

FISHTAIL WEST





THE VELOCETTE OWNERS CLUB
OF NORTH AMERICA

THE ELECTED OFFICERS OF THE
VELOCETTE OWNERS' CLUB OF
NORTH AMERICA AND CANADA
REPRESENT A REGISTERED NON-
PROFIT ORGANIZATION.



2026 1,000 Mile Rally Group...Mostly | Ferndale, CA ©Blaise Descollonges

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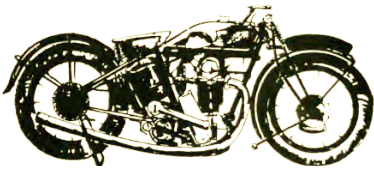
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'26 RALLY DAY 4 | FT. BRAGG TO LEGGETT, CALIFORNIA
©ALLY SMALLEY



JP SIGNING OUT OF FISHTAIL WEST ©KIM LOSTROH YOUNG

The time has come, gentle degenerates, to relinquish the levers of design and production on this rag you're holding, to some other poor _____ (fill in the blank) who doesn't yet know what they've signed up for. I took the saddle a few years back when the club was staggering through a hard situation, and I've edited every issue since 2023, sometimes with joy, and sometimes with the enthusiasm of a man defusing a bomb with a butter knife. But running two jobs in one club, newsletter and website, is too much weight for one set of shoulders, even mine. All with the continued support of my creative partner, Graham, based in NYC. We owe him a long debt of gratitude.

So here's the good news: Ally and Eric Smalley have stepped into the breach, torch in hand, apparently sane enough to want this job. Be kinder to them than you were to me: not a high bar, granted, and keep the stories and photos coming, or these pages stay empty as the promises made at the last AGM. Keep the criticism constructive. This club doesn't have the numbers to survive infighting on top of a dying interest in vintage iron and the daily indignity of nursing a defunct motorcycle brand into another decade.

Understand something: this was never a motorcycle club. It's a ragged congregation of humans still tending the spark of Hall Green, each with wildly different opinions on how the magneto should be serviced. Fine. Debate is healthy. I've never met a gearhead who didn't love an argument. But what's running low, dangerously low, is appreciation. The respect tank in this outfit has been on fumes for years. I'm honestly surprised the engine hasn't seized. The list of embittered former contributors who walked away is long. I won't be on it. Synergy is overdue, so while I'm stepping back from editing, I'm not going anywhere. I'll still be lurking, contributing, connecting and *taking the piss*. (Ask John Sims to translate)

The Handover

*Not a goodbye,
you don't shake me that easy...*

JP Default

What I'll miss least is nothing; what I'll miss most is sifting through your meagre offerings. The conversations, the arguments, the education, the headaches, even the arseholes. You know who you are. It's been a strange, worthwhile ride, and it'll stay that way, because the alternative is joining a macramé circle, and I don't do 5 percent adrenaline sports. Stagnant ambition isn't in my blood. If it were, I'd have joined a German motorcycle club.

I'll still have a hand on the website, though mercifully some newcomers and board members have finally volunteered to help drag it into the present: only took six years, which by this club's standards is practically overnight. So send your stories, your old rides, your memories, anything worth keeping. Don't make me come find you. I know where you live.

A word of advice if I may, to the incoming editors: the world of Velocette is thick with untold stories, buried secrets, half-true legends and bullshit. Talk to everyone. When you catch the scent of a good story, lean on them, threaten to torch their Velo if they don't hand it over. It works. Ask me how I know. With much love to all of you, I'll see you all down the road.

Letter From The Editors

Velo or not

Ally & Eric Smalley



ERIC & ALLY AT A PETROL STOP | LAKEPORT, CA
©KELSEY RAY

Where'd you find your Velocette? A common question from the initiated and uninitiated alike. We didn't find Velocettes, they found us.

First, as an aspiration. Since our exposure to the iconic 'Eames chair', there was a sense of lust to own one; all the while knowing that an original was rare and most likely out of our reach. Similarly, the Velocette marque was known, but with only a single touchpoint - a Jay Leno YouTube video going over his Thruxton. In their purest forms, a chair and a motorcycle fit for purpose. In their core 'truth', each item is designed to be a: functional, aesthetically pleasing, quality obsessed object, immune to fad...timeless. Unknown to the authors, both of these trajectories progressed in correlation.

While perusing a vintage decor store, we came across an original Eames chair with matching footrest. It needed a bit of elbow grease, but the price was right. After purchasing our Eames chair, we were eager to learn more about the makers of our interactive art piece.

To the Eames Office website we went. Landing on the website's home page, we were met with a striking photo. Ray Eames at the helm of a motorcycle, eyes focused on the horizon ahead. Her husband, Charles, riding pillion, staring at the photographer with a lottery winner's grin. The bike, their friend's son's KSS.

Mere months later, an Ariel Red Hunter was posted on Marketplace. But, the real attention getter was the front wheel of a Ducati F1 in the background of one image. Perfect to take vintage racing, not advertised for sale, but worth an inquiry. Eric hesitantly wrote a message to the seller and consulted Ally, who reminded him that the worst reply he could get was: "No, it's not for sale." Later that week, Eric found himself traveling to Beaver Dam, WI to see it in person. Did he make a deal on the Ducati? No deal was made, but an inroad to becoming stewards of a Velocette appeared and was traveled to success. From an Ariel ad to a Desmo Ducati is how we've arrived in Velotopia. Three years later, three soon to be four rallies deep, and with two Velos to our names, we're the latest editors to swim Fishtail West's storied waters.

Our Velocette journey thus far has been one fateful footstep after another. And, we wouldn't say that's unique to us. Maybe it's the nature of singular obsessions and focused intentions. Or, the magic of machines built and maintained by hands on, hearts all in motorcyclists. In this issue alone, you'll find fortuitous stories ranging from Scottie Sharpe's epic motorcycle manifestation abilities, to Dana Shatt's wine & puppies detour after missing a turn on the rally...twice, Steve Frei's noir style telling of how a special Velo fell under his ownership, and last but not least Kelsey Ray's unknown kinship to Velocettes all while wondering: "A Velo-what?"



CHARLES AND RAY EAMES ON A MOTORCYCLE
©EAMES OFFICE

Each of us arrives in Veloland in the way only each of us could- our own. We're proud to be the next stewards of this publication. But, we're only its current caretakers. It requires active participation and accountability from VOCNA members like YOU to keep this thing alive for generations to come.

So our call to each of you: Get involved. In any capacity.

- Don't have a vintage bike?
 - Peruse our Classifieds, there's several sweet machines waiting for their next good home! You might even make a new friend in your seller.
- Do you have a Velo or cool vintage bike to sell?
 - Send fishtailwest@gmail.com your photos, contact info, and a short description. Posting in our Classifieds will get more eyes on your machine from a dedicated pool of vintage moto enthusiasts.
- Have a vintage bike, but don't have a like-minded community near you?
 - Join us at an upcoming event! In this issue alone, you've got the East Coast Georgia Rally, 49 Mile Ride, or the Melo Velo to choose from. Truth be told, our first group moto event was the 2025 Velo Rally in Oregon. We knew no one, and we left with a community.



ALLY POSING WITH HER STEED '26 RALLY ROADSIDE
©KELSEY RAY

- Have a cool vintage moto event or story contribution?
 - Tell us about it! Send fishtailwest@gmail.com your: Velos in the wild, photos & captions, histories, unique people and bike tales, or a mini blurb. Check out The Californian, 1,000 mile rally, or Scotts Valley Motorcycle Show recaps in this issue for inspiration. While most of our coverage leans West Coast, we want to publish rad vintage moto content from all over. Here in Wisconsin, we'd love to hear from Slimey Crud attendees or Lorem Ipsum organizers. *wink wink, nudge nudge*
- Do you know someone who likes vintage motorcycles?
 - Tell them about us! Send them your latest Fishtail West, bring them to a rally, plan a ride together, or hell send them a Facebook Marketplace posting to buy their own cheap ride.



ERIC ADDRESSING A ROGUE B39/26 ON THE '25 RALLY
FLORENCE, OR ©PAUL D'ORLÉANS

No matter how you participate- just do it! Kurt Vonnegut says about art: "Practice any art...no matter how well or badly, not to experience money and fame, but to experience becoming, to find out what's inside you, to make your soul grow." The same can be said about Velocettes and vintage motorcycle riding.

And, when we say you don't need a Velocette to be a VOCNA member or rally attendant- we mean it. This is not lip service. Ally attends the rallies on her 2022 Royal Enfield Meteor (seen above). You'll read about BMWs, a Harley, Moto Guzzis, Vincents, and all the rest in this issue. If you've received Fishtail in your mailbox, you're a fellow Velo-ist. And, Velo or not- you're one of us. Sucker!

Chairman's Chat

Paul d'Orléans

Happy summer, and if you weren't at our Summer Rally, I hope you found as much fun elsewhere...but I doubt you did! What can compare to the joy of riding your old bike for a whole week in a beautiful landscape, with no planning required except to bring a runner? Which can involve a lot of preparation, I admit, but that's just part of owning vintage. This year's rally was superbly planned by John Ray, and was our best-attended in a decade, with 60-odd riders and friends enjoying the abundance of machinery corralled in the Harbor Lite Lodge parking lot in Fort Bragg. We haven't seen this many Velos on the move since the 2000s, and while few OG club members remain rally regulars, our club demographic is bucking the global trend, becoming younger every year.

How did this happen? A concerted effort by club members to rope in new members. That included reviving or creating events in new locations (e.g. Melo Velo and East Coast rallies), and direct invitations to friends to join these rides, who typically did not have a Velocette, but loved bikes with character. It's a canny strategy, knowing it's hard to resist Velo ownership, once sampled. Speaking of, it was great to see Sean Duggan's scrappy Venom make the rally as his first Velo, bought as a complete unknown at the Las Vegas auctions, and fettled back to life in his skilled hands.

And speaking of skills, I'd like to give JP Default a huge thanks and round of applause for all his work as Editor of FTW, which brought this publication to the elevated position it now occupies. Visually and content-wise, he's made it a terrific zine, and wrote many of the articles himself. And getting back to club growth: JP has been a key figure in that effort, urging (ok, nagging) changes that were overdue, taking on the Melo Velo rally as a personal project (along with FTW and the club website), casting a wide net for new members (including Arnault the Belgian baker...who knew we needed gâteau basque at a rally?), hosting overseas guests (especially difficult these days), and more. JP joined the Board because he loves the club and believes it's something special, and worth fighting for. You can blame him for my bid for Chairman in 2022, as he was deeply concerned about the club's future, and thought I was the man for the job. Well, we do seem to be gaining ground, while other clubs are ebbing with the tide.

