

Norton Notice



Newsletter of the Northern California Branch

NO. 41

OCTOBER 1981

ANNOUNCING

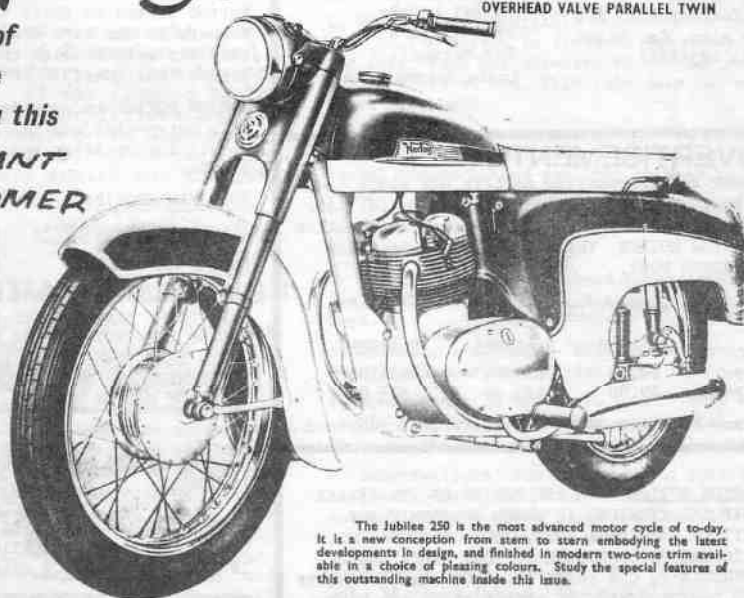
THE

Norton Jubilee 250'

OVERHEAD VALVE PARALLEL TWIN

60 years of
experience
brings you this
**BRILLIANT
NEWCOMER**

to the



NORTON
MOTORS
LIMITED,
BRACEBRIDGE
STREET,
BIRMINGHAM 6

The Jubilee 250 is the most advanced motor cycle of to-day. It is a new conception from stem to stern embodying the latest developments in design, and finished in modern two-tone trim available in a choice of pleasing colours. Study the special features of this outstanding machine inside this issue.

GO GAY WITH THE NORTON JUBILEE



This month's front and rear cover shots come from the November 6, 1958 issue of THE MOTOR CYCLE magazine sent in from "on the road" Michael Heth. More from Michael next month.



Norton Notice

1924 Kentucky St.
Redwood City, Ca. 94061
(415) 369-0597 eves.

published monthly by the NORTHERN CALIFORNIA BRANCH of the NORTON OWNERS CLUB, its sole purpose is to inform and entertain members regarding all aspects of the NORTON motorcycle, including history, technical advice, and preservation. NORTON NOTICE is not for sale, but is provided as a benefit to members of this Branch.

OFFICERS AND STAFF

<u>PRESIDENT</u>	<u>VICE PRESIDENT</u>
Harvey Loucks 7583 Lockford Ct. Cupertino, Ca. 95104 (408) 255-7356 (BEFORE 9:00 PM)	Maya Petersen
<u>MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY/ TREASURER</u>	<u>RECORDING SECRETARY</u>
Tom Horton 250 Curtner Ave. #26 Palo Alto, Ca. 94306 (415) 493-2157	Art Sirota (415) 747-0740
	<u>NORTON NOTICE STAFF</u>
	Michael Heth Harvey Loucks Phil Verzola Bob Marshall Louis Mendelowitz

ADVERTISEMENTS

Current and prospective members may place ads for Norton-related material wanted or for sale in TRADING POST. Send all necessary information to NORTON NOTICE. There is no charge for ads in TRADING POST.

COMMERCIAL ADVERTISING RATES

	1 Issue	3 Issues	6 Issues
1/4 page	\$5.00	\$13.00	\$25.00
1/2 page	\$9.00	\$25.00	\$45.00

Ads may be designed by the Staff if so desired.

NORTON NOTICE IS A REFLECTION OF ITS READERSHIP AND EVERYONE IS URGED TO SUBMIT ANY ARTICLE, TECHNICAL TIP JOKE, PHOTOGRAPH, ORIGINAL OR OTHERWISE SO THAT OTHER NORTON ENTHUSIASTS CAN ENJOY IT. FOR BRANCH MEMBERS WHO CANNOT OTHERWISE ATTEND RIDES AND MEETINGS, NORTON NOTICES AFFORDS THEM AN EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE EXPERIENCES WITH THE ENTIRE MEMBERSHIP AND BRING US ALL CLOSER TOGETHER.

DEADLINE FOR ITEMS IS THE 20TH OF EACH MONTH.



MEMBERSHIPS

Membership is available in three categories.

FULL MEMBERSHIP gives membership in the NORTON OWNERS CLUB with its benefits and privileges such as bi-monthly issues of ROADHOLDER MAGAZINE sent directly from England keeping members abreast of Norton owners activities from around the World, the SPARES PROGRAM that allows one to buy Norton parts directly from England at an attractive, low cost, and full voting privileges at all NOC and Branch meetings.

ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP is established for any Norton owner wishing to be associated with the Northern California Branch and are welcomed at all meetings, rides and other functions. Members are urged to become FULL MEMBERS as they become familiar with NOC advantages and benefits.

SOCIAL MEMBERSHIP is established for Norton enthusiasts who have not yet bought their Norton to become familiar with NOC and Branch functions and to assist them in finding a Norton suited to their needs. Although Social Members do not have Branch voting privileges, they are welcome with their ideas at all Branch functions.

NORTON NOTICE is provided to all three membership categories and the publication is open to all for articles and ads they wish to submit.

