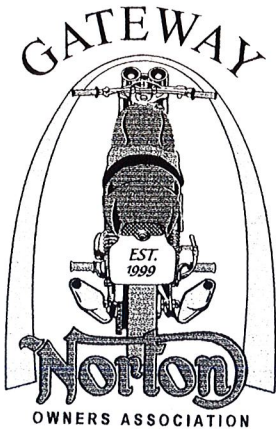


Gateway Norton Owners News #16



**"To Promote the
Use and Pride of
Norton Motorcycle Ownership"**
Compiled by Marty and Peggy Dupree
May 2003



FROM THE PRES

Submitted by Joe Jump

Spring has finally arrived and along with the April flowers, our club has sprouted up from the ashes of last year with a flurry of activity! Mike French's annual Kick-Off meeting was a great success, with about 18 members in attendance. We had an enthusiastic meeting, discussing the upcoming season. We discussed where to have meetings & came to the conclusion that getting together for events is a lot more fun than meetings-so that's what we're doing! And the events are stacking up like cordwood:

***April 13th** marked the date of our first club ride, thanks to Tom Mitchell & Merlin Libby (see included article).

***Sunday, May 4th** will be the annual ride to the Jerseyville Flat Track races. Meet at the QT gas station on the East outer road (Parker Road?) of Hwy 367 located about 1-2 miles North of I-270. Depart at 11:00 am. Contact Robin Swaysland for details (314) 355-0053.

***Sunday, May 18th** will be another Norton Day hosted by Kurt Baue at his home, 528 N. Benton in historic St Charles. Starting at 1 pm, activities to include light maintenance, BBQ, refreshments, club discussions, etc. Contact Kurt at (636) 947-3895.

***Jack Geers** will be hosting a ride up the Great River Road in June (details are sketchy right now but everyone will be contacted at a future date)

***Then there is Mid-Ohio July 18th-20th.** Plans are to set up camp once again at Honey Creek Campground in Belleville, Ohio, about 10 miles from the track. We normally leave Thursday with bikes in tow-about a 9-hr. drive. A great weekend trip full of vintage bikes, the biggest swap meet in the country, and great camping! Contact me for info (314) 909-0712

***And let's not forget the Rocky Top Camp-Out in Sept.!** If Mid-Ohio is too far for you, then Rocky Top is right up your alley! We set up camp at a private group camp site at Silver Mines State Park (just outside Fredricktown, MO), and spend the weekend tearing up the roads around scenic Iron County, home of Pilot Knob, Elephant Rocks, Johnson Shut-ins, and Hwy 32! Contact Mike French for details (636) 940-9365.

In addition, we have two efforts in the mill for new club tee shirts, and a renewed interest into updating our web site. I want to thank those who have stepped forward in the spirit of volunteerism. Their efforts have kicked off this season off with a bang! Let's keep the momentum up!

So mark your calendars now & plan on being at some of these events. And if there is an event or something that you stumble across or think up that could be a club function, please let me know about it.

Ride 'em, don't hide 'em!

J. J.

During the meeting at Mike's Norton Day (I like to think of it as "Nortapalooza") one of the items discussed was the club website. Everything from "How to make it better" to "Do we even need one?" was discussed. New member, Roger Yount agreed to do some checking into domain names etc and this is a report on his findings.

GNOA Club Website

Roger Yount

A few members of GNOA have expressed interest in developing a more comprehensive club website. I volunteered to look into what it would require in time and costs to build a new site and populate it with information and functions that serve the members.

Let's start with cost. Because my company designs and builds websites, I was able to register the domain name www.gatewaynorton.com for a three year period at no cost to the club. The name is registered with Network Solutions, the world's largest Internet registration bureau. Beginning the forth year, there will be a \$25 per year fee to maintain the name. My firm will build the site and host it on one of our servers at no charge. I don't ever envision the site becoming so large that we have to move it to a commercial server operation.

Let's build a simple site. I would suggest that the club appoint a couple members who can perform administrative duties, such as adding and updating content on a regular schedule. A site that includes fresh and relevant information will be a bigger benefit to the members.

