

FISH- TAIL WEST

**Velocette
Owners
Club of
North
America
News-
letter**

**October &
November
2022
no.252**



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elected July 2022

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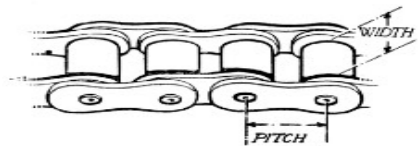
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Club dues \$35 a year. Membership runs from January thru December. U.S. funds only.

Front & Back Covers: Photos from the 2022 VOCNA Rally by Adam Cecchini.



**Submissions for
Fishtail West due
last day of ODD Numbered Months.**
Next Deadline: Nov 30, 2022

The views, opinions and technical tips expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the editor or of any of the other VOCNA officers.

This newsletter often features items from older motorcycle magazines, including photographs, drawings, cartoons etc. Where possible I acknowledge their source. Often these items are often from "MotorCycle" and "MotorCycling", and the current copyright holders are Mortons Motor Cycle Media. I thank them for their use.



Cory Padula, president in 2018.

Hi Everyone.

I hope everyone had a great summer riding their (t)rusty steeds. Vivian and I did some amazing and eventful rides this year. I won't bore you with the details but let's just say traveling through Yellowstone on June 13 with torrential rain and temperatures hovering around 33-34F made for a very memorable day. Even more memorable when we saw the news of the destruction we managed to avoid.

So everyone, mark your calendars, the date has been set for the second week of June. Sunday June 11th to Saturday June 17th. Our base will be in Courtney, BC. Hotel details and such are still in the preliminary stages. I hope to have things firmed up by the next Fishtail West issue.

So without further ado I am presenting the first of several parts of my recount of the 1983 VOCNA Rally. Enjoy. And if any of the members that survived the event wish to comment or add to my recollection, please do. Also, if you happen to have old photos, I have a special scanner that will convert old photos and slides to digital files with high resolution. I would like to put on a slide show at the event so if you wouldn't mind sending me some photos or digital files that would be great.
Cheers, Cory

Hello to the Velocette club.

My wife and I have not put on the Southern California Velocette Christmas Party since 2017. After years of COVID hell and some of our members passing, we think it may be time to do it again. So we need to see if there is enough interest from the SoCal Velo members to do it. **IF YOU CAN MAKE IT, PLEASE CALL OR EMAIL US NOW!** If we get enough people wanting to come, we will do it and let you know.

Southern California Velocette Christmas Party.

Tentative date is Saturday December 10th 2022 from 12:00PM until ?

Bruce & Remeny Farren

18860 Roberts Road, Riverside CA 92508

farrenb@att.net

951-780-5874

If there is enough interest we will let you know to come. If not enough interest, then it's not happening and we will also let you know. So don't show up unless you hear from us. Providing your phone number with your email would be helpful.

You don't need to bring anything. But if you want to that is great!

22nd Annual
San Francisco 49 Mile Ride

Sunday 30 October 2022



Ride is FREE
All old bikes welcome
(pre-1975 if possible)

Meet at Red's Java Hut
Pier #30 on Embarcadero
Ride leaves at 9:30 am



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NORTHERN CALIFORNIA ALL-BRITISH RIDE

BRITISH BIKES ONLY

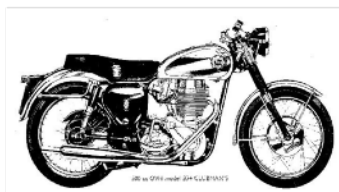
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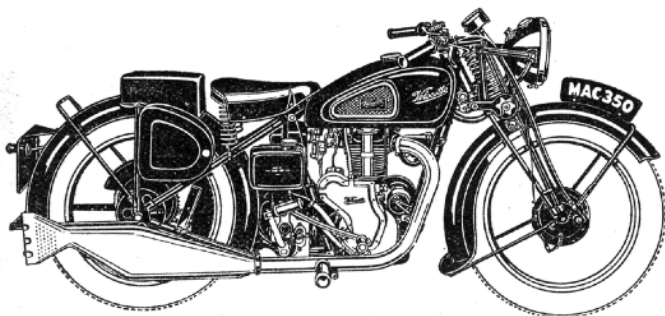
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2022

Ride departs 10:00 AM – 940 Seventh Street, Novato

DO NOT PARK TRUCKS OR TRAILERS IN THE GYMNASIUMS CENTER PARKING LOT Bikes only at the curb – trucks/trailers use nearby streets or the back lot at the shopping center across the street



Info: Bill Whalen, 707-837-0424 or David James 415-760-6392 and
info@bsaocnc.org



WANTED; Looking for a complete or nearly so engine for an LE, rebuildable condition or better if possible. A complete LE bike might be considered running or not. Also looking for a rigid frame for MAC for a special project. Frame not need to be perfect.

Neil Olson 406 360 3048 or mortngina@gmail.com



**1983 VOCNA Rally Part 1 - The Calm Before The Storm.
Cory Padula**

So 39 years years ago I can up with a plan, a very devious plan. I was going to put on a Velo rally to beat all Velo rallies. It wasn't going to be a weekend meet greet, drink beer and kick tires, it was going to be a ride. Not a ride around the block but a weeklong ride for real riders, Velocette riders. How hard could it be, any idiot could organize it. Well I found out it takes one with exceptional idiot qualities, me.

A date was set, a route was planned. Hey how hard could it be? Ride the route first to check out the landscape and the facilities? Hell no. Why do that, it was going to be a piece of cake. So with date was set, route picked and all I had to do was sit back and wait for the special day when the Velos arrived.

