

Comstock Chapter News

Antique Motorcycle Club of America

February 2017

President's Message



During the Comstock Chapter meeting in September, a meeting that I did not attend, the club elected me to be the president. Upon learning of my nomination from past president, Dick Toth via email, I started spinning donuts. I'm a racer, not a president. Although I did not want the position, after a few weeks of trying to come up with excuses to not accept the position, such as family, too busy at work, too many projects, racing, hunting, etc., I accepted. Dick needed a break and I really want the club to succeed, so what the hell.

Although the club is still in its infancy, the Comstock Chapter put on some good events, arranged some good tours and was invited to participate in events put on by other groups in the past year. Fortunately, there is a lot of antique motorcycle and automobile activity in the Reno/Carson and surrounding areas, so there are typically a lot of good events to check out and/or participate in. The Comstock Chapter calendar started with a tour of the private collection of Mike and Sharon Silvera. A guided tour of the National Automobile Museum was also arranged. Additionally, the club put on a swap meet and a picnic, and members participated in a variety of events including, but not limited to, Friendship Day, the Sacramento Mile, the Fort Sutter AMCA National Meet in Dixon, California, Rockabilly Riot, Hot August Nights, the Pre-16 Ride, Street Vibrations, and The Race of Gentlemen.

As the new president, my goal is to keep this party going, and 2017 is shaping up to be a good year. In addition to the AMCA national events close to home, the Fort Sutter Chapter National Meet in Dixon, California on June 16 and 17 and the Fort Sutter Chapter National Road Run in Lake Tahoe, California on September 11 thru 13, as well as The Great Indian vs. Harley Race in Kanab, Utah on May 18 thru 20, the Comstock Chapter is planning on having another swap meet, as well as putting on an antique ride of its own on a weekend in mid-October. In addition to the Comstock antique ride, short rides will be planned after our monthly meetings and informal coffee shop get togethers will be taking place throughout the year. Although not an official club event, some of the club members will be taking a rural endurance run through the great state of Nevada on some of state's best roads in June. Keep an eye on the event calendar on the club website, comstock-amca.com, for other upcoming events.

With all the events planned close to home and the rides being planned by the Comstock Chapter, make sure to get your scoots ready for the soon to come riding season. It's going to be a great year and I look forward to meeting and riding with all of the Comstock members.

Rodd Lighthouse

Silvera Collection

By Rodd Lighthouse

Wow! If you missed the tour of Silvera Collection, you missed a great collection of antique bikes, cars, and other automobile related goodies. Mike Silvera is a serious collector and doesn't mess around. His restored automobiles and motorcycles are perfect; there is not a spec of dust on them, and I am certain that they look better than the day they left the factory. Even the brass radiators were spotless. Prior to meeting Mike, I had not known anybody who has a spark plug collection. Although I would rather drool on his Thor, Reading Standard, Excelsior, Indian, Yale, or his other bikes, his collection of plugs was fantastic. What I have described so far doesn't even scratch the surface of what's in Silvera Collection.

If it is mechanical, or it rolls, Mike collects it. Plus, I don't think Mike has ever sold any piece of equipment he has ever purchased. After checking out the bikes and cars at Mike's secretly located collection, the club was invited to his warehouse. The warehouse contained everything from snowmobiles to steam tractors to lawn mowers to horse drawn carriages. Again, that doesn't even begin to describe his collection, but you get the picture. If you want to check out Mike's goodies, don't miss the next tour of his personal museum/s, whenever that may be. The Comstock Chapter is hoping to arrange another tour of Mike's collection in 2017.



National Automobile Museum Tour

By Rodd Lighthouse

Most people who enjoy antique automobiles in northern Nevada have been to Harrah's Automobile Museum and the National Automobile Museum. I have been four or five times counting the old Harrah's collection. At one time, it was the largest collection of automobiles in the world, containing 1,400 vehicles. Since Harrah's death, a majority of the vehicles have been sold, but the National Automobile museum still houses over 200 of Harrah's finest automobiles, still too many to take in on one visit.