JP is of course not alone in his investment in the club: that includes everyone volunteering their time to do a club job - we're all in it because it feels like family. In that spirit, I congratulate our new Editorial team, Eric and Ally Smalley, who are taking on the biggest job in the club, after joining our rallies for only a few years. I know they'll do a superb job, and it's been really fun getting to know them - they're a breath of fresh air.

“Ride the wheels off the thing(s): it sure beats watching the news.”



THE CHAIRMAN IN THE WILDS OF RALLY '26
©PAUL D'ORLÉANS

Similarly, back in 1989 Denise Leitzel and I took over the editor's chair from Sam Jowett after only two years with the club: it doesn't take long to figure out this is a scene worth investing in. Give Eric and Ally your support: please contribute your stories, history, tech tips, bike backgrounds, and ride reports!

I hope you've been able to take advantage of the astonishing deals coming up in the old bike scene: it's an excellent time to buy an old motorcycle. I mentioned purchasing a '65 Thruxton and Scrambler last issue, and tell the back story on VMT 165 in this issue. Recently club member Simon Peters asked my opinion about a Manx-ized Norton Inter cafe racer going cheap in LA. All I could say was 'Buy it before I do!' And then, ride the wheels off the thing(s): it sure beats watching the news. In our next FTW, I'll share the story of a unique factory Velocette that is as we speak heading to a certain San Francisco warehouse...

I hope to see some of you in Georgia Oct 2-6, at the Barber Festival immediately afterwards, and/or at the Melo Velo Rally the weekend of Oct 16-18. I'm diligently working on appropriate machinery for each rally, and if you have an interest in riding Georgia but need bike transport, hit me up, as I'm sending my van across the USA and have a couple of spots.

The Co-President's Communique

Irene Chen & Blaise Descollonges

We're thrilled to introduce the dynamic duo leading our vintage motorcycle club!

Irene has been riding for nearly a decade and embraces all styles of motorcycling—from dirt biking and track days to long road trips and relaxed neighborhood cruises. This is her first venture into the vintage bike world, and she's impressed. "The bikes are quirky and so are the people; I love it!" she says. Her passion for planning and community spirit makes her the perfect person to coordinate our next rally.

Blaise has been in the saddle since age 18, with his love for Velocette motorcycles kindled in 2011 when he had the chance to ride a Kim's 1930 KSS Velocette. His first Velocette rally followed in 2013 aboard his 1969 BSA Starfire. As a lifelong learner who values the deep friendships motorcycling creates, Blaise is dedicated to "carrying the torch" and growing this amazing vintage community. He hopes to create events that are both fulfilling and memorable for all members.

Together, Irene and Blaise bring complementary strengths—one's energy and enthusiasm for new experiences paired with another's deep roots in the vintage scene. They're committed to keeping the spirit of classic motorcycles alive while building lasting connections among riders who share their passion.

Get ready for some incredible rides and unforgettable gatherings!

Irene & Blaise will take the reins on planning & organizing 2027's 1,000 mile rally to be held in and around Mt. Shasta, CA. Stay tuned dates & details coming to in a subsequent issue.



MT. SHASTA ©GETTY IMAGES SIGNATURE



RALLY 2026 | FT. BRAGG
©BLAISE DESCOLLONGES & IRENE CHEN

Ex-President's Palaver

John Ray

Hello Velo Enthusiasts!

Well, the fastest week of the year for me – VOCNA Annual Rally Week -- has come and gone. From my perspective, the 2026 VOCNA Annual Ride & Rally was a big success. We had 60 participants gather in Ft. Bragg California for a week of good cheer, motorbike riding, motorbike wrenching, feasting, and imbibing. Weather – if you average it out – was spectacular: cloudy, cool and sometimes wet (no rain, but heavy mists) on the coast, and warm and sunny inland.

The 2026 VOCNA Ride & Rally was the culmination of a year's worth of planning, organizing, budgeting, designing, and executing. I want to thank everyone who pitched in, especially my fellow club officers, Chairman Paul d'Orleans, Treasurer Blaise Descollonges, Secretary Debbie Macdonald, Editor and Webmaster JP Default, and Rally Purser Kim Young. An event like this takes real teamwork.

AND, a very special "Thank You" to good friend and compatriot Niel Macdonald who last spring drove miles of bendy roads on two separate road trips checking out the hotels and ride routes while I rode along taking notes and photos. We discovered several potential routes that looked good on a map but turned out to be dead ends or not suitable to ride on a Velo. So our time and effort was well spent. Thanks Niel!

The Rally hotels in Ft. Bragg and Ferndale were "more than adequate", and the staff very helpful. The hotel in Ft. Bragg even coned off an entire section of their parking lot for our exclusive use. This was the site of much wrenching & fettling (and chatting & beer drinking) during the week. We can only hope that the oil "sealant" we put down in the parking lot will be helpful to the hotel staff.

On "Welcome Day", Sunday afternoon, June 14, my niece Kelsey, an experienced rider, but VOCNA Rally first-timer who flew out from Denver to join us, and I set up shop in the hotel banquet room to hand out the participant packets containing the route sheets, rally pin and rally t-shirts, to the participants. This was an excellent way to get to say "Hello" to everyone, renew old acquaintances, and meet the newcomers. And a great way for Kelsey to meet everyone.

On the routes, Kelsey and I frequently rode together, joined by Debbie Macdonald on the Thursday and Friday. Kelsey rode my wife Sue's trusty Moto Guzzi V65SP, a sweet little bike and veteran of many VOCNA Rallies. Debbie rode her rigid MAC until the clutch started giving out, then switched to her modern Triumph Bonneville.



MAN WITH VELO ©KELSEY RAY

My (usually) trusty coil-ignition 1969 Venom Clubman Mk II – which I have owned since 1982, and has been on all but one of the 40+ VOCNA Annual Rides (when I rode my VMT) -- performed well on Monday's ride. But on Tuesday mid-day, while riding through the town of Lakeport the bike developed an electrical short, intermittent at first, but then a dead short resulting in the machine ceasing to run. As in dead. Amp meter pegged to full discharge.

Fortunately, Niel Macdonald was close behind with his pickup truck. (If you can't be good, be lucky!) We loaded my bike into his truck, and I rode along with Niel in air-conditioned comfort, but missing some of the best motorcycle roads of the week. In the town of Cloverdale, we met up with Debbie Macdonald who was riding her rigid MAC.

While taking a break, Debbie graciously offered to let me ride her bike the rest of the way back to Ft. Bragg. I immediately accepted her offer, got suited up, fired up the MAC, and pattered off. The MAC is a delightful little bike, light, adequate power, and easy handling on smooth roads. But the clutch was slipping riding uphill under power. Easy just to back off and let it grip again, so I had a very enjoyable ride back to the hotel in Ft. Bragg.

That evening, with the help of Velo electricians Jim Romain and Frank Brennan, and with the seat off but fuel tank in place, we worked on my Clubman with a multimeter to find the short. We seemingly had resolved the problem, but – ominously -- without actually finding and fixing the cause.

Heading out on Wednesday morning, the problem – intermittent short, causing misfire -- soon emerged again, and I turned around and limped back to the hotel parking lot, which by then was fairly deserted because everyone had departed for the day's ride. I set up a work space, pulled the seat and tank and went to work to find the cause of the short.

For those unfamiliar with the later Velocette coil ignition set-up, the coil is mounted vertically at the front of the tank, between the two sides of the tank and behind the front frame down-tube. It is clamped to a bracket welded to the cross strap under the front of the fuel tank. (Part# A276/4). The HT lead socket and positive and negative male spade connectors – each in a pair, but with only one of each used, leaving one bare -- are at the bottom of the coil close to the cross strap.

Visual and tactile inspection rather quickly revealed the culprit: The unused (bare) positive male spade connector terminal on the bottom of the coil was perilously close to the mounting bracket under the front of the fuel tank. As in less than the thickness of a human hair.

When the terminal made contact with the bracket as the engine vibrated, it caused a short in the ignition system. This effectively cut off the ignition, causing a total loss of forward progress. How this happened after 40+ years and 60,000 miles of ownership, I'll never know. But such is the Velocette experience!

This was quickly fixed by simply bending the terminal away from the bracket. But by this time it was late morning. Fuel tank and seat back on, I headed out on the route in reverse direction, to meet up with the riders along the route, and especially to make the group stop at Zen House Motorcycles in Point Arena.

But. . . two miles down the road, the ignition completely shut off. Again.

I pulled off on a convenient side road and looked for the problem. Found it: One of the wires to the coil, (from the 57-year old wiring loom!), had broken where the connector crimps on. Probably objecting to the disturbance I had caused while remedying the short that morning.

While stranded, as I was contemplating my alternatives, which included a two mile walk in riding gear back to the hotel to fetch my car and trailer, a gentleman in a small pickup truck with a dual-sport bike in the back came down the side road where I was standing with my bike.

He stopped and asked if he could help. So, I gratefully hitched a ride back to the hotel, where I hooked up my trailer and went back to pick up my Velo. On the way back to the hotel, I stopped at a convenient auto parts store and bought a packet of 1/4" female spade connectors. You know: the cheesy ones with the blue plastic shrouds.

So back in the hotel parking lot, off with the seat and fuel tank, and on with the replacement connector. I also found that the ground wire, which has a ring connector, was hanging on by just two strands of wire. Fortunately, Joe Wright of Iowa had arrived back in the parking lot and had just the right connector for the purpose. Thanks Joe! Easy fix, but a bit of a bother removing and replacing the seat and fuel tank.

So I was up and running again. But by this time, riders were starting to return to the hotel from the day's ride. A relatively minor problem, but one that took most of the day to fix. Glad that the route had us returning to the hotel that day.

Thursday's ride across Highway 1 through Leggett started in a cool mist, which gave way to sunshine as we crossed the coastal mountains.

This 20 mile section of Highway 1 from the coast to Leggett is a motorcycling treasure, very bendy with completely smooth pavement, and not much traffic. Perfect road for a sweet handling bike like a Velocette.



DEBBIE MACDONALD AND KELSEY RAY WITH DEBBIE'S MODERN TRIUMPH BONNEVILLE ©JOHN RAY



KELSEY WITH HER SWEET WHIP FOR THE WEEK
©KELSEY RAY

We then rode through the towering redwoods along the Avenue of the Giants and out to the Lost Coast on the infamous Mattole Road to Ferndale. A spectacular ride, if a bit rough in sections.