<u>FULL MEMBERSHIP:</u>	\$25.00/yr.
<u>ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP:</u>	\$10.00/yr.
<u>SOCIAL MEMBERSHIP:</u>	\$10.00/yr.

ALL MEMBERSHIP DUES ARE PAYABLE TO THE BRANCH TREASURER. RENEWAL DUES ARE PAYABLE AT THE END OF THE INDIVIDUAL'S MEMBERSHIP YEAR, THAT MONTH BEING DESIGNATED BY THE LAST NUMBER OF THE MEMBERSHIP NUMBER LOCATED ON THE MAILING LABEL OF NORTON NOTICE. Example:

999/6

denotes member number 999 with dues expiring in JUNE.

BRANCH MEETINGS ARE HELD EACH SECOND THURSDAY OF THE MONTH; LOCATIONS ARE ANNOUNCED IN THE NORTON NOTICE CALENDAR.

BRANCH RIDES ARE HELD THE SUNDAY FOLLOWING THE MEETING, TIME AND LOCATION ALSO ANNOUNCED IN NORTON NOTICE CALENDAR. IN THE EVENT OF RAIN, THE RIDE IS POSTPONED UNTIL THE NEXT SUNDAY. IF IT RAINS THAT SUNDAY, THE RIDE IS CANCELLED FOR THAT MONTH.

OCCASIONALLY, MEETINGS AND RIDES ARE SCHEDULED FOR DAYS OTHER THAN THE SECOND THURSDAY AND FOLLOWING SUNDAY. BE SURE TO CHECK THE CALENDAR FOR ANY CHANGES.

The Newsletter of The Northern California Branch



MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER MEETING

One couldn't say it was a very exciting meeting last month. Only about 16 people showed up and half of them were from the peninsula. What happened to the good ol' days when there was a large turnout at Edinburgh Castle? Maybe the rest of the members were on vacation that week or the meeting was too close to the Labor Day weekend.

Harvey did manage to bring those present under control and hold a short meeting. He gave a report on Rich Rutter who was hospitalized after the accident during the pre-Commando ride. Rich was still in the hospital at that time and doing okay. Harvey also informed members present of a business in Washington State - Big Four - which was offering 45% off Continental tire prices. Finally, Harvey told of ordering parts from the N.O.C. spares scheme in England, and gave examples of how much can be saved and ended with the statement, "I saved about 50% on things I didn't need." (Sounds like someone I know.)

Another item that was brought up was that the month of September marked the 10th anniversary of this branch of the N.O.C. It was founded by Bob Bausch and two other fellows and of the original dozen or so members, only three still belong to the club - Bob Bausch, Gene Austin and Bob Getts.

What Lewiston

PRESIDENTIAL RAMBLINGS

Bernie, Kathy, and Birleffi are downright nice folks - the kind that help make the Norton Owners Club experience a rewarding, pleasurable, leisure-time activity. Bernie and his father run the Ford dealership in Calistoga as well as a small wine making operation. When we rode through there on the September ride, Bernie intercepted us on his red Roadster and invited the whole group over to his place for some of his award winning wine and chips. The wine and camaraderie were both excellent and we spent a very pleasant hour and a half sipping wine, talking Norton, and doing a little maintenance (right Tom Dabel?) in Bernie's picnic area. Thanks again, Bernie and Co. For details on the ride, see Gene Austin's report on page .

On another front, I'm a little concerned about Branch participation in the San Francisco area. There were only sixteen people at the September meeting at Edinburgh Castle and most of those were from the Peninsula. This contrasts with the fifty plus that we have been getting at the Peninsula meetings. Also, on the September ride, although we had a good turnout at Sausa-

lito, Bart & Meda Rago were the only folks from the San Francisco, Berkeley, Oakland, Marin County area. If participation from the S.F. area continues to be minimal at the October 11 ride from Sausalito and the November 12 meeting at Edinburgh Castle, we'll probably hold the January elections in Palo Alto so more folks will get to vote.

Next month's ride will start promptly at 10:30 from the ferry landing at Sausalito and cover the usual excellent roads of Marin County. One place we'll stop is at Tom Peterson's Mill Station Garage near Sebastopol. He works on British bikes and carries a lot of Norton parts which he will sell to Branch members at 10% off. He stocks some excellent old style Dunstall copies at less than \$50 a pair, for instance.

While on the subject of rides, I'd like to make a proposal that we adopt a set of ride rules for our group rides. A number of members are concerned about the safety aspects of our rides and feel things could be more fun and safer if we observe a few common courtesies. Here are a few suggestions I have and I hope to hear from more about this from you all at the next meeting:

1. Don't ride immediately behind or to the side of the person in front of you. Ride in the tire track not occupied by the guy or gal in front of you. This rule does not apply on twisty roads.
2. Don't pass any vehicle on the right, including motorcycles. If you know there are faster riders behind you, try to keep to the right.
3. Pass cars one at a time; the person in front goes first.
4. Never ride over your head regardless of the level of exhuberance. Remember, we have maps.
5. Drinking & driving - best not to do it all but if you must, for christ sake, don't race!
6. Breakdowns: In this rare event, only a couple of good, technically expert will stay to help; the bulk of the riders will continue.
7. Intersections: You only need to wait for the next person before continuing on so the whole group doesn't get held up. If you are last, you better know it!
8. Staging area: When the whole group starts out, we'll go just a few hundred feet and wait until the last, red-faced soul has started his bike and joined us.

Our next meeting will be at Rick's Swiss Chalet in Palo Alto at 4085 El Camino Way on October 8. It should be a good one! Art Sirota will bring his gorgeous 1947 Model 18 in for display and present a talk on Norton restoration. Ed Brooks has volunteered to come and auction off some neat Norton goodies with proceeds going into the Branch treasury.