Fortunately for the Comstock Chapter, founding member, George Canavan is a volunteer at the museum, and club members were invited to a guided tour of the facility. George has an incredible knowledge of the vehicles in the museum. Combining George's knowledge and his ability to tell a great story really enhanced the tour, but it will take me another few visits to remember a hundredth of what George knows. Why lie? I'm not going to even try to know what George knows, but I am going to head back to the museum for another tour.

Comstock Chapter Swap Meet

By Rodd Lighthouse

The Comstock Chapter had its first ever swap meet in April at founding Chapter member and past president, Dick Toth's place in Washoe Valley. Several club members made it to the swap including John Bland on his Servicar from Lee, Nevada, approximately 35 miles south of Elko. Approximately six club members brought their unwanted parts to sell, and a dozen or so members attended the event. I don't know about you, but I miss having swap meets, they're fun. Ebay has screwed up a great American pastime.

Although I did not sell anything, the swap meet forced me to go through my parts and clean the garage. As you can see in the photos, there were plenty of fine pieces to purchase and everybody had a great time. I'm looking forward to the next swap.



Friendship Day

Comstock member, Jim Coe, attended his second Friendship Day at this year's event in Minden, Nevada on May 15. Friendship Day is put on by Bill Ramsden, and according to Jim, Bill goes all out, and the event is getting bigger every year. This year the event drew approximately 135 cars and three motorcycles including Jim's 1953 Indian Chief.



Amateur Sacramento Mile

By Rodd Lighthouse



Rodd Lighthouse leading Perry Smith

race winner, ex-professional racer Tom Horton, and in 2016, I was hoping to see if I could close the gap on Mr. Horton even more. Unfortunately, he did not make it to the 2016 event, but I did end up winning my class over two other Triumphs and an Indian.

For those interested in checking out the amateur mile and the cool antique racing machines, plan on coming out to races the day following the AMA Grand National Championship event. The amateur is scheduled to take place on May 21, 2017.

May 22, 2016 marked the fourth running of the amateur Sacramento mile since 2012. The amateur mile is held the day following the AMA Grand National Championship event and offers several opportunities for antique motorcycle racers to participate in a variety of classes. Since the amateur racing began, I have been competing in the 500 Classic class, which pits pre-1967 brakeless 500cc over head valve machines vs. 750cc side valve machines. My 1968 Triumph, which is housed in a Sonicweld frame, is eligible for the class because the engine and frame were designed prior to 1967.

Although I have significantly improved since my first outing in 2012, I have finished third every year. Each year I have finished closer to the

Comstock Chapter Picnic

By Rodd Lighthouse



The first ever Comstock Chapter picnic took place June 4, 2016 in Washoe Valley at the Washoe Lake State Park. Although poorly attended, five club members and three spouses made the trip out to the venue for a peaceful BBQ get together.

The members that did show up to the picnic, showed up in style in and on their antique rides. George Canavan and his bride drove their beautiful 1932 Pierce Arrow out to the park; Victor Hounsell made the voyage from the Truckee Meadows on his nice looking shovelhead; Kirk Yeager and his bride rode in from Yerington on their modern Harley-Davidson and Indian respectively; Dick Toth cruised on over from his nearby home in Washoe Valley in his early 70's hotrod Chevy pickemup; and I coaxed my 1934 Harley-Davidson out to the park from Reno, followed by my bride in the chase vehicle. The

approximate 50 mile round trip was the first significant test for the '34 since it was recently resurrected in May 2016, and it passed with flying colors.

The small gathering created a more intimate setting and the club members and spouses got to know a little more about each other's backgrounds. While everyone was chatting and getting to know each other President, Dick Toth was burning burgers and dogs on the BBQ for lunch. It was a really nice event and hopefully more club members plan on making it to the next picnic. Thanks to Dick and George for all the hard work.