The first thing I had on the agenda was for those that came a day early was to head to the local racetrack, Westwood. There was a Classic racing event that weekend. I arranged for us to have a Velo display in the paddock. And just to spice things up, I decided to pull my old Velo race bike out and enter it in the race. Unfortunately I hadn't raced in over a year so I had to qualify for a posi-



tion on the starting grid of the big classic race. There was everything, BSA's including several Goldstars, Ducatis, Triumphs, Matchless' and AJSs including a 7R, Nortons, including a couple of Manxs', and other interesting makes. Although I had to qualify in the rain I still managed to place second fastest in qualifying. This placed me at the very back of the starting grid just ahead of Dave Wildman on his factory Manx Norton that brought him 7 silver medals at the Isle of Man. I knew the Velo was pretty quick but I had never gone up against Dave on the Manx. He was the man to beat as I used to race against him in sidecar. In sidecar he was unbeatable. In fact he was so good that the American sidecar champs used to come up from Seattle and race him in their Yamaha factory sponsored rig. They had the edge in power versus his Triumph Trident powered rig but he just annihilated them in the corners. Here is a photo of Olav talking to Dave Wildman at the track.

Next thing you know the big race is about to start and I jump on my Mick Grant Velo race bike. The flag drops and the bikes are flagged off based on their lap times. Being at the very back with Dave I had to wait like what seemed an eternity. We get the flag and off we go. Next thing I remember is hitting turn one and a big jam of bikes. I was weaving and dodging past them. They were going so slow that I thought the race had been black flagged. I manoeuvred past what seemed like 20 bikes and a few more in turn 2 and then by turn 3 there was no one in front. In my mind I still think the race is black flagged but I figured I have to make it back to the starting grid anyway so I just continue on. I come out of turn 3 and start down the back straight when about one third of the way down the straight I hear a bike on my right. Sure enough it was Dave. Oh crap. I knew this was a full on race because Dave who always wore an open face helmet had his jaw stuck forward. This was a sign that he

was determined to win. I hadn't prepped the bike so my gearing was too short. I was revving at 7,000 rpm as Dave slowly passes me. As he passes me I upped the revs to 7,500 knowing the engine was once capable of those revs but it had at least 3 years racing on it without a tear down so I was pushing my luck. With engine screaming away I managed to keep Dave in sight losing about 10 bike lengths by the end of the back straight. Dave started braking for the hairpin and I came in hard. By the time he hit the apex of the hairpin I was on his outside. I heard him revving up at the apex and I just let her rip. I took off like a scared rabbit through the esses and onto the front straight. I had no idea where Dave was but apparently he was about 3 to 4 seconds behind by the front straight.

As I was going down the straight I heard this metallic sound from below. It was getting louder by the time I was almost to turn one. I knew this wasn't good so I pulled off. It seemed like a long-time before Dave went by. The rest of the pack was miles back. So I DNFed. Dang. Many wondered what happened to me because turn one terrain made it impossible to see that area.

Although I didn't finish I was impressed on how fast the bike was, especially against somebody like Dave on a well tuned Manx. Once I got the bike back to the pits Dave came by and said, that he was impressed on how fast the bike was and did I want to sell it. It made me feel good but no I didn't sell it. But even better was that one of the bikes in the race was bit of a rival in the local Classic bike club. He would always go on that his Goldstar would eat any Velo. After lap one he was 20 seconds behind. It pretty much shut him down from that time on.

Off we went back to Padula Central to prepare for our leisurely excursion around BC.

All in all it was a good day, good weather, good fun and good friends.

Next Fishtail for my further account of the adventures of The Velocetters.





Hall Green's finest still going strong at the Auburn Rally 2017 © JP Default

Change is the only constant

By JP Default

As time rolls on, the inevitability of age takes its toll on the human body. Wear and tear hits us all harder than it will a motorcycle. We all know, you can always repair, modify or restore a motorcycle and keep it going. Sentient beings on the other hand face the aging process. There's currently only so much we can do to slow it down.

The death of the social club

“These organizations are important to American democracy because they are democratic in their internal governance. They are local, but are also federated: they brought America together. They were once gender and race segregated as a whole (not anymore), but they went across class, creating cross-class solidarity.” Peter Levine, Political Science Professor, Tufts.

When Jeff Scott invited me to the Velo rally back in 2016, he knew that I would find something interesting in it. Velo or no Velo, everyone is welcome. This is one of the best policies a club could hope for. With growth comes awareness. With knowledge comes experience. All of these are abundant in this club. Pick any field: from motorcycles to coffee, bike maintenance, travel, wine, life experiences, technology, cost of living, culture, relationships, parenting, global issues, history, art, architecture, and even fashion!

I’ve had the privilege of conversations with many members in all these realms and more. We have divided opinions on politics and religion. Imagine that? And yet here we are, united in our mission statement “Dedicated to the preservation and enjoyment of Velocette motorcycles.” It’s quite something. It’s also rare. We are more inclusive than we realize. We are richer than we know.

This newsletter that you’re holding carries our voices. Our knowledge, our experiences, our photos, and our friends. The hub of it all is Velocette. Your editor, Lanora Cox painstakingly curates, edits, and crafts this bimonthly publication on her own time, outside of a full-time job. It comes through the mail and we all look forward to the physical experience of opening it and devouring it. While she does this FOR FREE, it costs the club money. Our treasurer John Stanley tracks escalating costs, from Fishtail West (FTW), the website, and various bits and pieces. He reminds us when we are skating a fine line. But we are online (www.velocette.org) and visible to those that know. But that’s not enough. All of us need to do our bit and bring new members to the club. We have numerous assets that make this club unique and special: events, knowledge, and more Velocette projects that are in need of revival with existing or new custodians. The Melo Velo ride has been added to the official calendar. Next year’s 1000-mile rally is the 40th anniversary. VOCNA members are planning local rides focused on Velocette. We are also fortunate that our new chairman has high visibility in the motorcycle community at large, both on and offline, particularly in the classic, vintage, and veteran motorcycle world. All of these assets should be a step forward in the evolution and continued growth of the club. So let’s use them!