(continued on page 4)



The Newsletter of The Northern California Branch

Hell of a guy, that Ed Brooks. Also, Ron Glenn, the official NOC, US Liaison Officer will be there to give us his blessings. I wouldn't miss it for all the peanuts in Petaluma!

By the way, our treasury is still holding up nicely at about \$500 clear. Maybe we can use some of it to finance a pretty hot Christmas Party. Dealers are wanting to place ads in the NOTICE again, also - if we accept those, the treasury will fatten up even more.

Gene and Pat Austin (mostly Pat!) retyped and updated the membership listing, recently. Thanks to these two, we have a good idea of where we stand membershipwise: We now have 233 members, a 16% increase since the first of the year. Of these, 49% are full members and 51% are Associate and Social members (\$10 type).

Full members have been growing at a faster rate than the \$10 type [Hear that England! -Ed.] Also, more of our members (76%) are in Northern California than at the first of the year. Not too surprising, since only 39% of the membership outside Northern California are Full members. In addition, over a third of the membership do not want their bikes listed in the annual membership listing. This choice was initiated at the first of the year when the new Membership Application/Renewal was revamped and included in the NOTICE as each Membership was to expire. In summary, I feel pretty good about the way we are growing and improving the quality of our membership. I'd like to see over half of the members be Full members, though and maybe, the article on the Spares Program will help bring that about.

How about a report on Dick Rutter? OK.

Dick is the Branch member who was seriously injured (through no fault of his own) on the Old Timer's Ride. He is still at Stanford Medical Center and still has not had several of the breaks in his knee and femur fixed. It seems the doctors are still waiting on some shin grafts to take hold so they can set the bones without the risk of infection. Dick will be there for about another month, so stop by and say "HI" if you have a chance. He could use a little cheering up.

I want to thank Lynn Simmons of San Jose for the excellent technical tip he sent in this month. This helps make the Norton Notice more interesting and easier to put together when we get good letters from the membership.

As a final Ramble, there's a new book out that everyone of you will want: *Norton Twins* by Roy Bacon. There are original photos of every model produced since WWII and details of all the changes that were made. This hardbound book is over 300 pages long with over 100 photos. The reasons for Norton's demise are detailed as well as a good account of their racing activities with twins. The cost is \$19.95 plus \$1.00 for shipping from Motorsports, 6115 Gravois, St. Louis, Mo. 63116. I'll have a copy at the meeting for inspection.

Keep 'em upright, *Hamey*

BRANCH EVENTS

DATE	TIME	PLACE	EVENT
10/8	7:30	Rick's Swiss Chalet, P.A.	Meeting
10/11	10:00	Ferry Bldg. Sausalito	Ride
11/12	7:30	Edinburgh Cast. S.F.	Meeting
11/15	10:00	Summit Inn Hwy. 17	Santa Cruz Ride

SEPTEMBER RIDE REPORT

Thirteen people on eleven Nortons left the Sausalito ferry landing for the last overnight club ride of the year held the weekend of Sept. 12th and 13th. Our first stop was just five miles away at Motorcycles Unlimited in Corte Madera where Tom Dabel wanted to buy a new clutch cable to replace the one that was unraveling itself on his Atlas. As the rest of us did some browsing and buying, Tom changed his clutch cable and we were soon on our way and into the wine country where we stopped at Bernie & Cathy Berleffi's house on the Silverado Trail in Calistoga for a taste of some of their home made wine. Well, actually it was a little more than just a taste as we emptied five or six bottles of the various outstanding wines. Properly fortified, we left Tom Dabel adjusting and cleaning his clutch at the Berleffi's as we were several hours behind schedule already. Fortunately Tom caught up to us in the Sierra foothills and his Atlas never gave another hint of trouble. By the way, apologies go to anyone who went to the pizza shop in Yuba City intending to meet the group for lunch. As we were running behind "schedule" (whatever that is!), we decided to eat lunch at a bar in the hills east of Calistoga.

Toward the end of the day we ran into a rain shower in the Sierras and the wet roads slowed us down even further. Arriving in North Lake Tahoe after dark, some of the group went across the state line for dinner and gambling, while some of us made use of the hotel hot tub and swimming pool before dinner.

After getting up bright and early next morning (about 9:00 - what a laid back group!) we journeyed along the eastern side of Lake Tahoe and descended the Sierras by way of High-

(continued on page 5)

The Newsletter of The Northern California Branch



way 207, a series of high speed sweeping curves with a commanding view of the Carson Valley. We then went south to Topaz Lake and turned west on Highway 89 and began the climb back into California, getting re-fired on again as we went through Monitor Pass (8314 ft.) and Ebberts Pass (8730 ft.). We managed to dry out and have lunch at a lodge at Alpine Lake before continuing west, crossing the central valley and arriving home at dusk.

The only mechanical incidents during the trip were Tom's clutch cable and adjustment, a broken center stand spring on Bart Rago's 850, and a broken center stand on my In-a-state. Thank heavens for bungees, huh Bart?

John Austin

WIND CHILL CHART

WIND SPEED IN MPH	ACTUAL TEMPERATURE (°F)					
	50	40	30	20	10	0
	EQUIVALENT TEMPERATURES (°F)					
5	48	37	27	16	6	-5
10	40	28	16	4	-9	-21
15	36	22	9	-5	-18	-36
20	32	18	4	-10	-25	-39
25	30	16	0	-15	-29	-44
30	28	13	-2	-18	-33	-48
35	27	11	-4	-20	-35	-49
40	26	10	-6	-21	-37	-53

It's interesting to note that wind speeds greater than 40 mph have little additional effect on equivalent temperatures.