Pre -16 Ride

By Charlie Stewart

If you have never participated in the Minden pre-1916 antique bike tour, you should give it a try. It was nice to see some Comstock members make it to the event last year. The pre-1916 tour has been an annual event every September since 1981. The tour had its beginnings as a pre-1916 ride but has changed over the years. Currently there is now no restriction on what year motorcycle you ride. This years event had 30+ bikes with one third being pre-1916 machines. What is more important than the year or manufacturer of your motorcycle in your willingness to have a good time. It is a very casual event with a good group of people.

The tour happens Thursday through Saturday every Labor Day weekend and features three rides. The first day of the tour consists of a ride from Minden to Markleeville; the second day ride if from Minden to Virginia City; and the third day is from Wellington to Yerington. Hope all the Comstock members can make the event in 2017.



Pre-16 line-up

Street Vibrations

Prior to becoming Comstock Chapter members, the Meadows family, Jerry, Patti and Jim, invited the Comstock Chapter to join them for a little get together at their old place of business, Petroleum Maintenance, on Fourth Street in Reno during the fall Street Vibrations motorcycle festival. Petroleum Maintenance is strategically located directly across the street from Under the Rose Brewery, so there was no shortage of beer and the Meadows provided burgers, dogs, and fixin's for all who attended.

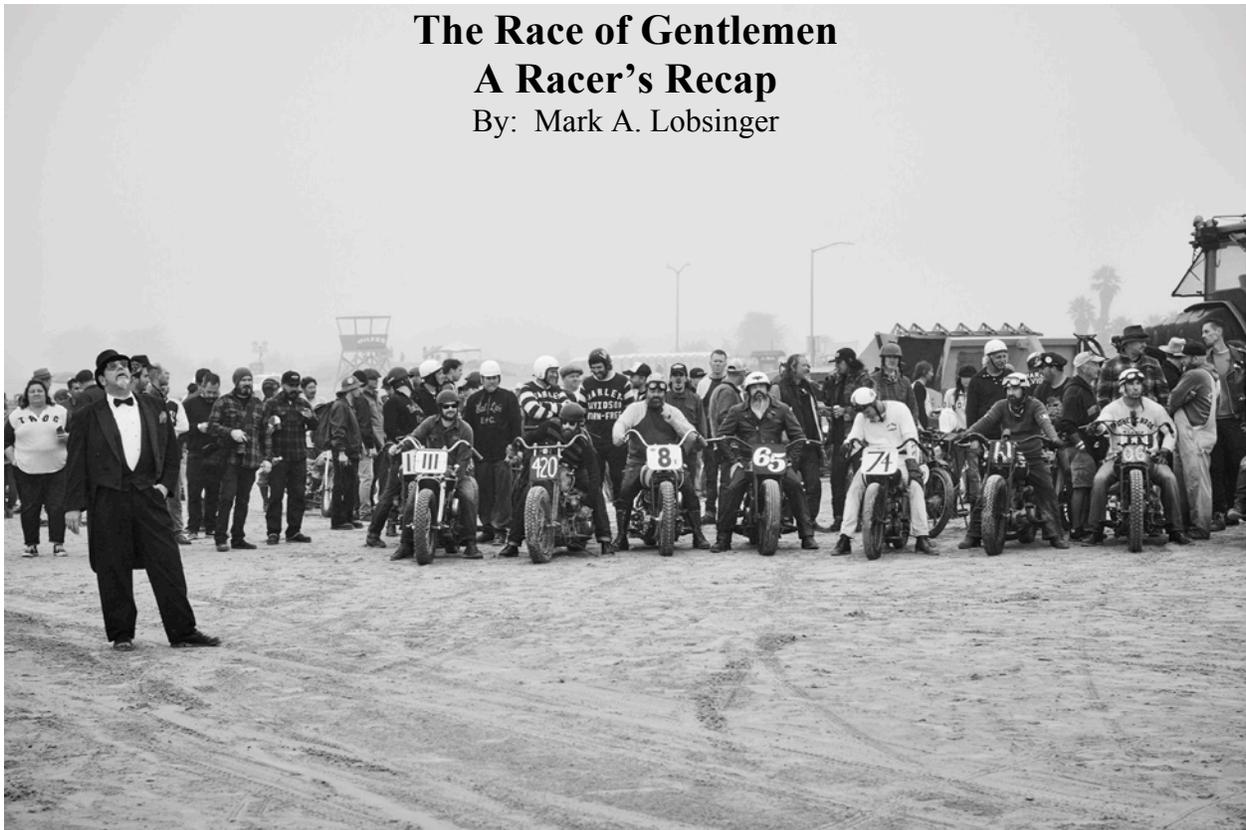


The little gathering turned out to be a really good time with a great turnout of antique bikes and riders. Old looking gas pumps were set up on the sidewalk to give the appearance of an old service station, which added to the nostalgic nature of the festivities. Approximately 17 antique bikes showed up at the Street Vibrations gathering including Triumph, Norton, BSA, Honda, Indian, and Harley Davidson motorcycles. Seven Comstock Chapter members also showed up for the gathering.

Jim has informed that they are planning on having the gathering again in 2017, as well as similar gatherings during the spring Street Vibrations motorcycle festival and Hot August Nights. Keep an eye on the calendar and plan on attending some of the Meadow's gatherings next year.