One of the unquantifiable notions of this motorcycle club is that some members, who were around at its inception, are still kicking and riding their Velos late into their 70s, and well into their 80s. As a Velo rookie, this is inspiring and very unique. Through adversity, injury, and natural bodily decline the community of this motorcycle club is evolving in many ways. It’s still here. For now.

If we don’t all spread the word, grow the community, and poke our heads out of the echo chamber, this club will fade into history, much like Hall Green. JP Default

John L. Prideaux

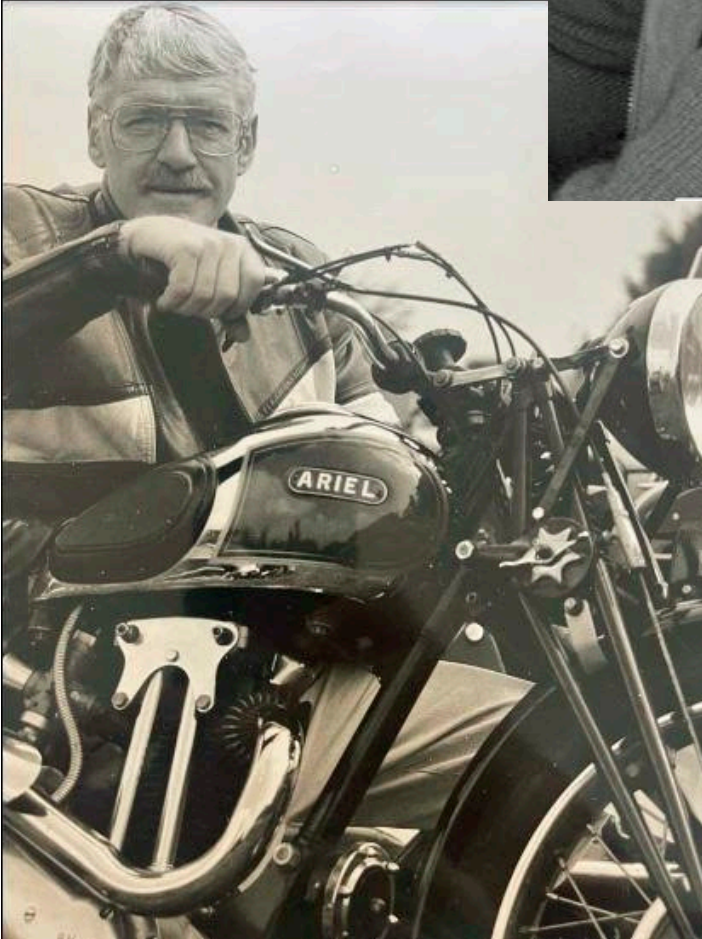
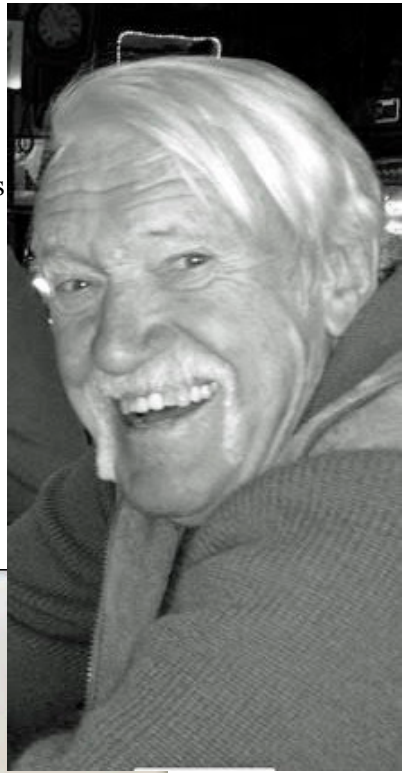
J.P. as he was known to members of VOCNA, has left this world and is at peace. Martin Prideaux, the son of J.P. announced this news, earlier in September.

A longtime member of this club, J.P.'s name has graced many pages of this newsletter, usually with the phrase, "he blew by me at speed on his 250 Royal Enfield Continental GT."

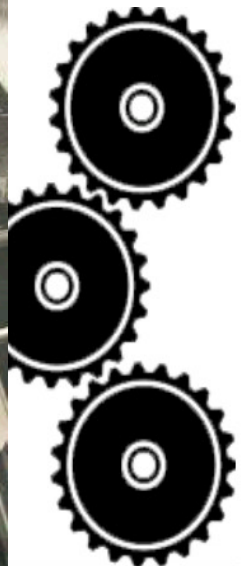
J.P. was a regular on the Mellow Velo ride. His wife Christine drove a chase truck sometimes, and he even showed up last year at the Lake Casitas campsite.

J.P. had an infectious laugh and love of life. He brought joy to any group.

He will be missed.



Condolences to his family and especially Marty who shared these photos of his dad.



Queen Elizabeth **by Jack Sanders**

Queen Elizabeth! Her name alone says volumes to millions! She is, she was, indisputably the greatest woman and maybe the most iconic person in my lifetime. A woman, a wife, a mother, the Queen of England, and ultimately the most universally loved person on the planet Earth !

I fell in love with her when I was twelve years old! I stood on the balcony of my father's Canal Zone Customs and Immigration office and watched her drive by in an open car, seated beside Panamanian President Jose Ramon Guizado. She was the dream come true of a boy that meets a beautiful Princess or even better, a boy that meets Britain's twenty-six year old, young, beautiful, newly coronated queen. It was a moment in time that I will never forget! In my twelve year old mind it didn't get better than the Queen of England and Queen Elizabeth! At age eighty-one, she remains the same !