Friday's ride back to Ft. Bragg was likewise wonderful, even though we encountered more stretches of rough pavement on Alderpoint Road back into Garberville. Despite the sometimes rough pavement, there are sections on Alderpoint Road where it follows a ridgeline with stunning views of forested hills and pastures. Delightful!

The only minor disappointment on Friday was the heavy mist on Highway 1 from Leggett to the coast. The road surface was quite wet and slippery; I had my rear tire slide twice, which provided me with a little warning to cool it, slow down and enjoy the ride. Hardly conditions for trying too hard.

A More Serious Note: On Friday, one of our stalwart members, 87 year old Larry Layman from the San Diego area, suffered a serious mishap. Larry, riding his 310 BMW, had chosen to skip the rough Alderpoint Road by riding Highway 101 south to the town of Willits, then riding west on Route 20 back to Ft. Bragg. Somewhere on Route 20, Larry went off the road, down an embankment where he severely gashed his knee on the exposed edge of a metal culvert pipe.

Fortunately, a Good Samaritan passerby in a pickup truck spotted Larry and offered to help. This good man and another Good Samaritan who also stopped, helped Larry up the embankment, then also wrestled his bike up it as well and loaded the bike – which fortunately suffered only relatively minor – if expensive – damage, into the pickup truck.

Then this fellow transported Larry, his bike and gear into Ft. Bragg, where he took Larry to the local hospital ER, and brought his bike and gear to the Rally HQ hotel. All of us were still out riding, so this guy coordinated with the hotel staff to leave Larry's bike and riding gear. None of us met this fine fellow, nor do we even know his name. But whoever you are: "THANK YOU!"

Larry was subsequently transferred from the hospital in Ft. Bragg to a hospital in Willits, where his knee was surgically repaired. While Larry was in the hospital in Willits, Frank Brennan and Kim Crozier dropped off his luggage, which had been in the chase truck, and Jim Romain loaded Larry's bike into his van to store in Jim's nearby Cloverdale workshop (nice workshop!) until it could be picked up.

As am I writing this, I have just spoken with Larry, and he seems in fine spirits. He faces a bit of recovery and physical therapy to restore his knee's range of motion and flexibility but is determined to get back on his bike. In fact, he has already ordered the parts to fix it – mainly plastic pieces and turn signals. We surely hope to see him on next year's Rally!

The rally week culminated in our Annual General Meeting. The AGM is followed by our Banquet, catered by Big Earl's BBQ. Food was good and plentiful, and the wine flowed freely.

The banquet gave way to our annual Awards Celebration, MC'd by Paul and yours truly. We handed out well-earned awards, both silly and more serious, and the voted category awards. A list of the award winners is also included in this issue. A fine time was had by all.

Then it was time to say our goodbyes to old friends and new, with promises to meet again at the 2027 VOCNA Ride & Rally in the Sierra Nevada Mountains, to be organized by stalwart member Blaise Decollonges.

And thus my job, and most recent stint as VOCNA President, were completed. I very much enjoyed the myriad tasks and effort involved in putting on the Annual Rally, and greatly appreciate the help and support of everyone who attended and contributed so much to making this year's rally such a success.

Cheers,

Yer Humble Ex-Prez, John Ray

The Californian

Or how I dragged a Velo to a Los Angeles equestrian show, and lived to tell the tale.

JP Default



JP'S KSS GETS A KIND NOD FROM BRADY AND HIS CREW ©JP DEFAULT

The email arrived out of some parallel universe where people still give a damn about things that matter. Don Danmeier, bless his twisted soul, had fired it across the void with the economy of a man who knows when he's holding a live grenade:

"JP, this should interest you, or the club." Said he. A bike show in So Cal, with a Velo on the invitation no less. A Velocette? On the invitation? In Southern California, where the spiritual currency is chrome, silicone, and the desperate mythology of the open road.

You have my attention. I made some calls. Brady, the organizer, a man I'd first encountered on a Velo ride up in San Francisco some years back, when time still moved at a reasonable speed and gas cost less than a Scotch, had a red MAC. A MAC, of all the glorious, deranged things.

We got reacquainted over the phone like two veterans who'd survived the same obscure war. His event had already taken a beating from the weather in April: God or fate or the California Coastal Commission had conspired to cancel it. But May was the resurrection. I promised I'd be there. I promised I'd fly the VOCNA flag into whatever madness awaited.

I put the call out to the So Cal membership. The response was, to put it charitably, underwhelming. These people had lives, apparently. Obligations. Reasons. Fine. I've operated in hostile territory before. I'd bring the KSS racer and go alone if necessary, because a promise to Brady is a promise to something larger than any one of us. It's a promise to the whole beautiful, creaking, oil-leaking enterprise of keeping these machines alive in a world that wants you to buy something new and shut up about it.



BRADY AND LARRY AND THE BEST IN SHOW AWARD
©JP DEFAULT

But there was one man I knew would show up. I called Larry Luce.

Eternal optimist, the mechanical connoisseur, and the magnificently improbable. His voice on the phone was the sound of a man who has never once considered that things might not work out, for Larry, they always do. He'd be there. Of course he'd be there. And we'd talk motorcycles, and hear about his New Zealand trip, and the day would be what days are supposed to be. He did not disappoint. His 1933 MOV, the very machine he'd piloted through the 2023 Cannonball, that lunatic cross-country ordeal that separates the believers from the civilians, held court like a dignitary. People gathered around it the way people used to gather around campfires, drawn by something primal and electric. Jeff Koskie materialized with an immaculate clubman, all sharp edges and righteous intent. And Steve Eorio, God bless him, showed up with his Jim Romain-built Velo Star: MAC engine dropped into a Gold Star frame, which is either genius or blasphemy. At that level, they're the same thing. There were interesting characters everywhere. There were eclectic characters. The distinction matters and I leave it to the reader's imagination.

Now. The venue. With the Quail gone, driven off that manicured golf course by the rebrand to "Moto Fest," which is what happens when consultants get hold of something beautiful and squeeze it until it screams, Brady has conjured something better. The Californian. A concours d'élégance staged inside an art deco horse racing track in Arcadia, East Los Angeles. The Santa Anita Park, built when Americans still believed in glamour as a civic virtue, all Spanish Colonial Revival grandeur and the ghost of Seabiscuit hovering somewhere in the infield. Epic. The only word. Epic backdrop for this sort of ceremony.

And the crowd, this is what separated The Californian from the expensive, self-congratulatory funeral processions that vintage motorcycling so often becomes. There were families. Children, for the love of God. Young people who hadn't yet learned to be cynical about machines built before their grandparents were born. Women riders swung by the Velocette stand throughout the day in a steady procession, and more than a few of them got genuinely lit up when they understood the basic truth: you don't need to own a Velo to join the club. The club is about something else. The club is about faith in people first. Motorcycles come second...

My mate Robert flew in from London for the occasion, because some occasions demand intercontinental commitment and we picked up his bike from Classic Avenue, where master mechanic Martin has been keeping it alive through whatever dark magic mechanics employ. We bantered with Nick Smith, whose piece ran in FTW #266 if you need credentials, and who still has a handful of Velos on his books. If you've found loose change in the sofa cushions, surplus hours in the week, and room in your skull for actual knowledge, call Nick. Give him a shout. Tell him the FTW press sent you.

Those of you that missed it, The Californian will be back next year. Mark it. Sign up for the updates.

Brady has built something real in a landscape full of facsimiles, and the least we can do, the absolute minimum of human decency, is show up with our machines, our madness and prove that this thing we love is still alive.

God help us, it still is.



JEFF KOSKIE WITH HIS BELOVED CLUBMAN PHOTO
©JP DEFAULT

Heaven Will Wait

Chapter One

Steve Frei

Opening Scene: A mid-size single storied factory set in a beautiful greensward reminiscent of the English countryside. Brilliant blue sky punctuated with soft fluffy clouds. Perfect roads surround the building leading to racetracks positioned at North, South, East and West, each one in use, the steady song of single cylinders evident. As the camera moves closer to the factory one hears the steady rhythm of 2 Browlett & Lindley engines pumping their massive cylinders in perfect syncopation. As the camera moves closer you are taken inside the factory through an open window, down a short hallway to a door marked *Veloce LTD, P. Goodman, Private*. A hand reaches out and knocks on the door.

A VOICE ON THE OTHER SIDE SAYS: "IT'S OPEN, COME IN."

Irving: Mr. Goodman Sir, I have a new Venom owner to report.

Goodman: Go on Irving.

Irving: Yes sir. Its VM6607C, a blue Venom Special, one of the last out of the terrestrial plant sir. Its changed hands.

Goodman: Marvelous. Refresh my memory on that machine.

Irving: Well, it left the plant in June 1969 and was sold by Dodkin to a barrister in London who rode it to work every day until he traded it back to Dodkin in 1973. We don't know much about this barrister, but the bike was kept in excellent condition and enjoyed regularly. A Mr. Marsden purchased it from Dodkin and exported it to the United States in February 1974, and by April 1974 it was registered in California, domicile Brisbane, near San Francisco.

Goodman: Brisbane? That's not far from some excellent roads I understand.

Irving: Yes sir, excellent roads and near perfect riding conditions year-round. VM6607C ownership records get a little fuzzy then, and in 1983, we think, a certain Mr. Danmeier of Novato California purchased it from a Mr. Ehret of Vallecito, California for the sum of \$300.00, if the DMV Bill of Sale is to be believed.

Goodman: More like \$900.00 I bet.

Irving: Yes sir, you can count on that. All we know is that Mr. Danmeier was busy with many projects. He and rode VM6607C as often as he could. At some point VM6607C had an engine overhaul, completed by the end of 1998. Mr. Danmeier made multiple Velo rallies, and enjoyed the bike immensely we understand. It's still a beautiful blue color, sir. Kept it until August 2025.

Goodman: Why did he part with it?

Irving: The sale was done at a weak moment sir. He's lost some sleep over it.

Goodman: Hmm. Serves him right. But that's a good amount of terrestrial ownership. How old is this Danmeier?

Irving: No one knows sir. He had over twenty-five 50th birthdays and he doesn't look a day over 65.

Goodman: Yes, I think I've heard of the chap. He's on the list here for acceptance if he makes the right choice at the gate.

Irving: We hope so sir, he can ride and fettle well, but we might lose him to those Vincent chaps, or even the BSA group, he has many passions sir.

Goodman: Vincent? Those overrated beasts. Plenty of power, too complicated, suspect handling, and BSA? A lack of focus there I would say.

Irving: Really sir, I don't think you are being fair to Vincents. There is some good engineering there.

Goodman: My apologies Irving. Please don't take it too personally. Now, how did VM6607C take the trustee change?