As for content, we could include sections such as:

- 1) **About GNOA.** Includes a page of information about the club, how to join and membership fees.
- 2) **Calendar of Events.** Lists upcoming club activities such as planned rides, camp-outs, meetings, maps/directions, contact info, etc
- 3) **News.** Could include the current club newsletter plus archives of previous newsletters, photos from club events, etc.
- 4) **Bike Gallery.** Photos of member bikes.
- 5) **Classified Ads.** Member bikes and parts for sale.
- 6) **Links.** Includes links to other relevant or interesting sites, such as, NOC, INOA, EMU, etc
- 7) **Anything Else?** Within reason, we could add more sections if we feel it would be useful to the membership. Let's discuss it.

Editor's Editorial

By definition, we will always be a small portion of the biking community. Members are hard to come by and I have been lax in thanking and introducing new members to the club. In the last six months or so we welcomed into the club Jack Geers, Mike Poirot, Mike Prosser, and Roger Yount, good people all. Introduce yourself to them at the next club function.

I want to thank everyone who submitted things to make this newsletter possible. As always, I need articles to fill these pages. Please tell us about your current or past bikes, improvements you've made, trips you've taken, bikes you wish you owned, things for sale or want ads, etc. Please send submissions to: Marty Dupree, 2637 Sneakwood Lane, Foristell, MO 63348 or e-mail: madx2@worldnet.att.net, or my phone number is 636-398-4049.