I was a third generation American Panama Canal Zone boy, born in 1941, just months before the bombing of Pearl Harbor and America's entry into the war. After the war's end in 1945 when I was old enough to begin comprehending adult chatter, I was continuously exposed to the events of the war. Clear to me even then, was Britain's valor against the odds of defeat! The British were clearly admirable people. My family held Britain, the British people, and the Royal Family in very high regard! They believed that no one had fought the Nazi tyranny longer and harder than the British. With Europe in Nazi hands and their backs against the sea, the British successfully repelled Hitler's almost eminent invasion. The British are a proud people, and for good reason! Princess Elizabeth, soon to become Queen Elizabeth was no exception and much more than anyone ever imagined. She is an example to be revered! She is a credit to Britain and she is a credit to humanity.

On September 08, 2022 I awoke to the news that Queen Elizabeth had passed away! I was stunned! I knew that she was ninety-six years old and that the end had to be near but nevertheless the news was shattering! Queen Elizabeth, "my queen", "our queen", "Britain's queen", "the worlds queen", God's gift to us all, was gone!

Thank you Queen Elizabeth and may God be with you .

Dear Kammi

I'm really worried about being a newbi Moto rider. I've done some short trips and commuting on my bike and everywhere I look it seems all the other riders have way more experience than I

do. I have made my gear look used and put old bags on my bike it still looks like I don't know what I'm doing. How can I get street cred? T

Newbi - The only answer is to ride. Ride, ride, ride. May I say it again, ride. Kami



Above: There are very few Velos here in Ontario, but one of the stalwart Velo guys (along with Gary), is Rob Hunt, pictured here with his Venom and mine from breakfast at Campbellville a few weeks ago. Mirek Sharp

Eastern News
by Andrew Harris

Greetings from the East, where the midnight oil has been burning in the workshop as I change the footrest rubbers.....Well maybe not midnight but it was about time, the old ones look as if they have been in place since that Scotsman discovered how to vulcanize rubber.

Had to change a sparkplug the other day on the way home. Unfortunately the plug gave up on one of the hottest days of the year. That and the 4 ¼ gallon tank ensured some toasted fingers before the job was complete. Happily I now have some non-resistor NGK plugs, I suspect they are sourced out of the UK.

The vintage group finally had a tour of the garden filled with replica full-size aircraft made from scrap. There is a Sopwith Camel, Fokker triplane, Spitfire, Hurricane, ME109 on one side. On the other a DH Mosquito and a Mustang. As if that wasn't enough the owner has also made a U-boat conning tower to go in the pond and the front end of a steam locomotive emerges from trees. All made from scrap but very convincing. It's good to have a hobby.....(!)

Back when I converted the Velo to 12V I installed a Cibie headlight. At the time this was one of the best available and was standard fitting on Volkswagens and other cars. Fast forward to today and the P45T 40/45W bulbs used are no longer available from my local automotive shop. Amazon lists a Hella bulb for \$12 but by accident I found the P45T round base lamp is a standard for ATV headlamps. Not only that but the ATV shop has a 60/60W version for \$2.99. (My Prestolite dynamo is OK with the 60W lamp.)

There is also a halogen version (P45T H4) but I wondered about the halogen and vibration. Is anyone out there using a halogen headlamp bulb on the Velo?

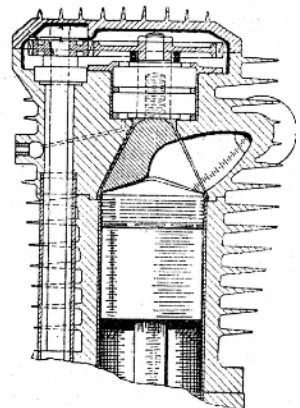
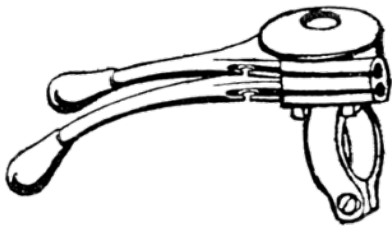
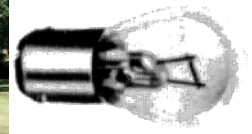
So next year is 40 years since the submarine rally. Can it really be that long? I suppose so as I have grey hair and grandchildren to prove it. Tempus Fugit when you're having fun....

Still it was a lot of fun, despite the rain, and the changes of plan – “can't go that way today, Trans-Canada highway blocked by a mudslide.” How many of us thought it would be such an enduring event? ride safely and stay healthy, Andrew



*That's right! 300,000 miles!
Congratulations Andrew!*

Vintage Motorcycle Group visits a garden filled with replica full-size aircraft made from scrap. photos by Andrew Harris





Member Dave Currier, won the 2021 Cannonball on his 1911 HD ...and rode his Velo in the Cross Country chase in Sept. 2022



Dave Currier wrote: I won class 1 and was runner up to the overall winner by 1 1/2 points short. Great ride on old Route 66. Saw all that it has to see. Even got a tour of Jay Leno's car/motorcycle collection. Jay is a awesome down to earth guy!

Now moving onto the 2023 Cannonball race. I will be defending my race plate #1. I will be riding my 1911 Harley Single again. So the prep work begins.

I enjoy my 1930 KSS Velocette!

Congratulations to Dave and good luck for 2023!