(Source: U.S. Forest Service)

This month's CENTERFOLD Norton is a beautifully maintained 1960th Model 77 owned by Ed Brooks. This was a center of attention at the Pre-Commando, Old Timers ride in August; everything is original except the rear tire (yes, even the oil lines), and beautiful in every detail.

*Not a 1957 Model 77 as reported in last month's NOTICE. If you crave flawless, accurate reporting, read the CRONICLE.

SUCH A DEAL! THE SPARES SERVICE

I have been too damn lazy to really check out our Spares Service for Full (\$25) members and now I'm sorry I waited so long. IT WORKS! Shown below is an actual order that I sent off a couple of weeks back and for comparison, the S.F. Bay Area prices for the same parts.

REF. NO.	ITEM	#	CLUB \$	S.F. \$
SD1	layshaft	1	19.18	48.00
CD6	Inspection Cover	1	2.35	3.00 usd.
CE6	tank decal	2	5.45	6.50
CE7	tank decal	2	5.45	6.50
CE10	S/C decal	4	6.77	11.00
SJ2	Lucas Head-lite rim	3	12.69	40.00
CK1	750 pipes	2	32.90	78.00
CK2	"S" style pipes	2	20.68	50.00 usd.
CK5	reverse cone muffler	2	52.64	115.00
CK12	Rubber mount	4	3.76	8.00
CL5	fork gaiter (long)	2	3.76	13.00
GL6	fork gaiter (short)	2	2.82	11.00
CN11	F/glas Rdstr S/C	2	30.08	75.00 usd.
CN18	Interstate seat	1	40.42	90.00
CP5	Interstate tank, primed	1	54.52	150.00 usd.
GP7	Clutch lock tool	1	4.70	12.50
GP7	Exhaust nut wrench	1	7.54	18.00

* Minus VAT, plus 25% shipping, plus \$.50 for insurance, plus \$4 for Pound draft.