Dreer Norton

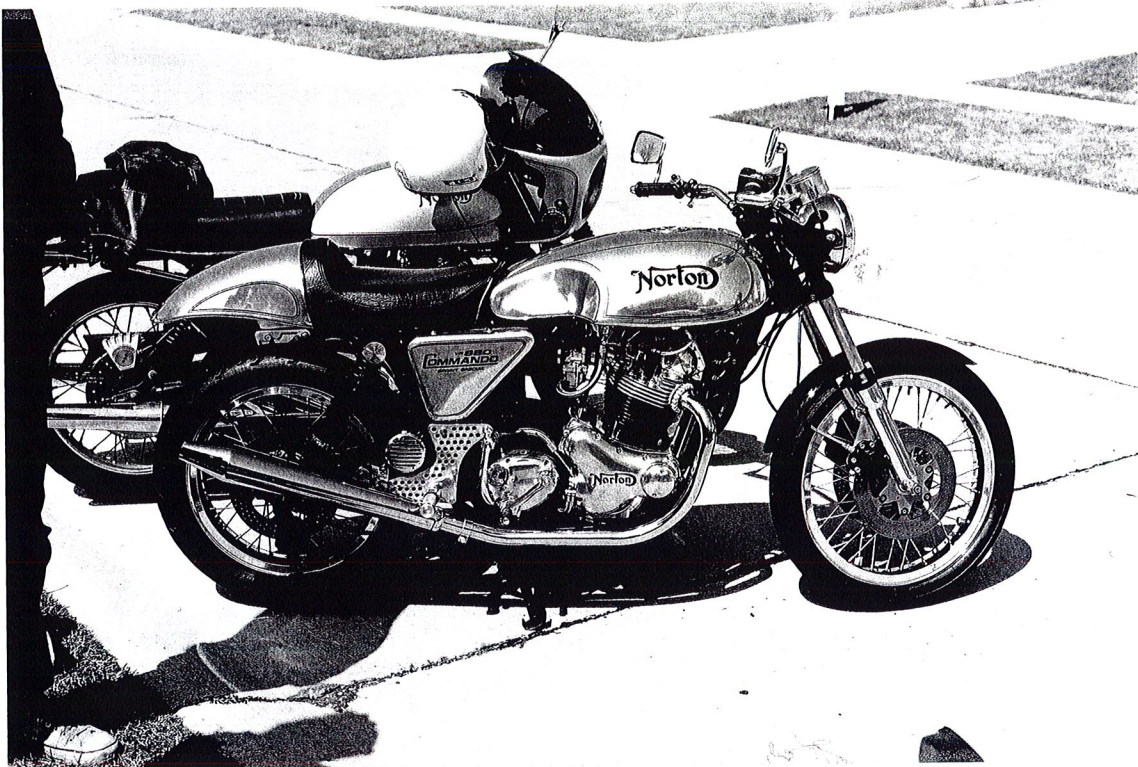
Roger Yount

It started out simple enough. I had just purchased a tired but unmolested '73 850 Roadster from a fellow in Granite City. The price was reasonable enough that I could rationalize spending two or three grand more (ha!) converting it into a café hot-rod. I will confess right up front that there's actually a serious dose of irony in this story. And here's another bit. Companies often pay me good money to write strategic business and marketing plans but for some reason I behave like a half-wit when it comes to planning motorcycle projects. I think that everything will be simpler, cheaper and take less time.

I fired up the internet and began to search the Brit bike sites and the variety used parts depots. The credit card bills piled up so quickly that I put a serious dent in my three-grand-budget (halhal!) before the project was even under wheels. The good news was that the quest for classic café bits put me in contact with a number of Norton "personalities" all over the US and Europe. One of

characters, a chap from Nyack, New York, sold me a set of clip-on bars and then mentioned that a friend of his was selling a Norton that sounded remarkably like the bike I wanted to build. The bike was a Kenny Dreer VR 880 Commando. The bike was being auctioned on eBay. By the time I logged on to the site, the auction had ended. For some reason that escapes me now, I sent the seller an email complimenting his bike and describing my project.

A couple weeks pass and I receive an email from a guy named Charlie Pettit saying that he is the owner of the Dreer bike and his deal from eBay fell through. He suggested, if I was interested, he would sell me the bike direct. This new wrinkle was definitely not in my restoration budget but he got my attention with a price that wasn't too far out of line from where I was headed with the current project. I said I'd think about it and get back to him.



I happened to travel to Portland that next week. So, I contacted Kenny Dreer and was invited to stop by his shop in Clackamas, Oregon while I was in town. I have to admit I didn't know much about Dreer except for his reputation as some mad Norton scientist. But not long after stepping into his shop and taking a tire kicking tour of a couple of his new Vintage Rebuilds, I began to get caught up in the Dreer magic. Imagine incorporating modern upgrades into a classic Norton but still allowing the essence of the old to survive. It's maybe not what Norton should have done, but it's what Norton could have done.