The Race of Gentlemen A Racer's Recap

By: Mark A. Lobsinger

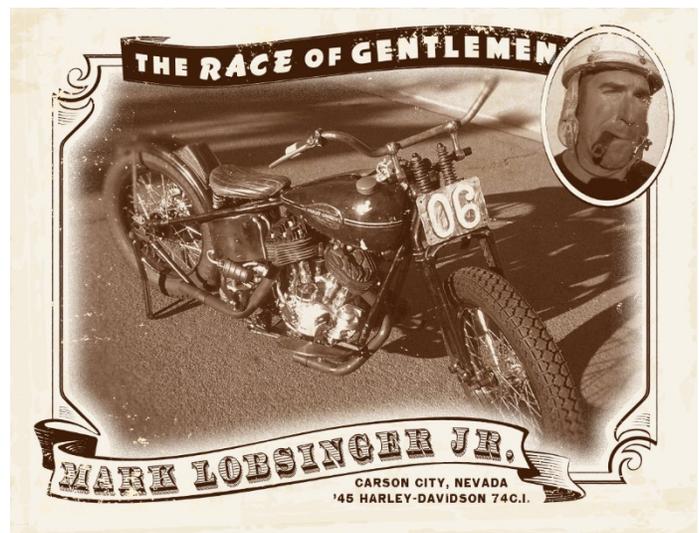


The Race of Gentlemen is a weekend-long event, celebrating American racing heritage, and hosted by the Oilers Car Club/Motorcycle Club. The goal of the event is to recreate 1940's and 1950's beach racing, and period correctness is key. Cars are restricted to bodies older than 1935 and parts predating 1953; motorcycles must be American-made, 1947 or older, and stripped down for racing. Races are 660 ft. long (1/8th mile) and take place on the beach after the tide has departed, leaving a firm-ish (at best) surface. The Race of Gentlemen has taken place in Wildwood, NJ for the past four years.

I had been wanting to attend the east coast TROG for the past few years, but never made the trip. This past October they decided to come out west (Pismo Beach, CA). I immediately bought a ticket (as a spectator). This was back around May. As the weeks went by, and as I watched more and more TROG YouTube videos, I started to think, "You know, I'd sure like to be one of the guys racin' rather than one of the guys watchin' racin." I thought my best chance at finding an entry bike would be a basketcase 45" and so I started putting the word out.



Every year a few of us ride down to Born Free (Southern California) at the end of June. We take Hwy 395, and stay the night in Independence/Lone Pine on the way with a couple good friends. This past June I was talking with my Lone Pine friend about our trip, and just happened to ask him if he knew of any pre-1948 basketcase 45s hanging out in an old widow lady's garage somewhere. After explaining to him why I was looking, he said, "Man, have I got a deal for you." He had recently acquired a 1945 74" Harley U-model motor and transmission. He said I was welcome to use it for the race, but had no idea if it ran or not. I was a bit excited, but still knew it was a long shot for me to get a bike together in time. I had a bunch of parts that would work towards it (springer, hubs, bars, etc.), but still needed a frame and tanks in order to get serious about it.