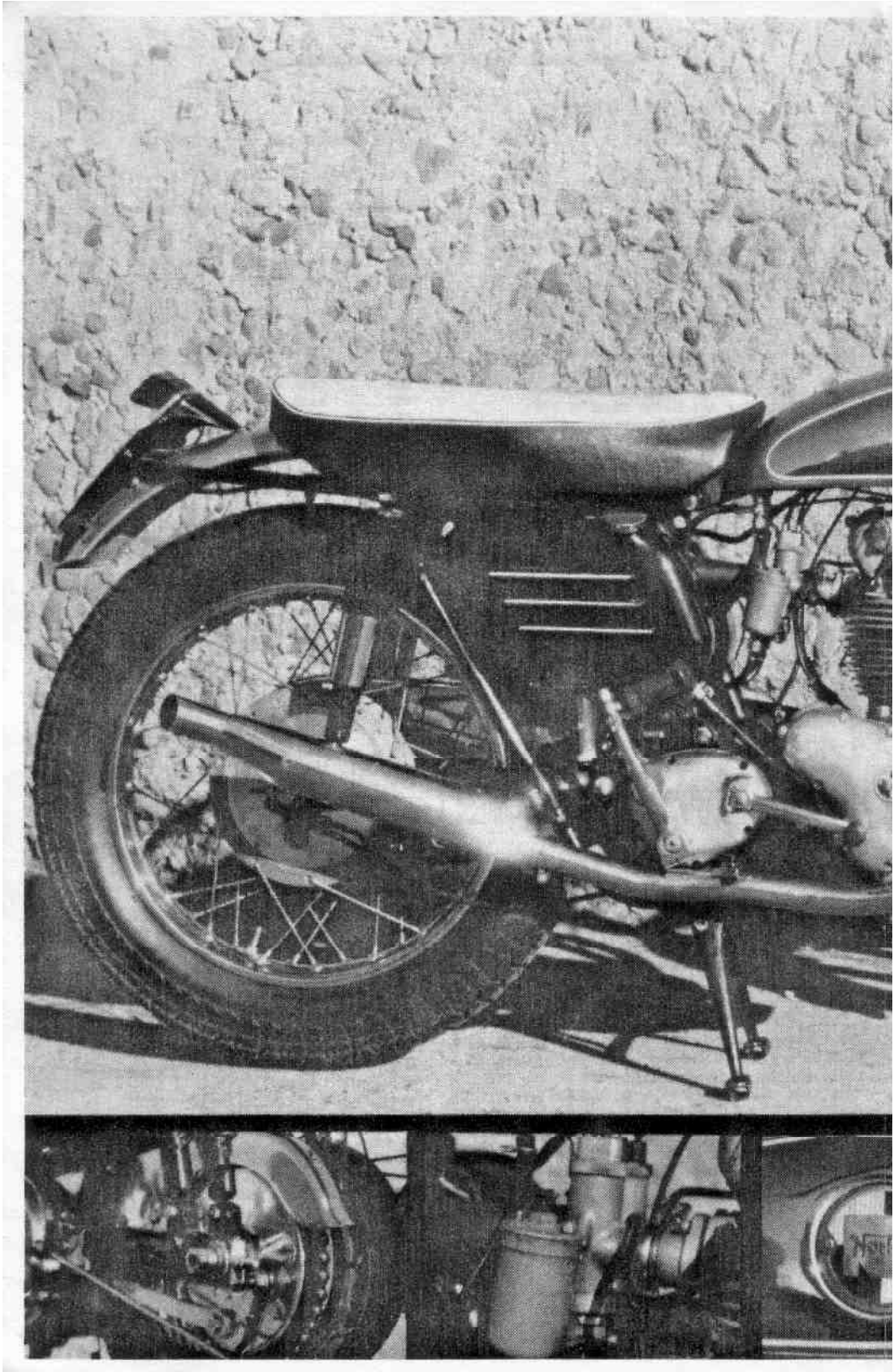
305.69	735.00
*	47.81 tax
336.94	782.81

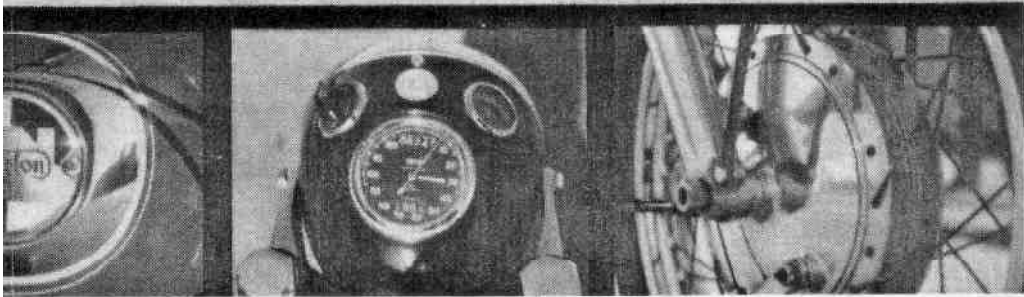
As you can see by the total costs, parts through the Spares Service was \$336.94 and S.F. Bay Area cost would have been \$782.81, well over twice the Spares Service cost.

The small things were sent by air and the large items by a slow boat. By the way, in checking around on prices, I found that Brooks Cyclery in San Jose was usually the least expensive and had the parts in stock. For parts I couldn't find, I listed an estimate of the cost for the used part.

So how does it work? First of all, you have to be a Full Member. Seven pounds (about \$14) of every Full Member's dues go to the NOC headquarters in England to help support and expand the Spares Service and run the Club. Once that's taken care of, get a price list from Les Emery in England or Jerry Henry here (or Branch officers, etc.) After figuring out what you want, go down to your local bank and get a Pounds draft and send it with your order and Full Membership number to Les Emery in England and wait. It will take

(continued on page 8)







The Newsletter of The Northern California Branch

about two weeks for Air Mail parts and about six weeks for parts sent by boat. Les will let you know if you underpaid or overpaid on the shipping charges. Don't worry about getting it exactly right.

Actually, Associate and Social Members can use the Service too for a standard charge of 20% extra, but you only have to order \$75 worth before it becomes cheaper to be a Full Member. By the way, Full Members get a subscription to the official NOC magazine, the ROADHOLDER; it's almost as good as the NORTON NOTICE.

Actually the Club in England has four or five different price lists covering singles, pre-Commando twins, Commando, and pre-war bikes. In addition, many parts (like the Interstate tank) are available but not listed. You must write for a quote on these items. Postage is 40c per half ounce to England.

If this sounds like a pitch to increase the per cent of Full Members, you're absolutely right! If we get three new renewals as Full Members that were formerly \$10 members, our membership will be over half Full Members. Ten dollar members who want to upgrade to full membership may send their \$25 to Tom Horton at any time and he'll pro-rate your \$10 membership and get you a rebate.

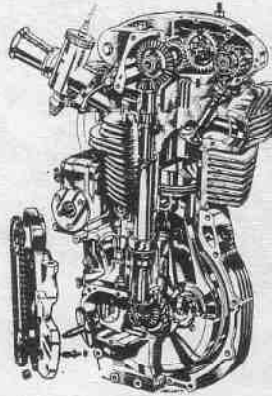
Keep 'em Uptight

Harvey

October Meeting and Ride

As noted in the "Ramblings", the meeting will be at Rick's Swiss Chalet, 4085 El Camino Way in Palo Alto at 7:30, Thursday, October 8. In addition to the usual dancing women, drinking and bench racing, Art Sirota will show his beautiful 1947 Model 18 and give a talk on Norton restoration. Ed Brooks has offered to bring some Norton goodies to auction off with proceeds going into our treasury. After I mentioned this to Larry Randall at West Bay Cycle, he volunteered to do the same. We'll have Bass Ale and Guinness Stout, so bring money for the auction and a good thirst. Don't miss it.

The ride will start from the fairy landing in Sausalito at 10:30 promptly on Sunday, October 11 and cover the backroads of Marin County. We'll stop by Tom Peterson's Norton shop in Sebastopol and have lunch at a great restaurant as yet to be determined. As usual, if it's raining, the ride will be postponed until the next Sunday.



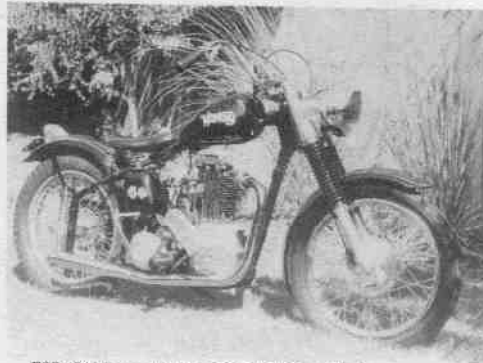
TRADING POST

FOR SALE:

N.O.C. PARAPHENALIA AS FOLLOWS.....

- 3" square machine badge.....\$6.00
- lapel pin..... 1.25
- 4" square embroidered patch... 1.50
- 4 1/2" sticker..... 1.00
- 2" sticker..... .50
- key fob with badge..... 1.50

3-color Northern Calif. Branch lapel pins \$1.50 at branch meetings or monthly rides \$1.75 by mail See CAROLLYN SCOTT at club meetings or rides



FOR SALE or trade for later twin:

1954 ES-2, running when parked a year ago. Has flat rear tire, wrong fenders and fork covers, however I have a new Lycett seat, a new, original chrome exhaust pipe and an old dented gas tank. Have original Norton trans. (Burman shown in pic.), an extra clutch with new leathers. Also part of an old engine, huband spokes, odds and ends. Mag and dyno rebuilt 2 years ago. Other details on request. Make your best offer first.