Irving: Well sir, it didn't like it too much. The spotless garage VM6607C parked in with a stablemate of fine companions was replaced by a gravel floored car port. An open car port sir.

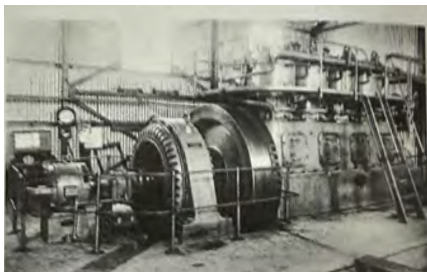
Goodman: For heaven's sake, is VM6607C covered?

Irving: Yes sir.

Goodman: Does it have any companions?



THE AUTHOR AND HIS BIKE
NEAR THE STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN



BROWLETT & LINDLEY POWER PLANT INSIDE HALL GREEN
©IVAN RHODES, TECHNICAL EXCELLENCE

Irving: Yes sir, I was getting to that sir, the new owner is a Norton man. He owns two currently, a 75 Commando he purchased new in 1976 and a 65 Atlas owned since 1990. A Mr. S. Frei of Mill Valley.

Goodman: Norton. Harrumph! They had that nice frame and that shaky motor. So they decided to bin the frame and used the motor for another 7 years! Oh well, respect given, they sold more than we ever did.

Irving: Yes sir. Well, as I said, the blue special was depressed. It started to seize while under stress, and some wires came loose and well, it left the new owner by the side of the road several times sir. 5 to be exact. But only requiring one tow sir, and that was most likely due to a loose wire and starting procedure ignorance sir.

Goodman: Playing hard to get, eh? How did this Mr. S. Frei take it?

Irving: Well sir, Mr. S. Frei is not the best nut and bolt man. Oil changes, keeps the chain lubed, can rebuild an Amal and change a spark plug, but he gave up serious bike work in 1978 sir.

Goodman: Why?

Irving: He finally realized he was horrible at it.

Goodman: A man needs to know his limitations. And lord knows we would hardly sell a bike if customers had to pass a mechanics test.

Irving: So, Mr. S. Frei has a brother who owns several Velo's sir, and that's another story sir, but through his brother, a certain Mr. J. Frei, he was in contact with a qualified Velo man, a certain Mr. F. Meyer, a trusted Velo man himself.

Goodman: Yes, Mr. Meyer, I have heard of him. Engineering background I believe. I am assuming his brother is the reason he bought VM6607C?

Irving: Yes sir, that's how it goes sir. Word of mouth always. One test ride and they are hooked.

Goodman: Mark that down Irving, extra points for Mr. J. Frei in the book. It takes courage to let other people ride your bike, even if they are related.

Irving: Yes sir. So, Mr. S. Frei doubled down. In his visits to Mr. Meyer the Clutch was overhauled with new parts, the wiring issues were resolved, the old Boyer was binned for a Tri-Spark, the compression release was rectified, brakes refreshed, and cables replaced. The seizing issue was addressed via checking the timing and carburation. But it didn't take sir, as VM6607C was still depressed, and quite frankly a little worn out.

Goodman: That can happen.

Irving: Yes sir. Well, there is more sir. VM6607C was so depressed it failed to make it to Mr. Danmeier's umpteenth 50th birthday party ride, making an early exit to the chase truck on the way to the event. Some sort of reaction to the sale again we think, pinning for its former owner and the wonderful garage left behind. Anyway, Mr. Meyer was at the ride and suggested a top end refresh, perhaps a new piston and bore. A serious look- see. An escalation in egorts. Mr. S. Frei agrees, and the work is done. Headwork at Engine Dynamics, as well as a O60" bore with new piston.

Goodman: .060? That stretching it a bit isn't it, Irving?

Irving: Perhaps, but not that unusual these days sir. You should have seen the old piston, it was knurled! Well, the sizing seems to be resolved, and we are happy to report she is an easy starter and is set to make the 1000-mile Ft. Bragg rally, and seems to be finally warming to this Mr. S. Frei. Except for one thing.

Goodman: What's that?

Irving: It's a drinking problem sir, she likes to drink the 50 weight.

Goodman: Balderdash. Rings haven't broken in yet. Send him a message through our Facebook avatar, that Hinson fellow. Tell him to pack some extra plugs and a few liters of the good stug. You know there is only one solution to this issue Irving, and that's more riding.

Irving: Exactly sir, more riding.

Goodman: That's enough for now Irving, why don't you go for a ride or design a new engine or do whatever you dam well please. I'm going to see the wife for a bit, run a few numbers with her and then head out to the North racetrack myself. Keep an eye on this one Irving, and report back to me with updates as you see fit. One more thing Irving.

Irving: What's that sir?

Goodman: Thank you for choosing Veloce, LTD at the gate, we do appreciate your expertise.

Irving: It was the proper choice sir.

Closing shot: The camera pulls out through a window and slowly reveals the front of the factory. A huge Veloce LTD sign is revealed, yellow script against a black background. Below the sign stands a row of perfect Velocettes, From KTT's to Thurxtons, all topped up and ready to ride. The camera continues to draw back, into the clouds, as heavenly music takes over as the thump of the Browlett & Lindley engines fades away.



NEWS FLASH: DON DANMEIER SELLS A BIKE



JOHN & KELSEY RAY SOMEWHERE ON THE LOST COAST

John Ray - my uncle John - has loomed large in my imagination my whole life. I'm told I look like him, think like him, take after him in hobby-intensity and perhaps also in stubbornness. In high school, I wore an old t-shirt from his first band, Kittyhawk, out of Seattle. His old trumpet is still under my bed at my parents' house. He still sends my siblings and I, all thirty-somethings now, gift cards at Christmas. But he's always lived across the country, and his visits to St. Louis growing up were somewhat rare. I never really knew him well.

What I did know mostly came from my dad, John's baby brother: that he played bass in that band; that he likes good wine and White Castle hamburgers and the Beach Boys; that he had a phase of ditching his bologna sandwiches in the garage before school, much to the secret delight of my always-hungry dad, age 5.

And, of course, I've always known that John rides motorcycles. We grew up hearing about his and my aunt Sue Ray's epic rides in California, Washington, and the Isle of Man. I have an old photo of one of John's bikes hanging in my room, a classic-looking black and chrome thing on the edge of the coast, in front of the bright blue ocean. In other words, I've always assumed kinship, but I've never really had the chance to dig in. So when he invited me on this year's 900-mile Velocette rally, I agreed instantly - never mind that I didn't even know what a Velocette was.

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Maybe it's because I just got into motorcycling several years ago, on my own, and as a woman with no mechanical background, but the most important thing to me about a bike is that it starts. I wouldn't know what to do, on the road by myself, if it didn't, and I haven't made time to learn. At home in Denver, I ride a 2023 Royal Enfield Scram: works-every-time electric start, I-don't-know-shit-about-shit-proof.

For this year's Velocette rally, Sue generously loaned me something much better - her bright red, 1984 Moto Guzzi V65, cute as all get out. New by Velocette club standards, sure, but still old enough to challenge someone like me. I flew out to Napa a few days before the rally, and it was decided that I would ride the Guzzi solo up the coast to Fort Bragg while John trailered his Velocettes and our luggage.

Riding the Guzzi around with John the Friday before the rally, I kept making mistakes: I forgot about first the choke and later the kill switch. I left the blinker on. I failed to adjust to the new clutch fast enough and stalled the bike in multiple intersections.

Strangers on this road we are on

KELSEY RAY

And please don't get me started on the center stand. With each screwup, my confidence plummeted; I wondered what John was thinking up ahead as I fell behind on the scenic, twisty roads. At our first stop, I asked worriedly, "Sorry for being - am I - slow?" "Yes," John said bluntly. Then, kindly, "But we're not in any hurry."

I pushed myself to try to stay within sight of him, to prove that I did, in fact, know how to ride a motorcycle. I relished the beauty of the curvy Napa backroads and felt the surge of gleeful joy in my chest that all motorcyclists must know. But in bed Saturday night, luggage packed and riding clothes laid out, I let myself succumb to the kind of anxious fear that works itself into your bloodstream. Was I going to slow John down on his big annual motorcycle trip? Was he already regretting bringing me along?

Sunday morning, once the bike was packed for my ride up Highway 1, John came to me holding a small black bag. "I almost forgot - your tool roll!" He offered a few extra spark plugs, too, for good measure. I blinked. I almost laughed. How large exactly was the gulf between his (very reasonable) assumptions and my ignorance? I double checked that I had the owner's manual and crossed my fingers that I'd have cell service if I broke down. I took a deep breath. I swung a leg over the Moto Guzzi and made my way down the driveway. What on earth was I doing?!

What I was doing, as the little red Guzzi and I made our way along the breathtaking vistas of Highway 1, was allowing myself to participate in something despite not being the best at it. What I was doing, riding the whole way without stopping, suddenly spooked about mechanical issues, was being brave, which by definition is only possible if you're a little bit scared. What I was doing, winding my way too-slowly around the curves of the old road, inhaling the familiar, salty smell of the sea air, was getting myself to the starting point of the annual Velocette rally - taking myself on an adventure.



JR'S NEON NOD TO VELOCE LTD ©KELSEY RAY

I made it to the parking lot of the Harbor Lite Lodge as it filled with people, trailers and bikes. Sixty strangers-to-me, swapping travel stories and showing off projects from the prior year. It's fun to look back, now that they're not strangers anymore: sharing my gas station Fig Newtons with Jim Romain; trying the beer Ally and Eric Smalley brought from Wisconsin; peeking into Joe Wright's van, where he'd slept on the trek from Iowa amongst his multiple Velocettes; feeling immediately taken with Dana Shatt's friendly exuberance. We gathered for the welcome banquet, ate barbecue and got the packets with our daily route sheets, every mile of which John and Niel Macdonald had driven just months before. What followed was a week of the most beautiful, challenging, perfect motorcycle riding I've ever done.

Man, the riding. We'd go down along the coast in the chilly morning mist, taking in the waves crashing against the shore, inhaling more of that sea air; then we'd be out into the mountains, sweating and squinting in the hot afternoon sun. We made our way up steep hillsides with expansive vistas stretching out as far as we could see, and along narrow, winding forest roads, the tree canopy overhead casting dappled shadows that demanded full attention.