A good friend of mine from Oklahoma decided to come out for this year's Born Free event. It just so happened that he had an old Knucklehead frame he was willing to donate to the cause, although it was in need of some major work. It had been notched (poorly) to fit a shovelhead motor and the backbone had broken in half. I'm friends with the frame guy out at Paughco, and he said he'd be willing to tackle it. So, I took off in my truck to Born Free where I picked up the 'Oklahoma frame.' On the way back I stopped off in Lone Pine to get the 'California motor.'



So, I was a bit more excited now, and desperately searching the internet for '41-46 big twin flathead tanks. Side note: FYI, the only differences between a big twin flathead and a knucklehead are the motor, fuel tanks, and oil lines. Everything else is the same. Well, as fate would have it, on my buddy's drive back to Oklahoma he stopped off in a small town outside of Albuquerque for lunch. In that small town was a small motorcycle shop. In that small motorcycle shop was a bunch of old motorcycle parts, including a perfect set of '41-46 flathead tanks hanging from the rafters. He called me immediately, and we struck a deal on my 'New Mexico fuel tanks.'

I only had a few months to get the bike race-ready, and much of it was one step forward, two steps back. The transmission needed some work, star hubs rebuilt, wheels laced and trued, Linkert totally rebuilt, etc. etc. All the normal stuff, only this time I was under a deadline.

I finally got it running a couple weeks before the races, but was having trouble tuning it. I kept fiddling with timing, looking for intake leaks, adding exhaust back pressure, trying different carb needle settings, etc. The morning we left for Pismo I started it and ran it up and down the street, and it was still backfiring and popping a bit. I decided to wait until we dropped 5,000' in elevation to the coast to mess with the needles more. Well, we got to the coast, unloaded the racer, started it up.....and it ran absolutely perfectly. Not a single pop, backfire, sputter.....nothing. Throughout the entire rain-soaked weekend, I did not do a single thing to the bike except for add fuel. Whatever I had screwed up at elevation was totally perfect for sea-level.

Friday was beautiful on the beach. Blue skies and 80-degrees. I had to take the bike over for inspection and get registered as a racer. Everything went perfect except for a zip tie I had used to hold a generator wire. They asked that I replace it with some more period-correct safety wire. I got a chuckle out of that. We were set to have *grudge-match* races all day Saturday, meaning you just take as many runs as you want, racing whatever/whoever you wanted. Sunday was supposed to be the actual bracket races, with some pretty amazing prizes for the winners.

We woke up Saturday to the biggest tide surges that Pismo had seen in 20+ years. It was off-and-on rain/drizzle and not 80-degrees. The entire grandstands had been washed out, and the entire race way was covered in water and ocean debris. I thought for sure that we would not be racing. They delayed the racer check-in for a couple hours, but didn't cancel. All the racers congregated in a rain-soaked muddy field next to the beach and, for the



first time, I got to see all the race vehicles in person. It was amazing. So many cool cars and bikes. I could not believe I was part of such an awesome event.

We stood around in anxious anticipation for a couple hours. Finally, they told us to start up the bikes and move down to the staging area. This part may have been the most exciting of all. All 150 pre-'48 cars and motorcycles all started their engines at the same time. The sound was awesome. I couldn't help but smile the entire time.



The commute down to the staging area turned out to be an event all in itself. You had to traverse some pretty deep sand and multiple cars and bikes were getting stuck. One poor fellow dumped his pre-1920 Harley on the carburetor side, and was done for the day.

Then I had the most fun of my entire life, on two wheels.

My first race was against a knucklehead from Japan. I was nervous getting up to the line, and shaking from the wet and cold. I

could see a “whoop” in the course about three-quarters of the way down, and riders were coming up off their seat when they hit it. One guy in front of me just about high-sided his bike coming off the line. I had it in my head that I had nothing to lose, and the excitement far outweighed the consequences. I couldn't wear my goggles because it was raining so hard. The flag girl jumped and I gave it wide open throttle the whole way down the track, squinting my way through the rain. The “whoop” sent me off my seat, but I rode it out. I won! It was so gratifying to make it the entire way, to build a bike from parts donated from great friends in multiple states, to make that bike run, to make it to the race, and to actually win. As I came to a stop, I couldn't have stopped smiling if I tried.