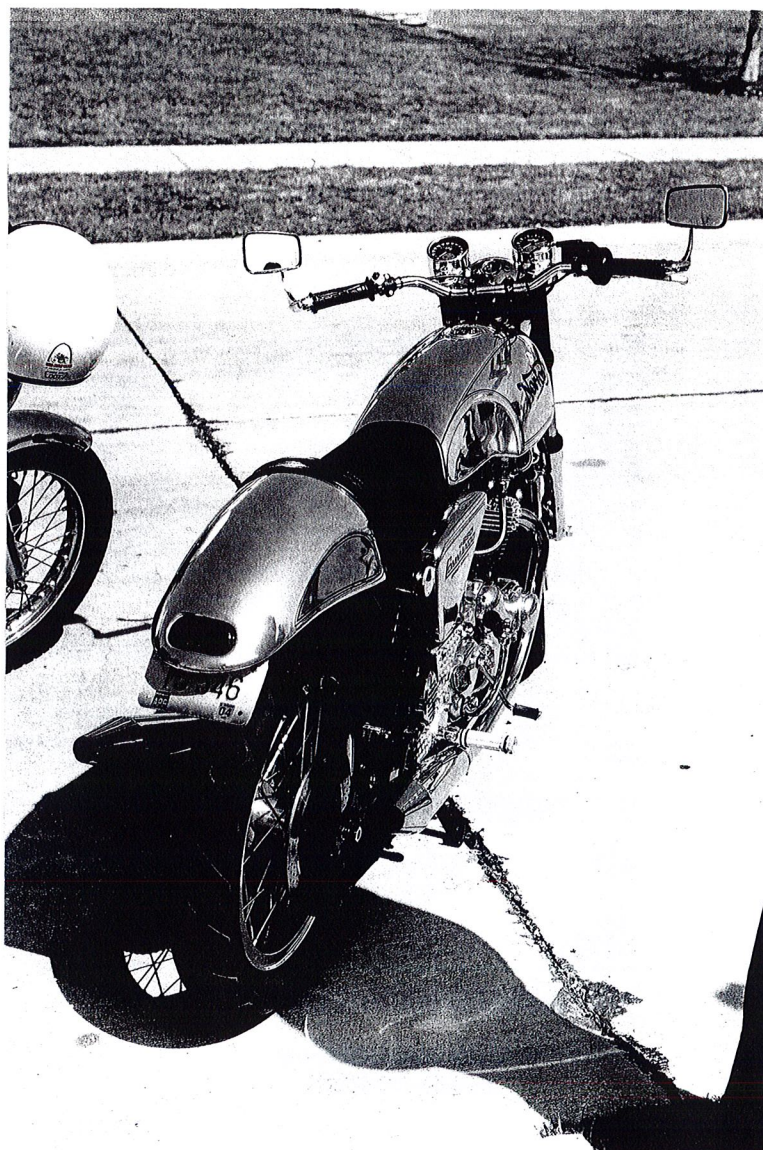
I was holding up pretty well until he whipped out a copy of the September 1999 Cycle World with a photo of LeAnn Tweeden on the cover and Charlie Pettit's Norton between her legs! Oh, behave! I told Dreer that I had just

corresponded with Pettit a week ago and was considering purchasing his Norton. Dreer launched into another 30-minute recount of the Cycle World Road Test and how he felt as nervous as a father at his daughter's first recital. He finished by encouraging me to buy that bike because it was the prototype of his modernized Norton Sprint Special. Or as he says, "What the new generation of Commandos would have been like had Norton not been run into the ground by England's nanny state business policies."

The rest of the story is just history. I returned to St. Louis, called Pettit and finalized the deal. The bike was shipped from Pennsylvania via Federal Allied. It's one of those bikes a fellow should put a climate controlled bubble and preserve. But it's so damn much fun to ride I can't leave it alone.

VR880 PERFORMANCE SPECS

AMAL Carburetors	34mm MKII
Cam Profile	5-6000 MK
Rear Wheel Horsepower	70 +/-
Dry Clutch	
Belt Drive Primary	



Which has a better view
from the back -

LeAnn ☐ choose
this bike ☐ one

Editor.