E.A. Johnson
2146 W. Michigan
Fresno, Ca. 93705
(209) 224-4436

The Newsletter of The Northern California Branch



TRADING POST (continued)

FOR SALE:

1955 ES-2, 500cc single, 99 94/100 original. Extra motor, perfect tank, front end, and other goodies. Runs well and looks great. Seen on page 10 of September, 1981 NORTON NOTICE. \$2000; call Mike at (415) 658-6181 evenings.

FOR SALE:

1964 Atlas, original, mechanically sound, very good sheet metal, clean, one-kick starter, original owners manual, needs some paint and some chrome, missing gauges, otherwise complete with several spares. \$650, will ship. Phil Hendricks
1840 High St.
Hamilton, IL. 62341
(217) 847-2501

FOR SALE:

1974 Mark II Interstate, less than 6000 miles, immaculate! with extra parts. Best offer. Call Bruce, (418) 379-6051 9 to midnight or before 8:00am.

FOR SALE:

1974 Interstate, low exhaust system, with NEW pistons, cylinders, valves, springs, guides, chains (all), cam, isolastics, swing arm bush. Call Andy Loomis, (415) 836-3270 days. \$1495 or Best Offer.

FOR SALE:



'62 Atlas. Mechanically sound with good black paint, chrome, tires, etc. Instruments and electrical system (with Miti-Max battery eliminator) are good also. \$1200 firm. Gene Austin (415) 573-9559 from 10 A.M. to 2 P.M.

WANTED:

For a 500 BSA twin, '67/68, anything except engine, transmission. Bruce, (418) 379-6051 9 to midnight, or before 8:00am.

WANTED:

Steering damper and/or steering damper brackets for '75 MK III. Call Brian Halton, (415) 982-7242

FOR SALE:

'74 Roadster with drum brake. Includes tools, manual and 7 5/8 helmet (Bell Star 120). Excellent condition, 17,000 miles, \$1250/bo. Call Rick at (415) 494-2326.

FOR SALE:

MK III tranny, complete. \$125
Mk III bottom end, complete. \$150
Red Atlas tank, perfect. \$100
Atlas Front fender, perfect. \$100
Atlas seat, excellent. \$45

Perfect red Fastback set with gold pin striping. Includes tank, seat, tail sect., sidecovers, oil tank, license bracket. \$350
850 cylinders, std. \$85

Call Harvey between 6 and 9 PM (408) 255-7356.

FOR SALE:

1. Pair of used Girling Commando shocks with 126 lb./in chrome springs, \$35.
2. Almost complete Dommie 650 engine in three lumps (head, barrels, and bottom end) plus extra head. All or part - CHEAP!
3. Set of new clutch friction plates to fit Norton singles, Dommies and Atlases after 1959, \$25.

Gene Austin (415) 573-9559 from 10 A.M. to 2 P.M.

FOR SALE:

1970 - 750 Commando, Cherry condition, must sell, \$1750 or offer. Call (415) 347-6055

REWARD

\$25 for information leading to the purchase of an ES2 or P11. Also wanted, old style Dunstall Decibel Silencers and P11 seat. Call Harvey between 6 & 9 at (408) 255-7356

FOR SALE:

1975 MK III Commando, 4000 original miles, VERY NICE CONDITION, must sell \$2000 or best offer. Steve Murry, (415) 364-8627 after 5:00.

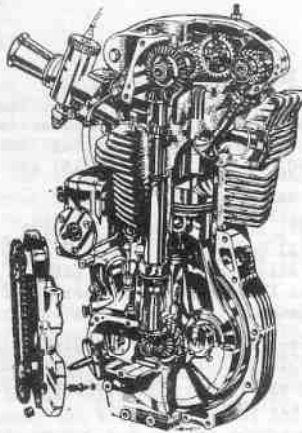
FOR SALE:

DZUS Fasteners for Commando side covers - complete with fastener, insert, spring clip, and side cover spring. \$3.95 to your door. Bob Marshall, 1924 Kentucky St. Redwood City, Ca. 94061

Just a reminder for new members and old: The TOOL LOANOUT PROGRAM, sponsored by the Branch is still in effect and is in need of use. Call Harry Bunting at (415) 968-2020 or 415) 842-3473



The Newsletter of The Northern California Branch



TECHNICAL SECTION

PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT SERIES: PART I; HANDLING IMPROVEMENT, FINAL INSTALLMENT

By an overwhelmingly popular request (I asked two guys if it was OK to do it), to get my butt in gear and write the final installment of the Handling Improvement section of the Performance Improvement Series. The Series started in May and continued in June covering the most important aspects of tire selection, balance, alignment, trueness, rim type, fork oil & seals, shocks and spring rates, steering dampers, tire pressure, and a few other items. This time we'll look at isolastics, head steadies, subframe flex, swing arm problems, control layouts, and ground clearance.

First, a few left-overs in the running gear area. Be careful to inspect your rim straps that cover the spoke nipples when changing tires. These straps deteriorate with age and are usually not changed till they break. When mounting tires, they often slip to one side uncovering spoke nipples to rub against the tube. This can cause a blowout which is bad for handling. I usually tape my strap in place similar to old road-race practice. Also, a word on rim locks. It's a good idea to leave your rim locks on your standard steel rim to prevent the tire from slipping at lower pressures even though they make tire installation and balance more difficult. You can leave them off alloy rims because of the deeper friction grooves in the rim if you don't let the pressure get below 20 psi. I once lowered the pressure of my rear tire on a club ride (I won't tell you the silly reason I did this) and suffered a blowout due to the tire and tube slipping on the rim with a portion of exposed spoke nipple cutting the tube.