Taken as a whole, the daily routes - constant curves, undulating hills, tight hairpins, plenty of elevation - felt almost like a curriculum. And, trial by fire, I learned. On the first day, after riding behind me a while, Steve Eorio suggested that I chill out and stop steering so much. I relished how much easier things felt when I relaxed my shoulders and leaned with the bike. The next day, after a pretty big group had gathered for lunch, Steve challenged me to lead on the way home. I reluctantly agreed, but I admit I felt unexpectedly good as I rode in front for 25-something twisty miles. Was I still slow? Oh, probably. But nobody, it seemed, was in any hurry.



'90 MELO VELO RALLY & SUE RAY'S MOTO GUZZI

Every day, after 200 or so miles of riding, we'd gather in the parking lot. The first night, my brain was so exhausted from concentration that I fell asleep early. But I got into the groove. We drank beers, shared club stories and lore, talked past dark under fluorescent lights. People tinkered with their bikes, fixing the problems that had revealed themselves on the road. I started to see the appeal of old machines - not only did they smell and sound better than my Scram, but without modern technology, it was easier to feel connected to the bike and to the road. And there's definitely something to be said for the old ways - I couldn't believe how much more colorful the world around me was on the days I used the route sheets instead of GPS.

We traveled mostly in small, fluid groups, passing each other over and over throughout the day as we stopped for gas and food and photos. I rode a lot with Debbie Macdonald, and with Carl Greenlund and Steve, and once, as it got dark, behind Joe, with Ally and Eric two-up in front of me after Eric's Velocette broke down. One afternoon near Boonville, riding alone while John tended to a mechanical issue back at the lodge, the Guzzi suddenly wouldn't start.

Before I even had time to panic, Blaise Descollognes, Irene Chen, Arnaud Goethals, Paul Murphy and Adam Cecchini rode out from the trees, quickly diagnosed and then fixed a loose fuse, and folded me into their pack for the rest of the day. But mostly, I rode behind John, my eyes never far from the back of his Clubman, trying not to lose him in the turns.



FELLOW VELO-ISTS WITH "THE KNOWLEDGE"
©KELSEY RAY

As the days went on, I learned more about him, this kindred spirit. I learned that he likes not just the Beach Boys but also Little Feat, the Allman Brothers, and most of all the Stones. He still plays bass, now in a band of "geezers," in Napa. I heard about coming of age in the shadow of the Vietnam War with an early draft number, and about the epic motorcycle trip he took in 1972 from Missouri to Vancouver to California and back. I asked endlessly about life in Seattle in the 80's and California in the 90's; about my grandparents; about my dad. And, of course, we talked about Velocettes.

I think it's okay to come to the Velocette rally if, like me, you've never owned or ridden or even started a Velocette. But Velocettes are, undeniably, the heart and soul of the club. In the same way that you can't be brave unless you're scared, you can't own a Velocette unless you know - and I mean really know - motorcycles, which means the club is filled with extraordinary mechanics with extraordinary brains. (An example: Kim Lohstroh Young arriving in Ferndale on her rigid Velocette with no front brake, Carl having rigged the brake lever into a makeshift throttle - on the side of the road, no less - when hers failed. The way I heard it, he proposed this fix by asking, "So, have you ever ridden a snowmobile?")

Before the rally, I couldn't understand why anyone would want a bike so temperamental and notoriously hard to start. I asked Blaise directly: just why are you people such, well, freaks for these things? I'd had too much wine to remember exactly now, but I remember he said something poignant. Something about how the severity of the challenge made the ultimate success all the better; about the hard making it great.

Mechanical failures are a source of anxiety to me, someone who wants total self-sufficiency and to never bother anyone for even a minute. But a friend's boyfriend once had a different take: "I love breaking down. That's when you get to call your buddies and figure it out." Spending time with John and all his oil-stained VOCNA kin, hanging out on the side of the road while everyone worked together on a bike before loading it into the chase truck, I realized that Velocettes offer the supreme version of that. Getting a Velocette to run is the ultimate project, requiring a vast body of knowledge that can't really be found in just one place. The skills, knowledge, parts and equipment needed are too much for one person. And that just means: You're going to need friends.

As the rally went on, I started to feel surrounded by them. I felt it most of all late at night in Ferndale, milling around the checkerboard floor of a dive bar. Everyone had a beer, the pool tables were busy, and more than one set of eyes got misty waxing poetic to me about the meaning of this club. We hugged and laughed and cursed the potholes of Mattole Road. Dana put The Kinks on the jukebox. "Strangers on this road we are on / we are not two, we are one."

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When I finally landed back in Denver, exhausted and exhilarated from my 1,100 miles of riding, I dropped my bags on the floor of my room and sat on the edge of my bed. I could already feel the blues coming on, the kind that inevitably follow an extended period of feeling so alive. But I was also inspired. I scrolled through photos from the trip and accepted new friend requests on social media. I ordered the book *The Perfect Vehicle*, about Moto Guzzis, which Mark Weinrobe had recommended on the rally. I pulled my forever-unread copy of *Zen* and the *Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* off my bookshelf and put it on my nightstand.

And then I saw that framed photo hanging on the wall, the one of John's motorcycle in front of the ocean. To me, it was always just a generic motorcycle on a generic coast, the generic shapes plenty to spark thoughts of freedom, sea air, wind in my face. But home again from my long journey, I reconsidered it. Huh. There's that iconic fishtail exhaust. And there's the nameplate on the tank. What do you know? A Velocette all along.



GENERIC MOTORCYCLE ON A GENERIC COAST
©KELSEY RAY

The Brown Out

*A postscript about someone
by someone who should know better*

There is a special kind of madness that overtakes a man when he decides, of his own free will, sober, in the harsh light of day, to revive a Velocette. Not buy one. Not admire one from behind a rope in some dust-choked museum. Revive one. This is the kind of decision usually reserved for people who have run out of better ways to destroy their marriages, their bank accounts, and their will to live.

Spencer Brown, God help him, made that decision about a Thruxton.

Some of you will remember the man. He wrote in, months back, with a long, bitter, genuinely funny howl of a complaint about his Thruxton refusing flatly, and contemptuously to run. I ran the piece. And the legacy members, bless their oil-stained hearts, responded the way old priests respond to a man who's shown up at Mass without knowing the words: Velocettes are not motorcycles. You either get it or you don't. Which is, near as I can tell, the closest thing this club has to a religious doctrine, and about as welcoming as one.

So I did what any responsible degenerate would do: I threw Spencer to the wolves. Introduced him around, hooked him up with every VMT lunatic I could find, and prayed that someday, somewhere, we'd see him limp into a rally on that Thruxton under his own power. He has not finished fettling. He may never finish fettling. Fettling, I've come to understand, is not a task with an endpoint: it's a state of being, like Catholic guilt or crippling nostalgia. But hope, unlike the Thruxton, springs eternal.



SPENCER AND HIS SOFA ©JP DEFAULT

I stayed on him. Talked him up more than once when he threatened to sell the thing, which in this club is roughly equivalent to threatening to burn down the church. I told him my own story of showing up at a rally a few years back with a half-dead Viper, watching two grown men roll up their sleeves and nearly come to blows over my magneto like a couple of drunks fighting over the last woman at closing time. (I understand now, in ways I didn't ask to, what it feels like to be fought over. It's flattering and... arousing. I digress.) We got it running. I squeezed short of 200 miles out of it over a few days before the rally ended, not bad for a rookie hauling a glorified parts bin. That's the power of community, I told him, over and over, like a man selling a timeshare.

And by God, he showed up. Fort Bragg. This year. Not on a Velo. On some American sofa. The mechanical equivalent of showing up to a knife fight with a Barcalounger. Think what you like about that. We don't discriminate here. No Velo required, that was always the deal. But Spencer showed up, which in this outfit counts for more than most people's entire riding careers.

I hope he found whatever burns the midnight oil in the rest of us to keep these leaking, backfiring, gloriously stubborn British thangs on the road. I hope he felt the camaraderie, the accumulated decades of shared knowledge, and the sheer bollocks required to keep doing this to yourself year after year. (John Sims will explain the bollocks part)

Spencer: Thank you for showing up. Thank you for dipping a toe into this beautiful, filthy cesspit of a club. We all hope you don't sell the Thruxton, and that you keep grinding away at it. Persevere, the way Olav Hassel keeps reminding us all to do.

You've got every piece of knowledge you'll ever need sitting right here in this room.

For God's sake, man. Use it!

They Hear What You Say

Larry Luce



The clock is ticking, time is running out, the pressure is building. What happened at that rally? Truth is, I can't really say and the editor wants answers.

This is the second year in a row it has happened; a bike which had performed faultlessly for years crapped out. First it was the red Venom and now the '51 MAC. Both bikes had completed a total of probably a dozen summer rallies and numerous other events with never a break down. And now both have left me stuck on the side of the road. What has gone wrong?

Could it be the fact I said I was going to sell them? I know they are inanimate mechanical devices but something is happening here. I can understand how the casual observer might assume I just waited till the last minute to prep the bikes and they weren't ready for the arduous task at hand but that is far from the truth. I started prepping the MAC over a year ago. It's true the guy who bored the cylinder for me took about eight months to get it back to me but still. I had the bike running at least a few weeks before the rally start date and I rode it maybe seventy miles and it worked just fine.

LARRY SEEKING GUIDANCE FROM THE CLUTCH SPIRITS
©JP DEFAULT

“Perhaps there is ritual I need to perform...”

The Japanese religion Shintoism (I think that's the one) ascribes a divine force to all objects sentient or otherwise. Perhaps I have betrayed the spirit of my machines by stating my intention to end our relationship. Perhaps there is a ritual I need to perform, complete with material sacrifices, to assuage the spirits. I went to a lot of trouble to bring these bikes to life when I first acquired them and I think I should get some credit in the spirit world for that effort.

The MAC is currently languishing in my garage. I have replaced the clutch, removed the top end of the motor, opened the timing case and can find no source for the horrible clatter it was making. I don't want to split the cases. I'm not Catholic but, perhaps, an exorcism is in order.

Background: The Velocette Oregon rally of 2025 was the last rally I attended with Thruxton. I trailed it up with the '99 Maxima from Los Angeles with an overnight stay. It was a fine rally, but the electrical starter gave out due to a dead battery from a failed voltage regulator at the end of Day 4. I decided to go in the chase truck with Neil for Day 5 since I had been nursing a bad knee. At the banquet rally, after a close vote with Kim's 2 flat tires, I won the Crock Award for the effort. I joined a memorable group of VOCNA members and had Torrance Trophy add my name to it so to be ready for the next rally.