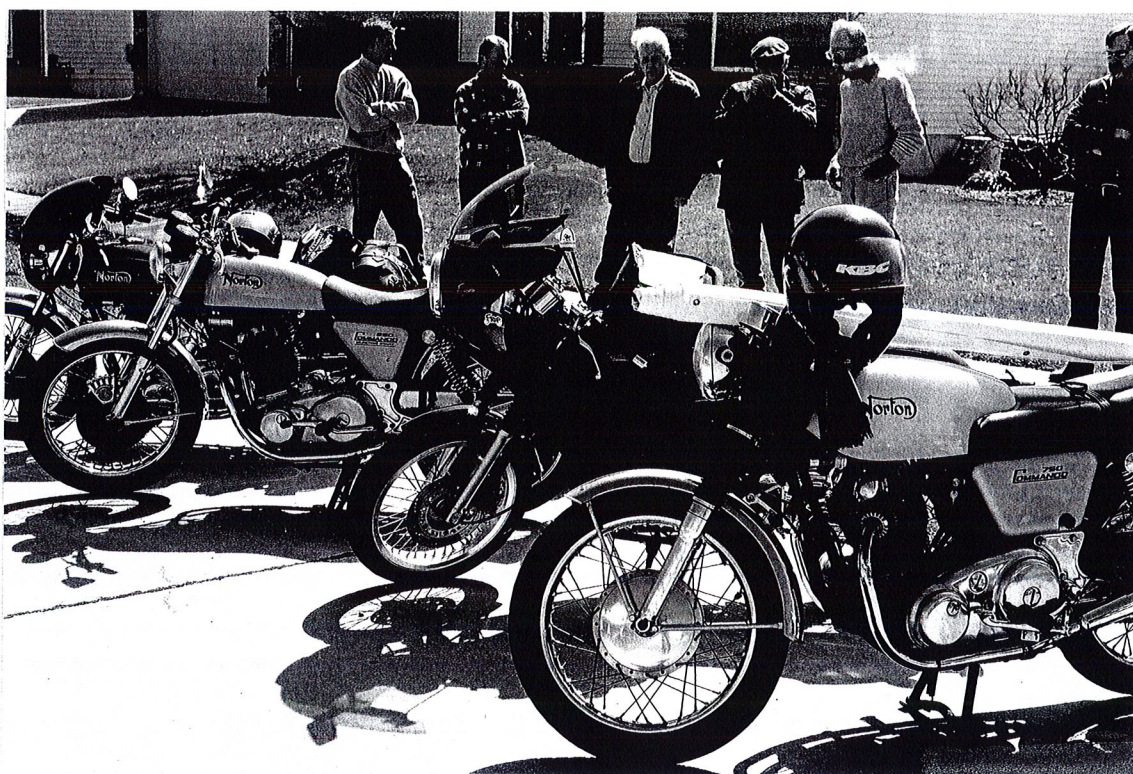
'47 ES2 Update

Marty Dupree

When we last left our hero....the fuel tank was at the metal wizard's workshop waiting (and waiting, nearly 6 months) for him to raise some deep dents and make it ready for the chrome plater. The day after "Nortapalooza" at Mike French's, I got the call I had awaited so long. It was ready!!

Like a lot of things in life, there was good news and bad news. The bad news was that the worst dent (about the size, depth and texture of the inside of half an English walnut shell) had split when he got it up to the proper contour. He then cut out an area about 2 inches square and fabricated a patch on the English wheel. After welding it in place it was sanded down almost to perfection. The good news? He only charged me \$25 for that. An extra \$40 covered the other dents he removed.

Last summer, I worked on a duplex where one tenant had a very trick Suzuki, 4 cylinder somethin' or 'nother street/drag bike. His brother has a motorcycle speed shop. Not only do they port and gas flow heads, they also prep things to be sent to a "dealers only" establishment in Tennessee to be triple plated. His opinion was that some spots on the tank are slightly depressed and will need to be leaded-in to get it perfect for chroming. As Mike French says, "The gas tank is the motorcycle's crowning glory". That is where the eye is drawn so it has to be done right. Since the oil tank will also be chromed, I want them both done by the same company. The quote has me saving my pennies, and \$100 dollar bills.



