

Gateway Norton Owners News #2

"To Promote the Use and Pride of Norton Motorcycle Ownership"

November 1999

Compiled by J. Jump

Editorial

It has been a challenge for me to visualize what the club's newsletter should look like. I decided that it should include some sort of editorial from the chairman that would address issues related to the club as an organization. I hope to have one included in each issue of the newsletter and invite members to submit their own points of view for inclusion in future editions.

Club Profile: This club, known as the Gateway Norton Owners Association, is a loose organization of Norton owners seeking comradery and support from other like minded, vintage bike owners. We first organized on June 27, 1999 in Mike French's basement following the Lollygag Ride. We had our first meeting on July 11, and a number of us attended the Norton National Rally in Buena Vista, VA, where we were recognized as a new chapter. We head into the new millenium as the newest Norton club in the country. Our members' rides consist mostly of Commandos, but a few other models, earlier and later, are starting to surface. Our roster presently stands at 25 people, but some of those folks have not responded to any of my attempts to contact them, so we are really around 15 strong. As with the INOA, I doubt if any of our members are less than 35 years old. Presently we have only one club officer (myself), and really don't have much of a plan for our future. To some members, that's good news, but it leaves me a bit uncomfortable.

During the meeting of July 11, members seemed unsure of what they wanted from a Norton Club. Most seemed hesitant to initiate any sort of action that may require personal obligations. One thing that seemed unanimous was the desire to get together and go for rides. We did have a ride on Oct 17 that was attended by 6 Norton riders, and the details of that ride are included elsewhere in this newsletter. So far that leaves plenty of room for more activities. I understand that we all have numerous responsibilities that eat away at our personal time, restricting access to riding, wrenching, drinking, and hanging out with our Moto Buds. Perhaps the answer is having more than one event quarterly, so that if you can't make one event, you could make the next.

As chairman, I feel a responsibility to investigate and promote other activities and programs to keep the club active and interesting. At the same time, I don't want to be a cruise ship director! I presume that each member has at least one good idea for an activity and I request that you step forward, present your idea, and consider your role in turning your idea into a reality. Sometime this winter I would like to schedule a meeting to plan activities for the coming year. All members will be notified by mail of the time and place of this meeting, and I hope to see a good turnout. If you can't make the planning meeting, please communicate your ideas for next year's activities to me, or someone else you know will be attending, so it can be tabled.

I feel that growth is essential to keeping the club interesting. I would like to identify every Norton in the area and ask its owner to join our organization. I might be able to do this through a search of Mo. Dept. of Revenue records-this is something I will investigate. In the meantime, if you know of anybody with a Norton, solicit them to join our club. Along with growth

comes more work, and at some point it will become more than I can handle by myself. Please be aware of this and consider accepting an active role in the club when requested. The following are a couple of ideas that have been rolling around in my head:

A Club Campout/Overnight Ride

Tech Sessions (Mike's idea) where we get our bikes together and go through a maintenance action.

A club Logo-To be placed on T-shirts/hats (in work)

Participation in local vintage car/sports car shows

Research on aftermarket parts & rebuilding processes

Pooling of Tech Info-A listing of technical resources, a list of which members have what.

Pooling of Special Tools- same as above, except hardware.

These are just some ideas that may be good or bad, you tell me. If something grabs you, take it and run with it.

One last item: I would like to request that membership dues (\$5) are forwarded to me by Dec. 31. After that date if I haven't received your dues I will discontinue mailings to you. It isn't fair that only a few should be responsible for Club expenses.

Rumor Control

Back in August, **Joe Jump** thought he seized his bike while romping on it hard entering the highway. Inspection after disassembly revealed no evidence of a seizure, so back together it went with new rings, valves, & guides. Fourteen hundred plus miles later all seems well.