Also, a word about brakes. Use a disc up front and set your rear brake up so it works. The drum brake always fades when used in fast riding in addition to not stopping as hard in the first place. Norton simply did a lousy job of designing drum

brakes. The single leading shoe front drum brake is a total disaster! Replace it with the dual leading shoe type (two levers) as used on the early Commando for about twice the stopping power. I crashed my '69 Fast-back in the Sierras in '72 due to a front brake fade and that brake was set up as well as possible. I actually rode a Honda for a year after that because it had a disc brake. I crashed that due to ground clearance problems! I've ridden only Nortons since I could afford a disc brake model.

The Norton disc is positive feeling, quick acting, and never fades. You can lock up the front wheel at any speed even though it requires more pressure on the lever than most disc systems. One problem with the lever is that it is too far from the grip making it especially difficult for people to use who have small hands. The solution is to apply the lever hard and measure the distance to the grip at the end of the lever. Remove the lever and bend it back by half the distance you measured - usually about 5/8 inch, then reinstall. It will be easier to use in general, but especially when riding fast as you have to move between the throttle and brake lever often and quickly.

There is no need to use special pads; the stock ones work just fine. Also, there has been some debate that the disc works better on the left side, as in the Mk III. It doesn't. I've tried it both ways with no noticeable change in handling [Ed. NOTE: The Mk III brake caliper change was done to help keep road dirt from building up, one rumor has it.].

Do check your master cylinder reservoir now and then; it works much better with fluid. Change the fluid at least once a year. Also, try to keep the vent hole on the reservoir cap open - most are full of polish. And, don't tighten the cap so much that it forces the rubber seal down inside the reservoir. This can allow water to enter the system and corrosion begins.

The rear brake can be made to work well enough to lock up the rear tire, but it will fade if used too much. Most of your rear braking should be done with engine compression, downshifting if necessary. However, the main trick for making the rear brake work is to center the shoes each time the left hand axle nut is loosened. Do this by slightly applying the rear brake with your left foot while tightening the axle nut. This assures that both shoes will hit the drum at the same time when applied later. Now on to new stuff.

ISOLASTICS:

These components probably strike more fear and worry into the hearts of Nortonophiles than any other part of their bike. A Norton will keep running fine with loose isolastics, but will handle like one Poppa Honda's old flexi-fliers. However, the handling degenerates slowly and most folks just

(continued on page 11)

The Newsletter of The Northern California Branch



ignore it, or don't notice. Actually, the isolastic design was a good idea, but not fully implemented. Everyone knows you have to have three-point suspension in order to constrain a system to motion in one plane. This means there should have been three isolastic units (one on the head steady) to keep the engine vibrating in the vertical plane only. Norton did this on their famous production racer and the kit is available from Ron's Cycle Sales at 215 Lancaster St., Leominster, Ma., 01453 or call (617) 537-6191. The cost is about \$120 but it virtually eliminates wear on the isolastics and improves the rigidity and handling of the bike significantly. The "Norvil" head steadies are also available from Mick Hemmings, 36/24 Wellington St., Northampton, England for about \$70 including shipping.

Even without the isolastic head steady, your bike will handle much better if you adjust the isolastic clearance to about 0.007 or 0.010 on front and rear. Don't forget to clean and grease the parts when reassembling. Actually, the front is easy to do, but the rear one, which usually needs it the most, is a real son-of-a-gun the first time you do it. Just have patience, read the Clymer manual, consult with old-timers, and try it, you'll like it.

While trying to figure out how to get your rear isolastics back together, check the tightness of your crankcase to subframe bolts. These often loosen up and screw up the handling as much as the loose isolastics. Also, keep the rear chain properly adjusted. When it gets loose, there is more driveline slack which causes jerky throttle response, in addition to extra chain and sprocket wear.

Another weak point in the Norton design is the damn pre-Mk III swing arm pivot arrangement. The pivot pin is a sliding fit into a short tube welded into the subframe. With wear, often accelerated by an out-of-tune rear wheel and lack of oiling, this pin will "oval out" the tube which causes the swing arm to move back and forth sideways, again screwing up handling. Fixing it correctly requires removal of the subframe (a non-trivial task) and resleeving or boring the subframe to fit an oversize pin. You then have to bore the swing arm bushes out as well. By the way, I have never seen a pair of worn out swing arm bushings; it's almost always the subframe that's screwed up. If you check back issues of the NORTON NOTICE, you'll see several technical tips on how to cure the loose swing arm blues. One that I like because it's the easiest, is to simply take two of the strongest clamps you can find and use them to clamp on either end of the subframe tube. This clamps the rather thin wall tube down onto the swing arm pivot pin and eliminates the clearance. Norton finally got their act together on the Mk III and put two wedge-type bolts on the tube which clamped down very tightly on some flats cut into the pivot pin, eliminating any looseness or wear.

Ground clearance becomes a problem on Nortons ridden quickly. Generally, the side stand and exhaust pipes will drag first. Remove the side stand before it wears out anyhow and rely on your sturdy center stand. Now, you can bend the pipes in and up a bit for significantly improved clearance, especially on the left side. Your pegs will touch next. Simply bend them up at the ends a bit.