I ended up running three total head-to-head races, two against knuckleheads and one against another big twin flatty, and won all three. I came in third in a four-man race behind two fast-as-shit 45s, one ridden by Matt Walksler.

When the races concluded that afternoon, I think we all knew that Sunday's races were not going to happen. They didn't. The tide came in worse than before. You'd think that people would have been overly upset about it, but they all (spectators included) understood the situation. I think the majority of us were just so grateful to have been given the chance to race at all.

The first thing anyone asks me about The Race of Gentlemen is “Did you win?” I tell them the results, but they don't mean as much as you'd think. You have to witness the event in person to really appreciate the atmosphere. We're talking 65-100+ year-old tank-shift motorcycles, not only starting and running, but hauling ass down the beach for an eighth of a mile. It was truly one of the best times of my life, and I'm so grateful to have been a part of it.

Incredible Motorcycle Story!

By Joe King in Borrego Springs



Down in Borrego Springs, California for the Antique Motorcycle Club of America Winter Ride, we witnessed the most incredible incident involving old motorcycles.

A fellow we rode with has this very rare 1929 Harley Davidson Model C 500cc single, totally restored and in pristine riding condition. He is very satisfied with the machine except one detail. "I've completely restored the machine but I didn't win awards because the front fender is incorrect. It is from a 1929 Model B, just like the Steve McQueen job. The judges are on it and I get marked off for it every time."

Turns out, he has been very diligent about correcting the authenticity problem. He searched for years, traveled to the famous swap meets: Hershey, Anamosa, Davenport, Fort Sutter, Wauseon, Rhinebeck and even through Europe. All his time and money were to no avail.

That morning's ride took us down a dirt road to the little town of Agua Caliente. About 85 bikes dating back to 1915 lined up in front of the fire station for a chili and corn bread lunch hosted by the local volunteer firemen. As we were removing our gear, a young fellow walks up to the Model C to take a closer look. "My Grandpa had a Harley just like yours" blurts out the youngster. Our amazed friend inquires if he kept any parts. "Could be" he replies. "He has a whole shed full of old motorcycle stuff. Wanna see it, Mister?"

Helmets and gloves on, bikes roar down a dirt road with our young scout pointing the way to grandpa's house from the buddy seat of a 1947 Indian Chief.

We arrive, meet the gent and the conversation begins. "Welcome! I see you've got a Model C too. Shame about the fender." Amazed, our riding partner inquired about a replacement. "Could be, got a shed full of old stuff out back. Let's take a look."



After what seemed an eternity, grandpa reappears with a large box. Not just any box, but a H-D factory shipping box, post marked 4/1/1929. It was unopened. Drawing out his Leatherman, the gent pries open the box for the first time since it left Milwaukee 86 years ago. Several newspapers of the same date that filled the void yield their precious cargo. There are not one but two identical items wrapped in waxed paper bearing the famous bar and shield logo. We unwrap the first item. It is a new old stock Model C fender complete with the factory applied khaki paint with red and gold pin striping. Perfect in every way, the gent holds it out, tugs at his whiskers, "Seven hundred bucks and it's yours, Sonny."



Our riding buddy, exasperated, exclaims, "I've been around the world, spent years looking for this and I know one thing. That fender is only worth three hundred

bucks.” The desert dweller removes the last of the wrappings from the fender. “Take a second look, Sonny.” He drops the fender to the ground, scrapes it along the rocks and sand with his foot, then picking it out of the dirt, bends it in half. “you were right. That’s what a \$300 fender looks like, Sonny.”

“OK, OK! Here’s the \$700! I’ll take the other one” winced the rider. The old gent looked him in the eye, “Other? What a shame. All that’s left is the \$1,500 one.”