Charlie Hillyer found a very early Fastback, which he has already started working on restoring. Turns out it still had a "Widow Maker" frame and an exploded gearbox. Last I heard he had completed the frame mod & had it powder coated, but he is still in need of some gears. If anyone can help him out, give him a call at (573) 885-**Tom Mitchell** has a new ride; an 850 E start Roadster having the JPN white with red & blue paint scheme. Last August he dragged it out of storage where it has sat dormant for many years. After a quick carb cleaning, and a change of oil, battery, and plugs, it started in one kick! Since then he's been hard at it changing other fluids, rebuilding hydraulics, and cleaning up the bright work. Keep up the good work, Tom!

John Wuebbeling has had his share of troubles with his High Rider-turned-Roadster this year. After stripping out the threads in an exhaust port, one of his lifters decided to spit off its stellite shoe, laying waste to the cam at the same time. He sent the head to Baxter, and had Mike split the crankcase to replace the cam. Last I heard he has it running good now & is happy how it all turned out. Rumor has it though that he's a bit timid about bringing it out, having only been seen riding a newly acquired Italian V twin with a Windjammer??!! Maybe it's the weather! ☺

Mike French and **Gary Creech** made a Speed run to the Matchless Owners Club Rally in September, which was held in the mountains of (North?) Carolina. Haven't heard much about it except that it was low key and relaxing.

FIRST ANNUAL "SNORTIN' THROUGHT THE AUTUMN" RIDE & PICNIC

Many were skeptical as to whether we could pull this off so late in the season, and by the weather forecast, it didn't look too promising. But as the morning of October 17 developed into a beautiful day for a ride, eleven hearty souls assembled at Mike French's house to embark on a roll through the countryside.

The original plan was to take the Golden Eagle Ferry across the Mississippi, drive around in Calhoun County, then end up at Marty DuPree's for some burgers and a meeting. As the date approached, popular opinion changed the agenda to a ride down to Columbia IL airport to participate in the "Fly In" and vintage bike show, which takes place annually. But alas, the Columbia Airport event was cancelled at the last minute due to high winds, Marty had already changed his plans for that day, and I was caught being unprepared for an official meeting. It was decided that we proceed with our ride to Calhoun County and stop somewhere along our route for lunch.

The Nortons that assembled at Mike's were ridden by Bill Bluemel, Gary Creech, Mike French, Bill Henderson, Mel Heffron, & Joe Jump. In addition, Merlin Libby (Vincent) and two of Bill Bluemel's co-workers (other brands) accompanied us. My apologies to Marty DuPree, who came in to Mike's from points west to participate in a meeting, which really didn't happen. We were all treated to a view of Marty's ES-2 under construction in Mike's basement. But soon we tired of burning daylight, so we saddled up and headed for Route B & the Golden Eagle Ferry.

Once across the river we made our way northward against a brutal head wind. Soon we found ourselves in Hardin IL, where we stopped for lunch. Afterwards some of our party decided to make their way home, while Bill H, Gary, Tom, Merlin, and myself continued north to cross back over the river at Louisiana MO. After crossing the river and a fuel stop, we rolled southward to Clarksville, where we turned on to Rte W. That's when we started to have some fun.

Now that the wind was at our back, it wasn't such a struggle to hang onto the bars at speeds above 60 mph. And Rte W turned out to be a great ride. A two-lane blacktop twisting through gently rolling hills, the drive was, shall I say "Spirited"? Ol' Bill really surprised me at how comfortable he seemed while heeling over his 850 E start Roadster for one sweeper after another. His bike was really running and looking good that day. After 30/40 miles of twisting back & forth, we ended up on rte 47 just east of Troy. The sun was getting low on the horizon, so we opted to jump on 61 southbound. Merlin soon turned off (guess he lives out that way), and Bill turned off onto P eastbound, while Tom, Gary, and I continued southward. Tom took 70 east at Wentzville, while Gary & stuck to 40 back into St. Louis County. I walked into my kitchen at 5:05 PM, after riding approx. 160 miles that day.

All in all it was a good day for a ride on a Norton, and I would deem it a success for a first official ride for the Club. Let's do it again soon!