Introduction: The Velocette rally, as announced in Fishtail West and on Facebook by John Ray, with Fort Bragg being the hub on the Lost Coast of Northern California. The rally was nearly 900 miles going through Mendocino, Sonoma and Humboldt counties. I got the hotel reservation at the Harbor Lite in Ft. Bragg and in Santa Rosa going up and Button Willow going home. I was glad to hear Olav Hassel and Larry Luce were coming up from So Cal. Also, Gil Loe gave me his Velocette books to give to the club, and I had the poster "Velocette Viper Venom" by Ed Badajos, 1969, photocopied and framed as a gift for the club.

Thruxton got the voltage regulator repaired, new Metzler tires front and rear, plus a gear box 1st gear and main shaft to solve the jumping out of 1st gear under load. "You had basically worn-out 1st gear" said "Famous" James, mechanic of Century Cycles. The Thruxton close ratio gear box makes you spend a lot of time in first gear. The annual maintenance of oil changes, chassis and Alton starter lubricates plus chains and cables filled out the list. I adopted a Beeline GPS from Adam Cecchini's article in Fishtail. It attaches to the handlebar and uses your phone app for the route. It worked okay on trial runs from the house though wondered how a rally would be mapped out.



VELO AT CENTURY CYCLE RALLY PREPARATION
©DANA SHATTS

Saturday, June 13, Torrance CA to Santa Rosa, CA
Raul and I loaded the bike on the trailer Saturday morning for the 440-mile trip to Best Western in Santa Rosa. Trailered cars are limited to 55 mph on California Interstates meaning the slow lane with the trucks for the MAX and Velo. It was fortunate because a front tire BLEW out on Interstate 5 just outside of Button Willow! AAA saved the day and Castro Tire service replaced the tire with one made in Thailand and I was on my way with just a 2-hour delay.

1000 Mile Rally Travel Journal

June 13 to June 22, 2026

VMT 838C with Dana Shatts



VELO AND MAX AT LEVINSON RALLY START
©DANA SHATTS

Sunday, June 14, Santa Rosa CA to Ft. Bragg, CA
Best Western Santa Rosa was great after the previous day, which made the 120 miles to Ft. Bragg an easy trip. I was one of the first to check in for the Velo group and help John Ray set up the welcoming dinner for 64 people and 50 bikes. It was great to see Eric and Ally Smalley with their Velo side car auction bike, "We got the side car basically for the price of the bike!" A great tri tip roast and chicken catered dinner meeting up with new and old rally folks. The Beeline GPS rally map files for each day of the rally were downloaded for the rally start.

Monday, June 15, Rally Day 1, Day Ride, 101 miles
The Ft. Bragg morning greeted us with thick, wet fog which meant no summer riding gear. I got to follow Eric and Ally's side car first rally trip which took us up Highway 1 and into the redwoods. The bikes ran well at a good pace with a lunch stop at the Loose Caboose in Willits with Velo folks from Georgia who will be hosting the East Coast Velo rally this fall. The ride went well with the Thruxton using 2 gallons, getting 50 mpg. Olav did okay on his Husky, John Sims on his KSS and the Velo side car passed its shake out trip!



SELFIE AT THE LOOSE CABOOSE WITH GEORGIA VELO
FOLKS, "THE NEILS" MCLEAN ©DANA SHATTS



RIDERS ON THE LOST COAST
RALLY START
©DANA SHATTS



PAUL D'ORLÉANS WITH HIS THRUXTON
©DANA SHATTS



ZEN MOTORCYCLE
MAINTENANCE SHOP
DAVE HARRIS,
PROPRIETOR
©DANA SHATTS

**Tuesday, June 16, Rally Day 2
Day Ride, 212 miles**

Eric, Ally, Joe Wright and I left on our bikes for the Redwood Forest loop. The Thruxton ran well with the group though the tachometer started to squeal, needle bouncing and died. The rally pace I could live without the tach as long as the speedometer and odometer worked well, shifting to match the gear with first number of the suggested speed. Jim Romain joined us and suggested we go into Hopland for lunch though it was slightly off route. "You are in my back yard!", Jim said and it was a fine lunch. The trouble was when we left, I went out first into traffic and missed the first turn. I stopped, but due to traffic missed the turn again. I turned around after getting directions, I got the correct road out of town. I finally got on route though the other riders had moved on. I used Beeline and the rally map and got caught up at the rally rest stop. They offered "Wine and puppies" at the saloon though with the wine server and puppies being both cute. A good Mexican dinner with Olav, John, his niece Kelsey Ray, Niel and Debbie Macdonald, but I added 100 ml of gear box oil.

**Wednesday, June 17, Rally Day 3
Day Ride, 190 miles**

This was "quite the loop" where I woke up late and Eric and Ally had an early start to beat the inland heat. I left with Paul d'Orléans leading on his Thruxton at a fast pace. I went with John Sims and his KSS to take us through the loop. The Zen House Motorcycle Maintenance in Pt. Arena was a stop that welcomed all our rally bikes.



JOHN SIMS WITH HIS KSS ©DANA SHATTS



WINE & PUPPIES RALLY STOP
©DANA SHATTS

Thursday, June 18, Rally Day 4 Overnight to Ferndale, 163 miles

We are going to the Victoria Inn in Ferndale, a post-Rally hotel hub. We are getting better with bikes, Eric, Ally on the Velo side car, Joe and I on our Venom's. We took off north through the fabulous Avenue of the Giants redwoods. We stopped at the Chandelier Tree where you could drive through a cut-out in the tree. The Lost Coast beaches had an isolation that was worth the trip on Mattole Road. It unfortunately had rough stretches which Pete Young called, "50 yards of good pavement then dropping into Dante's Inferno!" of deep potholes in dark shadows. Eric and Ally had to push the side car over the Mattole Road hilltop but came down with smiles on their faces. The hotel dinner was wonderfully catered with us going to the pub across the street. I was able to put on the jukebox fifteen Kink's songs in a row which made for a great time for the rally crew.



THRUXTON AT THE LOST COAST ©DANA SHATTS

Friday, June 19, Return to Ft. Bragg, 153 miles, (actual 110 miles)

The crew had a "heads up" about the route back to Ferndale and elected to "cut out the bumps" and returned on Highway 101 through the Avenue of the Giants. I had the Beeline draining my iPhone battery but was taught how to put the phone on "Low power" mode and have it get through the rally. We had a great lunch in the forest community and returned early to the hotel. This allowed the cleaning of the Thruxton from the rear to the front with WD-40 and paper towels plus some wax for tomorrow's Concours d'Oligance.

Saturday, July 20, Annual Rally & General Meeting

The morning had us lining up our bikes for the Concours where we had 31 Velocettes lined up for the rally judging, a great count for the club! We all voted for our favorite bikes for the annual meeting prizes. It was then time to hook up the trailer and load the bike which Scottie was good enough to be helpful, like everyone on the rally was for each other. The General Meeting and banquet had the rally members dressing up in their evening finery and bringing out their best wines. We had gotten the Crock Award, Venom poster and Gil's Velo books ready for the awards ceremony. It was catered with a great selection of foods. John and Paul presented the awards and I covered photos. The new members got Gil's Velo books, Eric and Ally the Squid for riding the sidecar through the rally, Blaise Descollignes got the Eddie Arnold Award and JP received the Crock for having not one but two Velo's breakdown at the rally. Blaise & Irene Chen will be the next co-president, and the rally will be at Mt. Shasta, CA.



VELOCETTE LINE UP FOR THE CONCOURS D'OLIGANCE
©DANA SHATTS

Sunday, June 21, Ft. Bragg to Button Willow 420 miles

The Sunday morning drive out of Ft. Bragg was very smooth, almost heavenly after the rally. The Bay area is always a challenge but cleared its toll bridges and made it to Button Willow. The Economy Inn was very basic, but it was walking distance to Taste of India, one of the best Indian restaurants in So Cal. Olav stopped in while I was eating to pick up food to go since he was almost home. Great meal!

Monday, June 22, Button Willow to Torrance 130 miles

An early start had me join the commuters and arrive home in the morning. Raul was good enough to help unload the bike and get the trailer over to his house. The post rally assessment of the bike, clothes, tools, and photos and getting back into domestic life after I left for 9 days for the Fort Bragg rally. Looking forward to sharing the photos and the Fishtail article with the club, thanking all of you for a fabulous time!



ERIC, ALLY AND VELO SIDE CAR ©DANA SHATTS

CLUTCH SURGERY WITH DR. SEAN DUGGAN



On film: Ft. Bragg 2026 Rally

Wrenching...



FRANK BRENNAN SIZING UP JOHN'S VELO MOES



CHASE TRUCK MANEUVERS

Divising...



HE'S GOT THE [VELO] TOUCH



SIMON PETERS IN CAREFUL CONSIDERATION OF NEXT STEPS



THE FINEST PIT CREW AROUND

Dissecting...

PORCH HANGS W/ KIM & SIRI



IT'S GUS!



THE AMBASSADORS OF COOL



MARK W/ A PROPER PINT AT THE PUB



FINALLY ARRIVING IN FERDLE...

FRESH FOOLS



THE THREE STAGES OF MATTOL ROAD



POSITIVE AFFIRMATIONS
ALWAYS APPRECIATED!



THE KIDNAPERS WERE HERE

FERVENT FRIENDS



JOE'S PERFECT PATCH OF LIGHT
W/ TOOL ROLL AT THE READY



A WINDOW INTO OUR RALLY WORLD....



YOU JUST HAD TO BE THERE.



The Law of Attraction

Scottie Sharpe

For some time, I had it in my mind to get a British bike.

For many years, I took full advantage of the club's warm and welcoming nature, which generously permits all brands of steeds, and I navigated Velocette rallies from the mechanical sanctuary of one old BMW or another. From my perch of smug German reliability, I observed my dear friends on British iron breaking down at delightfully regular intervals. Yet... I also noticed they reaped the unique benefits of this mechanical incontinence: impromptu repair parties on the side of the road and spontaneous wrench fests in hotel parking lots, fueled by laughter and libations. After a few years of watching from the sidelines of metric reliability, it seemed to me that I was missing the full experience. Riding broody British iron was seemingly ... fun! If I ever hoped to truly meld with the social *joie de vivre*, I needed to stop behaving sensibly and procure a morose and temperamental British motorcycle of my own.

Like most vintage motorcycle enthusiasts, I have seen photographs of Vincents. I have read some history. I have heard Lance Lindborg crooning about the Vincent Black Shadow and winning all the girls' hearts. And who hasn't had heart palpitations when the dashing Mark Stephenson rides by in black leather on his impeccable Rapide? Could I attain such a talisman? At one point I may have viewed owning a Vincent Black Shadow as I viewed owning a private island or a personal spacecraft: a grand fantasy, but thoroughly out of reach.