The many faces of Dana Shatts. Left on the 2022 VOCNA Rally. photo by Blaise Descollonges. Below: Dana places his bike in the Oil d'oiligance lineup at the end of the 2022 VOCNA Rally with the help of Gil Loe. photo by Lanora Cox





**Velocette Morro Bay Rally,
Unexpected Kim, and Melissa's Chase Car Driver
by Dana Shatts**

Dates: Friday, July 16 through Sunday, July 24, 2022

I was really looking forward to the Velocette Morro Bay Rally since I went to college at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo and having put the Velo together in my junior year at school back in '75. The bike was fully serviced, test rode around the South Bay and ready for the weeklong excursions. With the Raul's trailer attached to the '99 Maxima, saddle bags for the overnighiter plus required spare parts and tools, we were ready to go.

Velo on Trailer ready for Morro Bay Rally

The Morro Bay Inn received the rally participants welcomingly and I got the lower row of rooms at the bottom the hill, not easy for bump starting. I met my roommate, Larry Layman, from the Panama "Zone" who rode up on a BMW 310 from San Diego. We met Kim who came up with Melissa in her van which had the '30 Velo 350cc KSS and a '71 Triumph 500CC. It was Melissa's first Velo rally, so we unloaded the bikes and got them ready for the first rally day.

The riders rally maps were confusing and designed to be downloaded and work with a Ride GPS. I gamely started the rally route, but I had to go into town to fill up the bike. When I came back, all had left so I started down the route recognizing the roads but soon found I missed the first turn. I back tracked and went on a nice coastal road. I looked for the next turn and again missed the turn and reached the freeway, but a Velo went by so off I went following the lead. We made it to the Jason Len's garage stop and regrouped. I

heard the Melissa's Triumph stopped running as we took off for Los Alamos in South County.

There are some magical moments on a Velo rally when you are in line with four or five Velo's harmonizing through the turns. It was during such a moment the bike made a loud whirling noise and did not respond to the throttle. It settled down but to discover it would not down shift. I managed to nudge through the gears and once to Highway 101, got it into high gear and 70 miles straight back to Morro Bay Inn. The rear wheel would barely move in neutral, so the bike was out of the rally.



Velo transmission repair with Blaise and Melissa

I was feeling down at the pizza dinner with the lower deck rally folks. I decided I would be a chase car with the '99 Maxima following Kim and Melissa who was lent the Adam's Venom Clubman. The Day 2 was getting to the overnighiter in Carmel Valley, and I could take people's luggage in the car. The trip was Highway 1 up the coast with side trips and soon the bikes had left me as a solo. The GPS was set on the Contenta Inn, and I arrived early to the Talbott museum but to see Kim and Melissa arrive with Larry following on his BMW. He said he wanted to be sure they arrived safely. We were glad to have all made it and enjoyed the pool and spa that evening.

Day 3 was to get back to Morro Bay using the inland routes. Melissa left with Blaise's group, so Kim and I took off down the route. We had to stop while a heard of cattle were crossed the road with the owner apologizing for our delay, quite nice. We had Greg on his '69 Triumph 650cc join us and he knew the roads as we saw 108F temperatures. We found gas and food at the Orange

Cat Organic Café which served Lake Nacimiento. We bumped Kim's bike to life and got back to Morro Bay, passing Blaise's group resting under a tree.



Day 4 had the group deciding to do the route in reverse to get to James Dean's Memorial first and to shorten the days ride. Melissa had switched to Neil's '47 MSS rigid with Dowty air forks. Debbie was on her newly built '51 MAC plus with Kim's '30 KSS, we had Velo ladies assembled for the ride to the memorial. The trip to Camp Roberts split the group but all made it to a fabulous treat of an Army tank base and museum. Kim knew of a great taco place in San Miguel, Taco Mafia which where we all consumed a needed lunch.

left: Kim fueling Velo at Lake Nacimiento



Bikes heading to James Dean Memorial

Then came starting the Velo's in the mid-day sun. Debbie's MAC refused and ended in Neil's truck, but Kim's and Melissa's started with a bump. We had a warm run back to Morro Bay. The evening dinner at the Farmers Market in San Luis Obispo was a good way to wind up a day's rally.

Right: Melissa with Neil's '47 MSS at James Dean Memorial

Below: Velo's starting after Taco Mafia lunch in San Miguel

Day 5 started with Melissa's Triumph coming back to life when we installed my Velo's spare battery used for the electric starter, it be-



ing a drop-in replacement. We all started off fine but 17 miles into the ride, the Triumph quit. Debbie's Niel had been following and put the bike into his truck and Melissa became my co-pilot. Niel quickly lost us, so we used GPS to get to Steve Eorio's house having a good address. We were the first to arrive, having gone the rally in reverse. Being early, we proceeded to the Estrella Aircraft Museum and joined the front end of the rally. The museum had wonderful aircraft, aerospace, and automobile history, but it was time to go back to

Steve's place.

Kim had gotten her KSS to Steve's but the '47 MSS had worn out it's Niel and he asked Melissa if she would ride it back to Morro Bay. She was up for it and was ready to go but Kim's bike would not start despite Dave Roper and I trying to bump start it on a dirt road. Steve said, "I've got rollers!" and we proceeded to get her bike on the electric rolling starter where we got it going.

The bikes had not been fueled so we had to stop in Paso Robles to get gas. Melissa's bike started okay but Kim's would not kick, or bump start for anything on the main street of downtown. Exhausted and sitting on the curb, Mike Youngblood and Larry Luce arrived at the gas station. We explained what had happened and they managed to bring the KSS to life. I said, "If you get these bikes back to the Inn, I'll buy lunch for everyone!" We proceeded in great fashion and arrived at the Morro Bay Inn, finishing the rally and had a fine lunch.

The next day was rally's Show and Shine was where we took the morning the clean and go over the bikes. The Thruxton was relatively clean, so I



Kim with KSS before the last leg of the rally.