BIKES AT MIKE'S

April 13th Ride Report

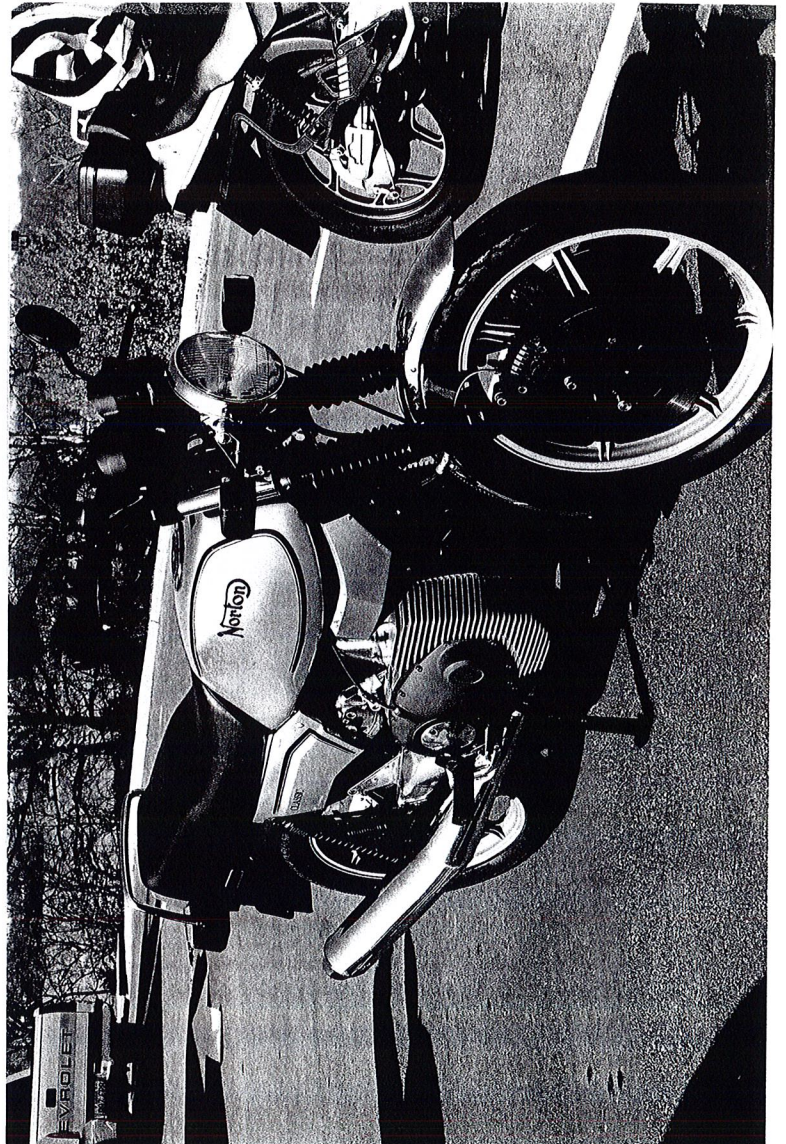
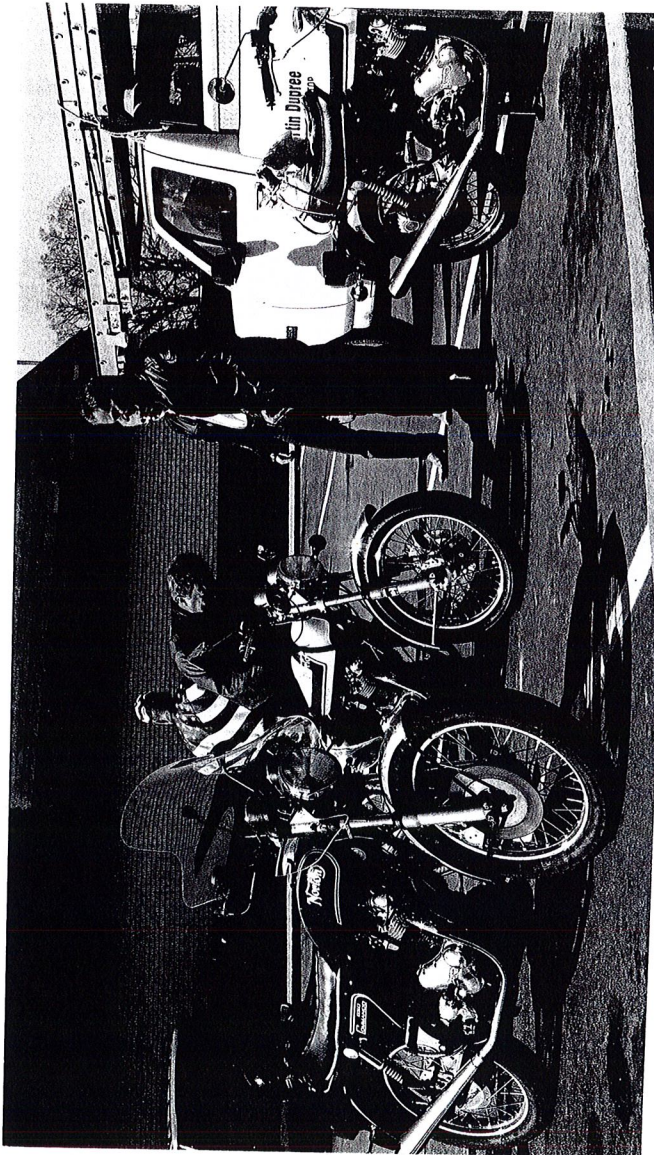
Tom Mitchell