I thought maybe I could find a fixer-upper, a ratty one—reasoning that a scruffy, dented, oil-stained, but perhaps well-loved example was the absolute ceiling of what I could reasonably hope to attain. I searched for a few months, but that ambition was proving remarkably treacherous, yielding two memorable candidates: the first turned out to be an outright scam run by an internet criminal. The second was genuine, though frozen completely solid—serving as a rusted, immobile monument to the moisture levels of its owner's basement.

With the search for a Vincent rolling around in the back of my mind, I attended the Velo rally two years ago in McCall, Idaho (an experience that was nothing short of sublime! Thank you, Kim!). On the very first day of riding, I volunteered to drive chase in PDO's van. Just about to leave McCall, I stopped to fuel up the van and was approached by a very friendly fellow BMW fanatic, who was attracted by my BMW R50S on the trailer. His name was Ray.



INSTANT BUDDIES - MEETING RAY AT THE GAS STATION
RAY AND SCOTTIE ©SCOTTIE SHARPE

Ray's hospitality turned out to be legendary. That Saturday morning, he treated several of us to an impromptu whitewater rafting adventure which turned out to be fantastic! Never one to let a good day end early, Ray and I managed to pack in yet another adventure that same afternoon—visiting an elderly gentleman out in the countryside who had a barn full of vintage BMWs, including a stunning Daytona Orange R90S that Ray purchased on the spot!

Ray and I kept in touch after the rally ended, often chatting about what motorcycles we dreamed about having, including my long-standing dream of owning a Vincent.

It was only after that rally that I happened to be texting with PDO and friends--and jokingly brought up the "law of attraction." After Paul had brought home seemingly countless Velocette treasures from the Las Vegas auction, I teasingly suggested that perhaps simply putting the intention out into the universe was how rare British motorcycles magically materialized in people's garages.

As it turns out, that is exactly how the universe works.



BRUCE CONRAD SHOWS US ONE OF HIS
CHAMPIONSHIP RACE HELMETS
©SCOTTIE SHARPE



CELEBRATING VICTORY: RAY, SCOTTIE AND JOEY
©SCOTTIE SHARPE

Because...a year after that rally, Ray happened to mention to me that a friend of a friend had a Vincent he may want to sell. Ray did a little follow up research and sent me the phone number for the Vincent's owner: Bruce Conrad. Bruce was a legend in his own right—a former competitive racer whose history on two wheels was as storied and impressive as the motorcycles in his care. He was in his 80's, and had retired to Boise.

I gave Bruce a call on a Wednesday and introduced myself. By Thursday, I asked if he would like to join me for breakfast on Saturday morning. Before hanging up, I slipped in the key question: "By the way, Bruce... how much are you asking for the Vincent?"

With a figure agreed upon, I grabbed my friend Joe and tossed our gear into my 95 Mercedes E320 wagon which is perpetually ready for any road trip, hitched the single-rail Kendon trailer, and hit the road for Idaho. We stayed with Ray that night and had a wonderful evening catching up, eating, drinking, and anticipating the day ahead. Saturday morning, we popped awake earlier than kids on Christmas morning, vibrating with excitement to meet Bruce and lay eyes on the Vincent.

When we arrived, Bruce greeted us warmly and we talked about his racing career, family, and his motorcycling adventures around the world—he literally knew everyone and had done everything! He toured us through so many artifacts around his house: prize trophies and vintage riding gear. It was amazing. And then we got to see the Vincent!

As we began talking and taking in the machine, Bruce dropped a bombshell: in an extraordinary act of generosity and a desire to see his machines go to a good home, he offered me two Vincents for the price of one!

It was an offer no sane person could refuse, but it left me with a hilarious tactical dilemma: I had arrived with a single-rail Kendon trailer and a tolerance for only one Vincent project. I had no time, patience, budget, or desire to take on TWO Vincent projects!

The second Vincent—a Comet—wasn't fully assembled—it was in boxes. However, the parts were magnificent and exceptionally well preserved, with key components like the engine and speedometer already meticulously restored.

Fortunately, my acute case of "Vincent fever" was highly contagious, and Ray had caught it almost instantly. Seeing the quality of the boxed parts and recognizing the cosmic alignment of the moment, Ray made a generous offer to buy the second Vincent, and I accepted. We toasted, and may have even finished the bottle.

It was the ultimate win-win: Bruce saw his beloved machines passed along to passionate caretakers, the universe's mysterious laws of attraction were fully satisfied, and both Ray and I pulled on our boots as newly minted Vincent owners.

Over the next 20 months, I threw myself into the restoration—rebuilding the brakes, installing new tires, overhauling the fuel system and carbs, and replacing the wiring harness. (Side note: a bout of shingles knocked me out of the 2025 Oregon rally, which is why this report is only now seeing the light of day!) Unfortunately, the one thing I overlooked—the crank seal—proved to be my undoing on the 2026 Velo ride.

On the first day of the rally in Fort Bragg, my wife, Ally, and I boarded the Vincent and began to roll north. The engine pulsed just above idle speed in fourth gear. As I wiped the thick coastal condensation off my visor, the Smiths chromometric speedometer darted to and fro, as if gently wiping the 60 mph mark on its speedometer dial face. The Vincent was fun to ride, packed with loads of low-end torque! Two-up riding was effortless and the brakes worked exceptionally well.

About 60 miles in, going up the mountain on Brandscomb Road towards Laytonville, the crank seal began leaking oil onto the clutch, causing it to slip and making two-up progress impossible for my wife and me. We called the chase truck, and Niel Macdonald came to our aid without delay! When the truck pulled up, I noticed Mark Stephenson jump out of the passenger seat—and then noticed that the other space in the bed was already occupied by another Vincent. Oh, the irony! We made Ally and Niel swear a solemn oath never to speak a word of this statistical impossibility to anyone, and proceeded back to the hotel.

Luckily I had brought a BMW R69S as a backup bike and we were able to continue to ride the additional days with much delight! This year, I have it planned to replace the seals in the Shadow and fettle a bit more with the cable routing. And the Vincent (and Ally and I) will see you next year for another try!



BRUCE, RAY AND SCOTTIE SECURE THE VINCENT
FOR THE RIDE HOME
©SCOTTIE SHARPE

A 'Zonie' Thruxton Legacy

Or, history clues in the toolbox

Paul d'Orléans



Bill Weigle - Miraflores Locks
Panama Canal - 1966

VMT165 & ITS THEN OWNER | PANAMA

There was a time when a small group of Zonies, or Panamaniacs, were an important fixture in our club. On reflection, it's possible these fellows were the most distinctive group of Velo owners in North America, who had all bought brand new Velocettes while working adjacent to (or sometimes in) the US military in the Panama Canal Zone, in the 1960s. Their stories are legend, and included road racing in the Zone, and further exploration off-road into the wilds of Central America. "I shoulda recorded that" is a familiar refrain among younger club members, like myself, who listened to hilarious tales of their adventures in Panama and Costa Rica in the 1960s and '70s, by club members now mostly gone, or at the very least, no longer attending the Rally. More on that in the Chairman's Chat.

My story with VMT165, an immaculate 1965 Thruxton, is brief, but the history of the bike from new is known, now. The Thruxton was listed on the Classic Avenue web auction site as a 1967 model, but the numbers indicated a '65, a first-year Thruxton in correct silver/blue livery, immaculately restored with what looked like all original bits, including handlebars, which was a factory option. If in doubt, check out the Lou Branch ads for Thruxtons with 'US' cowhorn handlebars! I've never seen one so equipped in person, but Lou must have actually sold a few thus. I placed a bid as a goodwill gesture on the site, just to stimulate bidding in this lousy market, as I hate to see an impeccable Velo go un-noticed. That worked, as someone did outbid me, but it wasn't enough for a sale. Out of curiosity,

I pinged Nick Smith to ask about the reserve, and suddenly we were negotiating...and oh crap, I've committed to buy a Thruxton.

Living half the year in Mexico meant the bike needed shipping from Ventura to my SF warehouse, which Nick helped sort via a gent with a truck wanting gas money - no small figure these days. Mechanic Kazu Nakamura received the bike in my stead, and I suggested he check it over and ride it, as I intended it as my mount for this year's Rally: Suzie Heartbreak hates her passenger position with clip-ons, but VMT165 has handlebars, so no problem. Kazu declared it in amazing condition, and was running like a clock, which was a relief, as so many 'restored' bikes are cosmetic jobs.

There's only one way to find out if a bike is actually sorted, which is a proper ride. The opportunity presented itself during John Ray's Spring Opener, although the timing was tight: almost 'off the plane and on the bike'. That morning, as I affixed my '65 Bonneville's plate to the Thruxton (old habits never change), I asked Kazu if the VMT had come with any paperwork, and he showed me a Florida title with owner's name William Weigle. Well, isn't that a piece of luck? Bill was a regular attendee for many years on the Summer Rally, and his bikes were always immaculate and well sorted. And so it proved, as the Spring Opener went without a hitch, even riding an hour each way to Napa on the freeway, then taking in the ride proper. Hardly a drop of oil was shed, barring a couple of drips on the timing chest, an indication there was really oil inside.



VMT165 & ITS' CURRENT CARETAKER | '26 RALLY
©PAUL D'ORLÉANS



MAY • 66 •

VINTAGE PANAMA MUD

A little digging online revealed that Bill Weigle had sent early photos showing VMT165 in 1966 in Panama, to Ed Gilkison, which Ed then shared on the Velocette Thruxton Enthusiasts page on Facebook. A more recent photo showed Bill with two Thruxtons and two enormous trophies. The second bike in that photo is VMT815RC, one of the ten factory 'squish head' Thruxtons sold by the Veloce race department as engines only in 1967. That machine was also sold (privately) by Classic Avenue, and is one number earlier than the ex-James Williams squish head I once owned (VMT 816RC) that now sits in the collection of the former CEO of Nike...after being transformed into the White Falcon custom, and sold for \$675,000 through an LA art gallery! The most expensive Velocette ever sold, actually. But that's another story.



FLOYD CLYMER ON VMT165| PANAMA

Opening the toolbox on VMT165, which I shall henceforth call 'Bill', revealed a small plastic tool roll, and a mix of dodgy Japanese and genuine British tools, including a chromed adjustable wrench with 'Weigle' etched in cursive, which I shall treasure. Such small indicators of history become, over time, a real legacy for the future: something to consider for your own bikes. Put your name on it, somewhere, and keep the photos with it, somehow.