Steve Eorio with a Velo at home

started on Kim's KSS which responded well to modern cleaning materials. I asked Kim, "When was the last time you changed your spark plug?" and she was not sure, so we

pulled the plug. It should be noted that the plug cap was soaked in oil while the plug was dark with a worn gap. She said, "But I always carry a spare!" I had her happily show the plug to all those who helped bump start her bike. The next rally she'll start with a fresh plug cap and spark plug.

The AGM was a wonderful event with Gil Loe showing up and the club going through its annual business. Melissa got a Rookie of the Rally award, but Kim got the Eddie Arnold Award for best Velo bike and rider. It certainly made me proud to be part of her team to have helped her get the award.

Best of all to Melissa and Kim!



Online Velocette parts store -
www.velocetteclassics.com

- **Restoration of Velocettes**
- **'Clubmanised' Venom bikes**
- **Vapour Blasting**
- **Magneto/dynamo repair**
- **Alloy petrol tanks and seats**
- **Wheel building and parts**

mark@velocetteclassics.com

Tanks
Classics Ltd.



Contact:
Mark Newsome
Tanks Classics Ltd
Cumbria
07870 762442

Tanks
Classics Ltd.



WANTED:

Trade or Cash. Poster "Triumph Wins 36th Annual Big Bear Run". This old race win promotional advertisement from 1957 of Bud Ekins winning. Other similar posters wanted. Good copies OK. Anything on Big Bear, Catalina or Greenhorn races. Also "Motorcyclist" mags of 50's and 60s.

R.E. Rogers Rogersr.e.
65@gmail.com



Jack Sanders: Panama story

Once again I am making an effort to pen a short story worthy of publication in the VOCNA Fishtail newsletter. I am not a writer and as I am sure that most of the membership are not writers either, I feel somewhat safe in this endeavor. I have written several stories in the past but to date I have only submitted one to the Fishtail that was released, "Bozo's Shortcut". The problem I have is three fold: (1.) my stories are pretty much narrow continuations of the shortcut story; (2.) my stories are not Velocette stories; and (3.) although I have been around lots of Velocettes, I have never owned one. Over many years I tried to get other riders to write short stories but to no avail. The sad fact is that our club members have fabulous untold motorcycle/Velocette stories to tell that are going to be lost forever if left untold.

Over a number of years the VOCNA has had a number of Panama Canal Zone riders on its rolls, most of them being pretty well informed Velocette owners. I am not an authority that represents them, I am simply a Canal Zone boy and a VOCNA member that has been riding there in Panama, the Canal Zone, and elsewhere for over 65 years with stories to tell.

Velocette/Panama Canal Zone

The war had been over for a dozen years and times were prosperous. The world was rebuilding and the British motorcycle industry was back in business like never before. It was a smorgasbord! British bikes were selling and riders around the world were overwhelmed with choices. Ariel, BSA, Triumph, Norton, Matchless, Velocette, Vincent machines and more. British bikes were winning races at places like Daytona while Marlon Brando was riding a Triumph

twin in the 1952 Hollywood filming of "The Wild One". Local boys were sporting their Triumphs, Ariels and BSA machines and an older guy down the street had a Vincent Black Shadow. Some guy in Balboa had an Ariel Square Four. Across the border in the Republic of Panama, Canal Zone boys had been racing their British machines since the early 1950s at the Stadium in Panama City and these guys were local motorcycle legends.

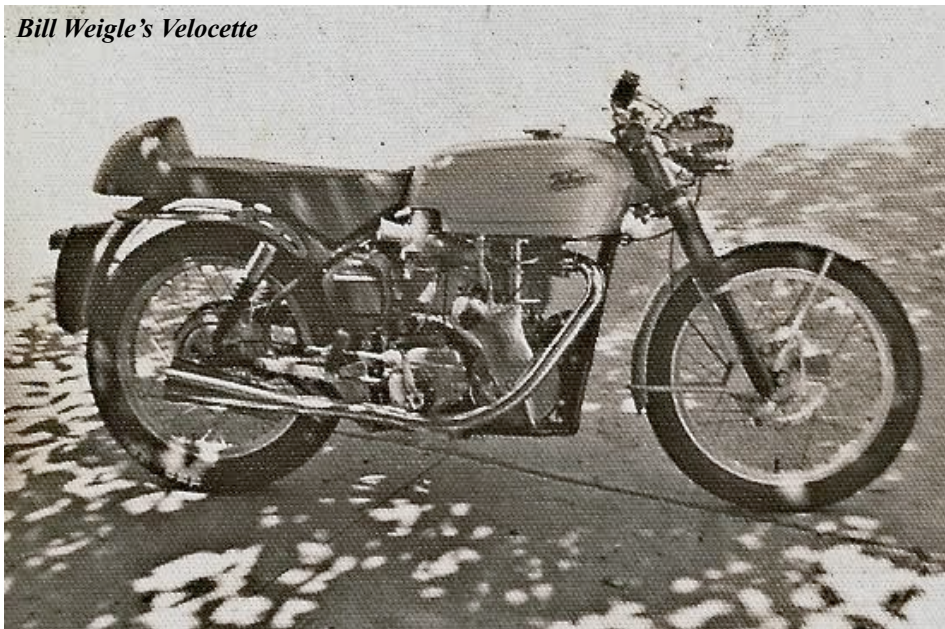
To my knowledge, there were no bona fide motorcycle dealerships or distributors in the Canal Zone in 1958. There were however, some pseudo-dealers that did a good job ordering bikes, stocking a few spares, and servicing bikes at their Panama Canal Company homes. There were also canal employees that dabbled in businesses in the Republic of Panama and some of these were motorcycle related. Out near Pedro Miguel Locks on the Pacific side there was a hobby shop operated by a Canal Zone policeman where a lot of motorcycle work was getting done and riders liked to accumulate. I remember going there and seeing an old four-cylinder in-line Henderson motorcycle leaning up against the wall. Who knows what else was in that place! Also on the Pacific side there was a man that performed services for Ariel motorcycles. I don't know what kind of arrangement he had with Ariel but he was pretty much Mr. Ariel in the Canal Zone. Across the border in the Republic of Panama there was only one motorcycle dealer that I can recall, Panamusica, a mixed jukebox and BSA motorcycle shop. The front of the shop was a small show room with room for one or two bikes at the most on display. Off to the side there was a workshop that was cluttered with a mix of dismantled motorcycles and jukeboxes in varying states of repair. Quite a scene! Looking at that place you