Weather could not be improved upon for our eighteen bike outing. Most were Norton's and I believe most everyone enjoyed the ride. The Busch Wildlife area was not too crowded with cars that we were slowed much, nonetheless, our group kept getting strung out way too far. When we would regroup at a stop or stop sign, again we would be strung out in short order. I am sorry about this but all became forgotten as Merlin meandered at the end to his house where the ever patient Sue (Libby) was waiting for our group to show up.

As many of us know, Sue's culinary talents are very special and she, with Merlin, made us all very welcome and fed us, then fed us some more!! What a fine way to finish off a ride with food and drink at the Libby's on their lake as the late afternoon waned.

Thank you Sue and Merlin. May we talk to you about that ride in June.....

Some of the nine Commandos and, of course, the only rotary on the ride



The Fatback Report

Submitted by J. Jump

Oil Tank Isolastics

Early into my Fatback restoration efforts, I bought new mounts for my oil tank because the old ones had failed. I'm not sure where I bought them from but they were probably Taiwanese repros. When mounting the oil tank in the frame, I installed the mounts in their normal position, although they were under a slight bit of tension due to rubber spacer located on the bottom peg on the oil tank being too thick. When I came back the next day I noticed that both mounts had torn and separated into two pieces- totally unsat!

I remembered reading somewhere that a good substitute was used on Mazda fuel pumps, so I took a trip to a local Mazda dealership. The parts man was familiar with the item but didn't have any in stock, and oh, by the way, cost over \$9 a piece! Not such a good solution.

I then went by a local motorcycle dealer in St Ann who used to sell Nortons and still supplies some parts. They had new items that were identical to the replacements I purchased earlier. In fact, one of the two that were pulled from the shelf had already developed a tear that would lead to the identical failure I was trying to remedy. These parts were offered at over \$6 a pop! I was not satisfied. As I was riding home on my UGM (Universal German Motorcycle) I kept thinking I had seen rubber mounts similar to these in another application. The answer was right under my butt.

BMW "K" bikes use a rubber mount (similar to the Norton oil tank mount) to support the battery tray on top of the transmission. I went to

my local BMW motorcycle dealer and compared the battery tray mounts to the offending Norton part. The difference in mounting height was negligible (a hair shorter, I believe) and their studs were about 1/4" shorter, but their construction was much more substantial. The best part of all was that they were priced under \$2 each! I had found my replacement!

After installing a rubber grommet in the Norton's battery tray to hold the pin on the bottom of the oil tank, I offered the BMW rubber mounts to the frame. In my application I installed one small 1/4" flat washer as a shim between the BMW mount and the forward oil tank support to compensate for the difference in mounting height of the new part. Everything fit up perfectly! I'm sure that on some machines, manufacturing tolerances would have some affect on the thickness of the shim required. The Idea was to remove any tension on the mount. If too thick a shim is required, this might cause a problem with the length of the mounting stud on the BMW part. My experience is limited to this one application. One other suggestion; buy the nuts and wavy lock washers from the BMW dealer too. You will need the nuts since the threads on the studs are metric, and those funny lock washers are thin enough that they may compensate for stud length used up by the previously mentioned shim.

Six years and twenty thousand miles later & they are still working fine.

Tank Sealer

For those who missed it the first time, the product I used to seal my fiberglass tank is sold by Bill Hirsch Automotive. Recommended by Colorado Norton Works, it's called Alcohol-Proof Tank Sealer. It's been 9 months or so & it seems to be hanging in there for me-no problems. I'm pleased! www.hirschauto.com (800) 828-2061. Buy a quart-\$22.95 plus shipping.