1966
L. & R. BILL WEIGLE - FLOYD CLYMER &
CLOIS DUFFIE

One of Bill's 1966 photos shows him solo on the bike at the Panama Canal locks (see beginning of the article), while the other shows Bill and the bike with Floyd Clymer and Clois Duffie, both of whom had Velocette connections. Clymer was a publisher and convicted felon made good: he owned Cycle magazine, and you probably have a Clymer manual in your garage. He also built the last Velocettes, badged as Indians; the famous Indian Velos sold with Venom and Thruxton motors, in a special Italian chassis made by Italjet. Lovely machines. Clois Duffie was claimed by some to be the Velocette importer for Panama, although he may have ordered his bikes through legendary dealership Pride & Clarke in London. I recall Bill and other Panamaniacs mentioning they ordered their Velocettes in particular specifications direct from the factory, which may also be true, with Pride & Clarke acting as the exporting agent. In the case of VMT165, that likely included the standard handlebars and possibly the 1036 Concentric carburetor it currently wears. Others ordered even more exotic spec, like the unique 'Thruxton Scrambler' recently sold by Paul Adams. Now there's a story I'd like to hear...

East Coast Rally Preview

*Greetings from your hosts:
Neil & Margaret McLean*

Our 3rd installation of the East Coast Velocette rally!

Discover the legendary Georgia twisties on two wheels, along the legendary Tail of the Dragon and Blue Ridge Mountains. You don't need a Velocette to join - old bikes preferred - but you'll probably want one soon: they're seductive.

It is the ultimate experience to share this East Coast Rally - a Georgia Adventure - with like-minded individuals, who appreciate the mechanical challenge of maintaining the historical Velocette with friends in new and different places.

Become part of a community built on a passion for riding, wrenching, and camaraderie. We'll start at the head of the Chattahoochee River in Alpine Helen. Lean into curves, around lakes, then reach stunning mountain views on three planned rides through historical paths and town squares.

Join us at the East Coast Rally for memories worth more than gold—and friendships that last long after the ride is over. Come experience the food, scenery, and fellowship that will keep Georgia on your mind forever.

Questions? Contact our hosts, Neil and Margaret Maclean at work247@gmail.com | 706.482.8302
Now make your reservations and get wrenching...!



NEIL'S INDIAN VELO AT '26 RALLY ©DANA SHATTS

RIDER FEE: \$180

NON-RIDER FEE: \$50

*NON-RIDERS ARE MOTO PASSENGERS OR ADULT PARTICIPANTS THAT ARE DRIVING CARS & TRUCKS ALONG THE RIDE. OFFICIAL CHASE TRUCK DRIVERS NOT INCLUDED.

KIDS UNDER 18: FREE

*IF RIDING OWN MOTO, YOU PAY THE RIDER FEE.

Rally Event Schedule:

Friday-Oct. 2 | Early Registration, Free day
Dinner at Loreley Decksides | BYOB

Saturday-Oct. 3 | Regular Registration, Free day
Southern Style BBQ dinner at McLeans

Sunday Oct. 4 | Riding day
Oktoberfest dinner Wurst meals

Monday Oct. 5 | Riding day
Everyone on their own for dinner

Tuesday Oct. 6 | Riding day
Farewell Dinner at Valhalla Resort | Cash Bar

With Oktoberfest filling the festive Bavarian town, the club secured limited special rates at the Loreley Resort along the banks of the Head of the Hooch.

To reserve your room:
Call Loreley at 706-878-2238 TODAY!
Ask for the "Rally 2026" rate.

Loreley Resort | 387 Brucken Strasse
Helen, GA | 30545
www.loreleyresort.com

**SIGN-UP BY: SEPTEMBER 1ST
SCAN HERE!**



RIDE THE MOUNTAINS OF

For Velocettes
and Other Makes

ENJOY THE SCENIC SOUTH
ALPINE HELEN, GEORGIA, OCT 2-6 2026.
VISIT VELOCETTE.ORG TO SIGN UP!

VOCNA at the Scotts Valley Motorcycle Show

John Ray



THE VOCNA REPRESENTATIVES AT SCOTTS VALLEY MC SHOW ©DEBBIE MACDONALD

On Saturday, July 25, Motocharities sponsored a motorcycle show at Scotts Valley High School, near Santa Cruz California. The show featured around 150 machines in classes ranging from British, Italian, and European, to Japanese and American. There was even a class for “barn find” bikes which featured a number of cool unrestored examples.

In addition to the bikes, the show also included vendor displays, ranging from food booths to motorcycle accessory vendors to law firms specializing in motorcycling injuries. Among these vendor booths was the one sponsored by the VOCNA, part of the club’s ongoing efforts to attract new, and especially younger, members.

VOCNA stalwart members Niel & Debbie Macdonald, my wife Sue and I set up and staffed the VOCNA club booth. We set up a canopy and table, where we featured club memorabilia and gave away old issues of FTW. To attract attention from the wandering show attendees, we displayed our Mk VII and Mk VIII KTTs on the grass in front of our popup canopy. We were joined a bit later in the morning by John Sims who rode in on his handsome 1946 KSS Mk II, which he also displayed in front of our booth.

Unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately, the three Cammies (the two KTTs and the KSS) were the only Velocettes in the show. Most of the British bikes were nicely restored Norton Commandos, Triumph Bonneville’s and various BSAs.

The VOCNA booth drew a lot of attention from the meandering crowd, many of whom stopped by to examine the machines and have a chat. Several VOCNA members, and former members, showed up and came over to say “Hi”. We did our best to promote the club and our various activities, especially the week-long Annual Ride & Rally.

We were encouraged that a number of younger lads came by and seemed interested in Velocettes. They uniformly expressed concern about the price of Velos, but we assured them that the market is soft right now, so it is probably an ideal time to buy the bike of their fancy. All in all, it was a fun and successful day. We are looking forward to doing it again in 2027!

CLASSIFIEDS



1948 MAC. Runs and starts well. Participated in the first Velo E. Coast Rally. Nice unrestored condition. \$5750 | Contact: Peter | plvoorhees@gmail.com



1950 Moto Guzzi Aironc Sport. Runs and starts well. Has lots of patina. Tank repainted many years ago. I have ridden it in many Moto Giro East events. \$5750 | Contact: Peter | plvoorhees@gmail.com



5th bike produced after WWII.
1946 Velocette 350cc MAC.
Asking \$9,900 | Contact: classicavenue.com



Custom Built VeloStar as seen in Motorcycle Classics, 2016 September/October Issue.
1959 Velocette MSS type S 500cc in a BSA Gold Star frame and Husqvarna telescopic front forks.
\$8000 | Contact: fishtailwest@gmail.com



1963 Velocette 500cc Venom
Inquiries Contact: classicavenue.com

WANTED

MAC cam M17/5
Contact: fishtailwest@gmail.com

MERCH

Some may say the sidecar is what makes Dana look sexy in this shot... but take a moment... focus on the headwear... notice that fine looking hat?



DANA LOVING SIDECAR LIFE
©ALLY SMALLEY

It can now be YOURS!

Inspired by Dana Shatt's original production run, the official Velocette tank logo, and Olav Hassel's VOCNA motto.

We present our [un]official VOCNA cap!



This 100% cotton, brushed twill, low-profile baseball cap is fully embroidered with the properly angled Velo-logo.

Prefer a bucket hat or trucker cap style?



We can do that, too!

Let us know your preferred style by emailing: fishtailwest@gmail.com and we'll sort you out!



\$30/EACH

+Additional fees for shipping, if required

-TO ORDER-

Email: fishtailwest@gmail.com

OR

Call/Text: 847-917-4692



THE GOODEST MODEL, LUNA
©ALLY SMALLEY

Coda

Another summer rally complete- more oil spilt, new friends made that feel like family. This zine only gets made if you contribute. **Fishtail West # 268 submissions are due: November 2, 2026.** Spam our inbox heartily!

The first, in a long line of many reasons we are members of this club and have agreed (been cajoled) to be editors of this publication is because JP Defaut picked up the phone and offered knowledge and guidance to step off into this Velo journey. For this we are grateful.

We close our first issue with his poem, in our humble opinion, partly inspired by the Ft. Bragg rally, but mostly it would seem informed by the slightly masochistic streak we all seem to share.

Cheers - Ally and Eric Smalley



JP DEFAULT'S 1947 KSS "BOB STRODE RACER" LEGGETT, CALIFORNIA ©JP DEFAULT

A Thousand Miles on a Rigid Spine and the savage brotherhood of fools

by someone who should know better

Some people chase God.
I chased a thousand miles on a Rigid Spine with a frame like a medieval rack:
No suspension, no kickstart lever, no mercy, no sense.
Just bone, steel, and the screaming certainty
I'd made a terrible decision somewhere outside of my soul.
Every morning: the ritual
Push... Curse. Push... Curse. Push... Curse
On occasion I got lucky; I parked on a hill.
After a quick break, I'd push the fucking thing down that hill,
like a dead horse hoping the gods of compression would show mercy.
Eventually, they did.
I sweated more diesel than the engine ever burned oil
And yes, I know. I know what I am:
A one-man oil spill, a walking carbon sin,
spraying the green hills with the ghosts of Middle Eastern sand,
Every mile a small apology I never quite finished writing.
And then there's the club; strangers, bastards and friends with spanners,
Saints with siphon hoses, pushing when I couldn't,
Laughing when I should've wept,
Pouring wine and whiskey into the wreckage of my dignity at every stop.
I owe the pushers more than a thousand miles.
I owe them the fact that I'm still breathing, still bolted together,
Still grinning like a lunatic at the absolute insanity of doing it all again next year.

Upcoming Events



East Coast Rally

October 2-6 | Alpine Helen, Georgia

Sign-up by September 1
See page 30 for more details

49 Mile Ride

October 25 | San Francisco, CA

Organizer: Pete Young,
pyoung@614engineering.com

California BSA Club Rally

September 16, 17, 18 | Morro Bay, California

<http://www.bsacnc.org/2026CalRally.pdf>

SoCal Norton/Vincent Rally

September 16-20 | Cambria, California

Cambria Pines Lodge

VJMC National Rally & Swap Meet

September 17-20 | San Luis Obispo, California

central-coast-classic-motorcycle-club.square.site/

Melo Velo

October 16-18 | Paso Robles, CA

Arrange your own hotel accommodations.
No camping at The Eorio's home.

Schedule of events:

Friday night:

- Meet at the local brewery for dinner

Saturday:

- Day ride towards Big Sur | BBQ dinner at Eorio's

Sunday morning:

- Breakfast at Airport | Short ride to San Luis Obispo | Local lunch

**Imagine knowing
motorcycles exist
and then choosing
fishing as a hobby**

Back: Vintage Velocette artwork at Rancho Veloce
©Kelsey Ray



Pacette
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