call me for all repairs, rebuilds, and modifications. Burton Kranzel (415) 261-8252 /8

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