NO. 14318, NO. INVOICE B.S.A. MOTOR CYCLES LIMITED ARMOURY ROAD, BIRMINGHAM 11 Messrs. Schusterfield Goodman & Sons Ltd., 175, Edmund Street, BIRMINGHAM, 3.		9991.109.139. Telephone: "SALMON, BIRMINGHAM" Telephone: BIRMINGHAM VICTORIA 2261 (30 lines)
Forwarded per	RAIL PAID.	MX. 52136.
MC No.	Date	18th March, 1963.
ORDER No.	2/524/37.	
P.A.N.A.M.A. C.A.N.A.L. Z.O.N.E. 1. B.S.A. Motor Cycle. Model A15.650 cc. 44V. "ROCKET GOLD STAR". Air Cleaner. Speedometer in Miles. TO U.S.A. SPECIFICATION 1963. Swinging Arm Rear Suspension. Flamecoat Red Finish. Less Front Number Plate. Dual Seat & Pillion Footrests.		
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For shipment per S.S. "LOCH LOYAL". Messrs. J.S. Holt & Moreley Limited. A/O: J.C. Sanders Esq., Box 5054, Cristobal (A/S C.C. Duffin). Country of Origin ENGLAND ONLY COMPANY'S OFFICIAL RECEIPT RECOGNISED		

would never have guessed that the jukeboxes and motorcycles in that place would ever run again!

The Panama Canal Zone was about maritime shipping and commercial motorcycle sales were not the concern of the US government's Panama Canal Company. Cars, motorcycles, or whatever anyone wanted that was not available from the Panama Canal Company came from dealerships in the Republic of Panama, the US, the UK, or elsewhere. Remarkably, for a time, motorcycle manufactures in the UK sold motorcycles directly to individuals in the Canal Zone one bike at a time. At some point most new bike purchases were done through a local motorcycle club of sorts where the transactions were handled by a single person named Clois Duffie! As I recall there was an export agent in England named Schoiefield Goodman and Sons that managed the purchase and export details that took place in England. The bottom-line was that British motorcycles purchased this way were considerably cheaper than purchases made from a bona fide dealership in the US or elsewhere. I know it sounds like more motorcycle lies, and we have all heard lots of those, but it is true and I have my original factory invoices to prove it! Lower prices always sound good, but as you might expect there was a down side! No dealerships meant there were no new on the spot motorcycle purchases to be had. No dealerships meant there were no dealer services and no dealer spares on hand. When you ordered a bike from the factory you paid up-front in cash and sometimes didn't get delivery for months. Your one-off purchase was not always a high priority sale as motorcycle manufacturers were attending to volume buyers first. With no dealers and no distributors there were no bikes to check out on the showroom floor and there were no brochures to look over and examine before ordering your machine. When your machine finally arrived at the docks you had to go down to the harbor freight offices and truck it home yourself. Once you took delivery of your bike you were on your own. You uncrated it, you assembled it, you ser-

Bill Weigle's Velocette



viced it, you repaired it, you stocked your own spares, and you hoped against the odds for a trouble free machine because there was no dealer to cry too and no spares to be had in the Canal Zone.

I bought four brand new motorcycles from England, all of which were real nice motorbikes: (1.) a 1963 BSA Rocket Gold Star; (2.) a 1966 Matchless G12CSR; (3.) a 1968 Norton P11A; and (4.) a 1970 Norton Commando. I can't remember all the used bike I had but it was a mix of Ariels, BSAs, Nortons, Matchless, and several others.

Up until about 1958 there were no Velocettes that I ever heard of in the the Canal Zone or the Republic of Panama. Along about then my best friend excitedly told me about seeing a Velocette motorcycle in our sleepy Panama Canal Zone community.

Bill Weigle, a current/long time VOCNA member, and I were about seventeen years old, new riders, and both riding BSA motorcycles at that time. Velocette was a new motorcycle to our world and Weigle was quite taken. As it turned out, there were three Velocette machines that had been delivered to three Pacific side riders. One of those first three to get a Velocette in the Panama Canal Zone was Larry Layman, a current VOCNA member. As I recall Larry had purchased a scrambler model. I think that the other two were probably Venoms. Velocettes were rather inexpensive as compared to BSA and other motorcycles and they gained popularity rapidly. I may be wrong but I believe that Bill Weigle purchased the first Thruxton on the isthmus. In the years that followed local Velocette popularity rose to a point where I am told, Velocette motorcycles delivered to the Panama Canal Zone set some kind of a Velocette sales record. As I said earlier, I never owned a Velocette but I did ride a few. There were so many choices back then and I really didn't appreciate the Velocette machines for the truly great motorcycles they are.



Larry Layman



My responsibilities as the Editor of Fishtail West

Note: Thanks to John Stanley for articulating his responsibilities as Treasurer in the last issue. No other officer submitted a description for this newsletter, so I'll step out of the editor role and add mine.

Thank you all for opening this newsletter. The newsletter really only comes alive and takes on meaning when you look through it.

I have been sending out newsletters every other month since late 2006, and in that time, I've figured out a routine.