For even better clearance, you can get a pair of production racer pipes from Ron's Cycle Sales or Mick Hemmings which have a special bend, but fit the stock Commando. The early 750 pipes that angle forward from the exhaust port are the best stock pipes for clearance; the 850 style are really and can't be bent. Bub Industries in San Jose makes a pair of Norton head pipes that tuck in well, also, at about \$68 a pair. If you still have a ground clearance problem, check the preload on the shocks and check your fork springs to see if they have settled. The spring free lengths should be 18 5/8 inches; if they aren't shimming with washers is a good practice.

The control positions on most motorcycles, including the Commando, were set up to feel good on the showroom floor, not on the road at 70. The standard handlebars are silly and the footpegs aren't much better. Lower bars and rearset footpegs will improve comfort and handling. The standard bars force the rider to lean forward into the wind and hang on with bent arms. This puts a strain on arm, shoulder, and back muscles. You can tell what height bars to put on by leaning into the wind at cruising speeds until the backward wind pressure just balances the downward pull of gravity. Now figure out where your hands would be if you extended your arms forward with only a slight bend at the elbows. The new-found position is where your bars should be. Look around, you'll see that all the old timers use lower bars. I find the GSM bars work best.

The control levers should be positioned ergonomically correctly also. If you are sitting in your normal cruising position and extend your fingers straight out from your arms, they should just touch the top of the levers. Adjust the levers accordingly. This will be the most comfortable and will allow the fastest reaction time.

Rearsets are comfortable and improve weight position for handling. If you ever cruise with your feet on the passenger pegs, you know that rearsets would be more comfortable. They also trim the weight by about six pounds. Unfortunately, they cost about \$150 to \$200 for a good set, but can be easily made if you have a machine shop available.

Well, that's about the modifications and adjustments I can think of to improve the handling and comfort of the Commando for

(continued on page 12)

solo riding. For racing, clip-ons and a fairing could be added, but both of those are for reduced wind drag; neither improves handling.

The next part of this Series will cover riding improvement. Now that you have your Norton set up properly, we'll talk about what to do with it to ride faster and more safely in Part II. Parts III and IV will deal with reliability and power improvement.

In summary, I would like to describe briefly the perfect handling Norton based on the ideas presented here in May, June, and now in October.

It's a Commando (750 or 850) with new, perfectly balanced 4:10 x 19 Dunlop K81s front and rear, mounted on light alloy rims that have been laced up and trued by an expert. The tires would be properly aligned front and rear and would be inflated to 25 psi front and 27 psi rear. The stock 850 fender would be mounted as well as an adjustable steering damper. The fork tubes would

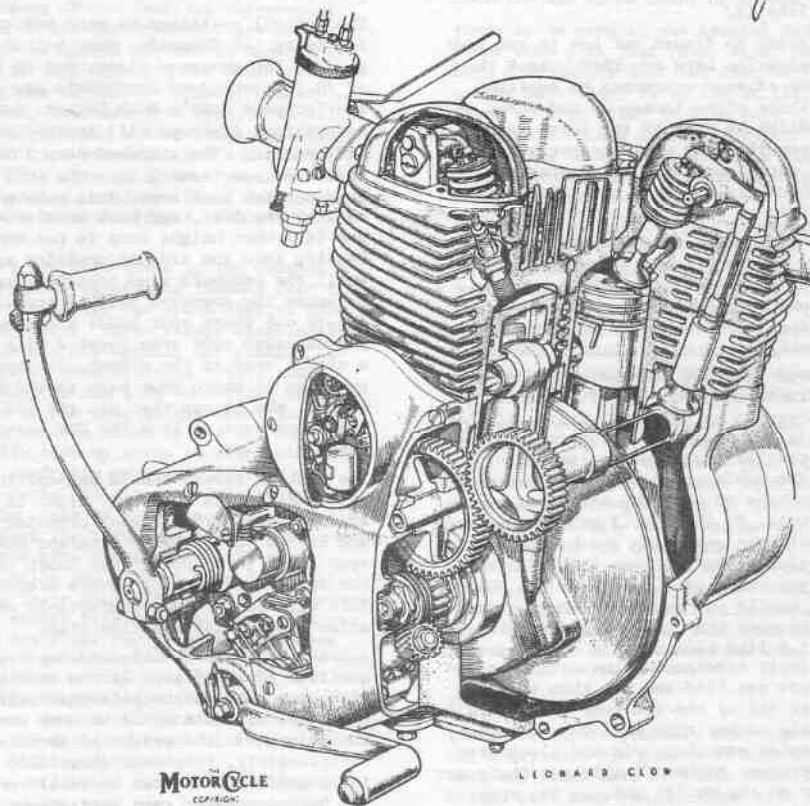
be aligned parallel, fitted with Ken Ross Teflon* seals, and filled with 20 or 25 wt shock oil. The wheel and steering head bearings would be greased and properly adjusted. Koni or S & W adjustable, rebuildable shocks would be on the rear with 110 pound springs. A disc brake would be on the front and the rear would be properly adjusted. An isolastic head steady would be fitted and all three isolastics would be silicone greased and adjusted to 0.008 inch clearance.

The side stand would be removed and production racer exhaust pipes would be added. All the subframe bolts would be properly tightened as well as the swing arm and rear chain. Rearsets would be added as well as lower, narrower GSM-type bars with the control levers properly adjusted. You wouldn't have to even slow down for corners! Actually, the inevitably unpleasant consequences of our immoral acts seem to more than offset the small pleasure derived at the time of commission, therefore negating the purpose of Hell. Just wanted to see if anyone actually read this stuff.

Keep 'em Upright,

*Dupont TM

Harvey



MOTORCYCLE
CORPORATION

L. CLAW

"X-RAY" engine detail of the 1959 Norton Jubilee 250