Thoughts On A Norton Commando

Tom Mitchell

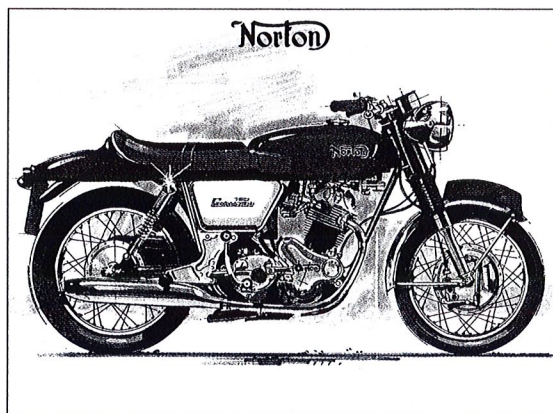
Recently, Kevin Cameron of Cycle World wrote in one of his technical articles (for the Triumph International Owners Club) that the venerable Commando head is still one of the (if not the) very best flowing two valve production head ever made. He is talking about how efficiently and effectively it uses fuel and generates power. Norton heads were so ahead of their time, with flat-top pistons, reduced inclined valve angle, partial squish combustion chamber and semi-down draught intake tract. With over 400 cc per piston swept area, using 32 mm diameter intake ports that are substantially longer than others, and with smallish intake and exhaust valves and definately "mild" lift and duration cam, the Norton head is truly amazing!

Sure, my hero, Doug Hele, as so often was the case, was involved with improving the Norton head I believe in the early 60's (or late 50's). Doug, as he so successfully did for Triumph in the middle 60's and then in the 70's took the excellent existing design and worked it to the extent that the Manx was still winning road races as a short stroke even at the very end. And very obviously, T.C. Christianson on his nitro-burning double-engined drag Norton beat all comers at many large event drag races in the mid seventies. He did this with only 1600 cc's. Some of the competition he trounced were two to three times that size! Amazing!

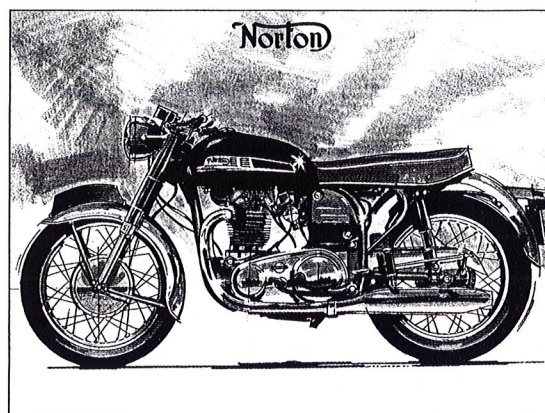
Norton's not only make great power very efficiently and without excessive heat loss, unlike the high domed piston, hemi-headed Triumph, they work especially well at lower revs developing great gobs of torque. I believe it is true for all of us Norton devotees; we all love the light weight and handling but foremost we love the instant throttle response of a good torque band. Norton's produce high torque through all of the engine's range.

Personally, I think today's manufacturers are missing the boat with everyone making a Harley clone with much torque, yes, but with excessive weight and poor and usually restrictive handling. For current production bikes, maybe the Moto Guzzi is close with its fine torque but has too much weight. Name me a production bike, mass-produced since the demise of Norton, which did what a Commando did with torque, handling (and low weight), None exist in the mass produced category once the Commando died. Sure, the Laverda does this and more. The Ducati works very well, but as our old friend and EMU member Don Fromm used to admit, a GT Ducati unless "breathed upon" could not keep pace with an average Commando and definitely not in a high gear roll on.

Norton Commando's, the marque for our club, are truly very special motorcycles. But you and I already know this.



750 COMMANDO



ATLAS

WANTED: Member Jack Geers is trying to breathe life into a long neglected Atlas. On different websites I've seen him posting needed items such as seat pan, inner primary cover, plus several other things. If you have any leads on Atlas parts, give Jack a call @ 314-831-2880.