First I collect material. It comes in all ways from snail mail to email – thank you all! When I go to events I keep notes and take photos in case no one else covers the event.

The deadline for submissions is the last day of every odd-numbered month. It is printed in every newsletter with the addition of the specific next deadline, but submissions are welcomed at all times. There is no reason to wait for the deadline.

Each issue takes 30 to 40 hours of time. More submissions are better; the more I have to create, the longer it takes. I carve this time out specifically in two weeks to get the newsletter to the printer by the 15th of the month.

I do this on a MacBook Pro in Pages. In case you're thinking of submitting, the preferred way to submit text is in Word or pdf, and photos in jpeg or png. The larger the image, the better the reproduction.

I work with recommendations from the printer and prep every image for print publication. I only edit the text to maintain a consistent font and spacing. Well, if I notice a name misspelled I will correct that too.

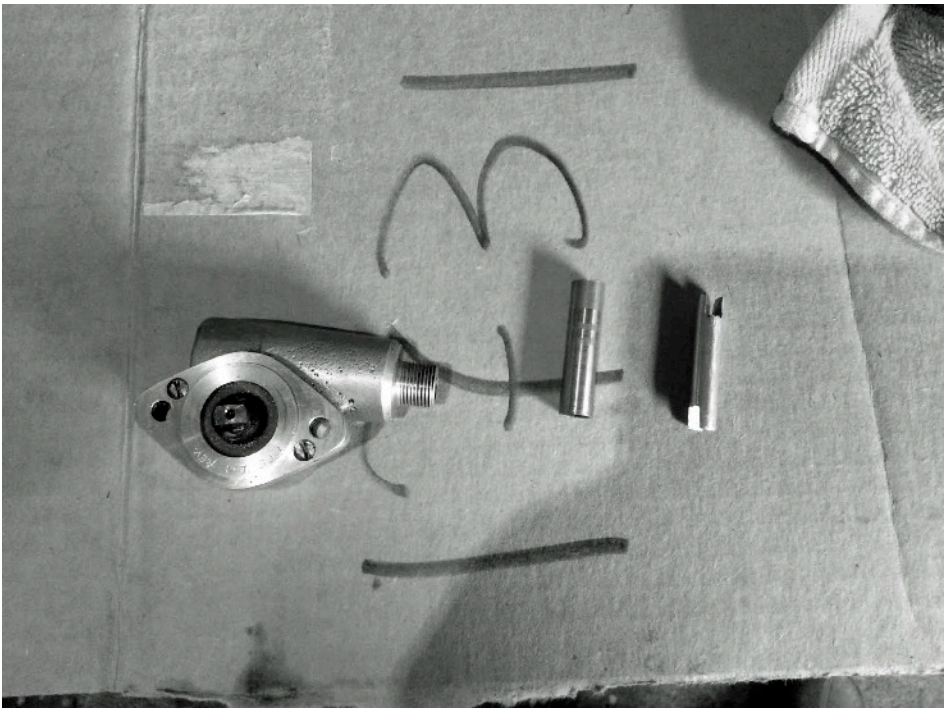
Once I have the newsletter together and a count of how many issues we need from the membership secretary, I send the job to the printer. The local Minuteman press has been very good at getting the issues back to me in a couple of days. At some point, Jeff or I make a trip to the post office to purchase the stamps.

Then it's time for movie nights. I watch movies and stuff envelopes after work. I put labels on the envelope and finally put the stamps on the envelopes. Jeff seals up the envelopes and usually is the person who takes them to the post office. And then it comes to you.

Thanks for allowing me to handle this material. I wish I heard from more people that I have not met. The newsletter is for the whole club! Hopefully this description will take away some fear of the unknown about what happens here on the other side of the newsletter.

Lanora Cox





Shadetree Fab: Tach Drive

All bits done with the best intentions and hand fitting. To get the tach to spin first we had to get one. With all the gear that makes it work which is the tach head, mounting bracket, fork top nut, cable, angle drive, drive mount in the timing case, drive spindle and spade end magneto drive nut adaptor.

Quite a list of bits to collect and modify, mount and install. Some of the pieces are simply a buy now button away some need special machine tools to effect the modifications to standard parts. such as the mounting perch and penetration in the timing case for the angle drive. Fortunately the offer of a kit so to speak came up for a ready made timing case and a chronometric tach head with a mount along with the drilled machined fork cap so most of the time consuming and high dollar bits for a trade and moderate fee. That all remained was the cable, had a used one in stock, adaptor spade nut sourced from Ed Gilkison parts and haute cuisine emporium. A quick check abroad and near would leave the crucial connection a mere note on the wish list for want of availability.

From the Mac installation of years ago, a short bit of thin wall stainless steel seamless tubing approximately 1/4" id. x 1 1/2" long gave the outer drive extension which required only the center connector to drive the spade end of the angle drive and be driven from the spade adaptor mag nut. The center bit was machined out of alloy round stock to be a slip fit in the outer tube with the cut outs for the spade drive / driver at 90 deg to each other to allow for compensation of any off center error that may have been created by using parts that were most definitely machined years apart to the same blue print certainly, but tea time being an unknown motivation to accuracy.

There are some variations across the model range in length and drive

A black and white photograph of a metal mechanical component, possibly a valve or fitting, resting on a piece of cardboard. The component has a central threaded rod with a nut, a side port with a threaded cap, and a base with mounting holes. Handwritten markings '13' and '17' are visible on the cardboard surface.

The piece that's shown is the tack drive angle reverse 2 to 1 for Velocette and the finished drive extension piece connecting the magneto gear nut with the drive unit spade fitting. The new drives have been known to come with nylon or delrin material gears which may not work with some tach heads. Beware.