Club Logo

Mike French has provided me with some artwork, depicting a Norton Model 7 (Norton's first Twin), and a globe surrounded by the words "World's Best Roadholder". I am going to present this artwork to a High School student I know, who is talented at the graphic arts, and hopefully he can use it to develop a couple of designs for a club logo. I would like to have more than one design to present to the membership, so if anyone knows a talent, please let me know. I plan on having designs available at the Planning Meeting so that a selection can be made at that time.

Treasury Report

One of my Pet Peeves with the INOA is they keep us in the dark about how they spend all of the club dues. It was my complaints to Suzi Greenway that resulted in the treasurer's report in Norton News #114. Although much less glamorous, here is our report:

Money taken in (dues)	\$50.00	
Money Spent (Envelopes, stamps, post cards)	<u>\$ 16.11</u>	
Balance (11/02/99)	\$33.89	<u>WE FAT!!!</u>

Many thanks to those who have cheerfully contributed their dues without whining!

Norton Day

One Saturday last August, Kurt Baue hosted what has since come to be known as a Norton Day, or "Bring Out Your Dead Day". I like to describe it as a gathering of club members and their bikes dedicated to repair, maintenance, inspection, and criticism of each other's rides. Throw in copious amounts of carbonated malt beverages, music, and some burgers on the grill, and you have the makings of a fun party. At Kurt's, we fired up an 850 that had been dormant for years, diagnosed and repaired poorly running 850 with a noisy primary, and tried to isolate a pissin' tach drive on another 850 (hmmmm...., what's going on with all these 850s?). It really was a good time, and we are looking for volunteers to host another Norton Day/BOYD Day. If interested, please volunteer.

This Issue's History Lesson

For any who might be wondering why Harley guys don't wave back at us Brit Bike Riders, here it is- and by the way, they all wave back at me, just the one finger of course...

Before the Battle of Agincourt in 1415, the French, anticipating victory over the English, proposed to cut off the middle finger of all captured English soldiers. Without the middle finger, it would be impossible to draw the renowned English longbow and therefore be incapable of fighting in the future.

This famous weapon was made of the native English Yew tree, and the act of drawing the longbow was known as "plucking the yew." Much to the bewilderment of the French, the English won a major upset and began mocking the French by waving their middle fingers at the defeated French saying, "See, we can still pluck yew! PLUCK YEW!"

Over the years, some 'folk etymologies' have grown up around this symbolic gesture. Since 'pluck yew' is rather difficult to say (like "pleasant mother pheasant plucker", which is who you had to go to for the feathers used on the arrows for the longbow), the difficult consonant cluster at the beginning has gradually changed to a labiodental fricative 'F', and thus the words often used in conjunction with the one-finger-salute are mistakenly thought to have something to do with an intimate encounter.

It is also because of the pheasant feathers on the arrows that the symbolic gesture is known as "giving the bird".

(taken from Brit Iron-author unknown)

Parts is Parts (or are they?)

Ever wonder what you are getting when you buy parts for your bike? Sometimes it's hard to tell. It has always been hard for me to swallow the dealer prices on OEM parts, some of which aren't worth their weight in defecant. There are lots of "pattern parts" available for the Norton, but who knows how good they are? Some dealers sell the pattern parts as OEM! So what's what? Recently I took the head off of the Fatback to get a look (Why? long story) and found I needed to replace the valves & guides, and the rings too for good measure. Seems that every engine I touch needs the valves & guides replaced!!! All of the careful shopping around I did for parts 6000 miles earlier was for naught. When I'm asked what kind of valves/guides I installed I can't say I know. I started to do some research this time so maybe I won't make the same mistake again.

A brand name that may be familiar is Black Diamond valves. Actually they are manufactured by a company known as Kibblewhite Precision Machining Inc., located near San Francisco. Their niche market is replacement valves, guides, springs, etc., for some rather obscure machines. Besides stuff for Harleys, they have parts for Nortons, Triumphs, BSAs, Moto Guzzis, & Ducatis. They also will do custom stuff. Their sales info says, *"Black Diamond Valves are stainless steel, stellite tipped, and impregnated by a special German process .002" deep and (having a) .0002" surface buildup to improve wear properties and reduce friction. This process provides resistance to corrosion and wear superior to that developed by hard chromium and electrolysis nickel plating. These valves are light and the profiles provide excellent flow characteristics."* Sounds pretty good to me! They have been recommended by numerous INOA types like T.C Christenson, Carl Hokanson, and Bob Goodpaster, all luminaries in their own right. More good news- they cost \$15.51 each direct from the company, which is a good price even for parts of unknown origin. I don't think you could go wrong here-good dope!

This leads us to guides. OEM guides are cast iron, and supposed to give good service. My experience has been they are either worn out, or they break during installation. I had a set in the Fatback for the first 3000 miles and it smoked like a mosquito truck. The problem turned out to be caused by the guy who did the head - he did not fit oversize guides when they were required. I've been told that they fracture easily during installation with too hard of a hit from the hammer (had one of those too)! Last time I bought some "silicon bronze" guides known as "PM" (Precision Machine?). I was under the impression that they were made from a material known as AMPCO-45 a nickel-aluminum-bronze alloy that is supposed to be ideal for valve guides because they are tougher than cast iron and they suck the heat out of the valve stem better, transferring it to the head. I thought they were made by the same company as the Black Diamonds (Kibblewhite Precision Manufacturing) - they sell an AMPCO-45 guide for Nortons. I bought them from a guy in Florida- that's really all I know. Two other brands of silicon bronze guides have been mentioned; Rowe, and Rawls. I can't say I have any experience with either one. This time I put in Black Diamond Valves with the Ampco 45 guides, both manufactured by Kibblewhite. The guides looked suspiciously like the ones I took out! At least this time I know what I'm putting in. How good they work, only time will tell.

Being the cheapskate that I am, I opted for a set of Hastings rings to replace the Hepolite OEM ones. These rings are American made from cast iron where as the Heps use a chrome top ring. I've been told cast rings won't last as long, but should reduce the amount of wear done to the cylinder. At \$27 a set they were about half the price of the Heps. Another option I investigated was a brand called Total Seal. These folks have been in business for over 30 years, selling what's known as a "Gapless Ring" installed in the second groove. Essentially it is a 2-piece ring, one piece being a thin rail, installed in the piston groove with the end gaps of the two rings staggered. The advantages are less friction (less force from the thinner rings), less blowby,

and cooler oil temps. They run about the same as the Heps (\$50-\$55/set). The lower oil temp sounds like it might be worth checking out! Oh, what I'd give for an R & D budget!!!

Installation of these parts is also an opinionated topic of discussion. I don't claim to be an expert, but I have talked to a bunch of folks and some of what they say is common, and makes sense. Certainly there are levels of detail that one could strive towards, and after a point, a lot of effort will yield a marginal improvement in performance, whether that be in the form of power output or reliability. If you only ride your bike enough to require one oil change a year, you may not need to even worry. But since this is a story about parts, I'll save the info on installation for another installment. In fact, I would like to request from the membership any information they would like to share with us on this or any other technical subject.

<http://www.blackdiamondvalves.com> 800-776-1088

<http://www.hastingsmanufacturing.com>

Total Seal Distribution Center

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Upcoming Events

EMU Christmas Party- sometime in December; somewhere in Illinois

MCRA Christmas Party-December 4th @ Gateway Intl Raceway. Call Matt Higgins for reservation (314) 832-1454. Free, but please bring canned goods for those less fortunate.

Carl Donnelson's Christmas Party- some Sat. in December; might be an opportunity for a club ride to gain exposure?

Gateway Norton Owners Planning Meeting- Jan 2000 (Specific date and location to be announced) To plan club activities for the year 2000

Flea Market A free service to members in good standing, or to those who have a bunch of good stuff we all want! Send me a note and I'll put it in here for as long as you want. Give your club mates first stab at your stash!

For Sale: A bunch of '71 BSA Firebird Scrambler bits left over from a chop. I know you're tired of seeing this same add, but somebody's got to want this junk-I sure don't! Front wheel complete with TLS brake, rear WM-3x18 Jones rim, rear fender, and some other bits. Cheap, or trade for Norton or Guzzi junk? Joe Jump (314) 909-0712.