

# Personal Business

## Collecting

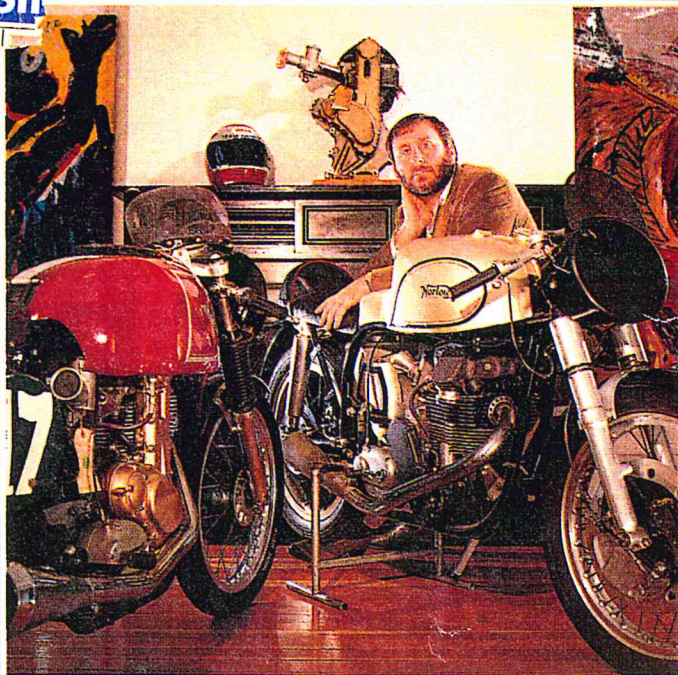
### MISTY-EYED OVER MOTORBIKES

The classic motorcycle has achieved a state of cultural grace it's never seen before in the U.S. Cycles are now collected, preserved, and ridden by a coterie of upscale enthusiasts. Today's collectors are respectable, grown-up versions of the kids about whom mothers used to say: "He's such a nice boy—except for that nasty motorcycle he rides."

To collectors, cycles offer an affordable second childhood. "A lot of the collector market is centered on the motorcycles we lusted after as kids," says Peter Egan of Stoughton, Wis. "People in their 40s and 50s, like me, who desperately wanted a Triumph TR6C Trophy in 1967, when all they could afford was a little Honda 90." Egan recently bought that Triumph for \$1,300, restored it with professional help, and ended up with what was essentially a brand-new vintage bike for \$5,500—about what a contemporary production model goes for.

**FOR LOVE.** Cycle collecting doesn't require the megabucks of the classic-car market, and it attracts a different crowd. Most members of the vintage-bike gang aren't in it for money or cachet, but simply because they love bikes.

Unlike the market for classic cars, there are few, if any, auctions and no vast network of dealers. The specialists are the collectors. Michael Fitz-Simons, a tall, craggy-faced 54-year-old from Cos Cob, Conn., favors Broughs (pronounced "bruffs")—low, lean British cycles with the elongated crouch of a prowling



ROB IANUCCI PARKS HIS '50s CLASSICS IN THE LIVING ROOM

cougar. Other experts recommend any Italian grand-prix racing bikes, Japanese road-racing cycles of the 1960s and 1970s, early Honda Dreams, and mid-1940s and 1950s Harley-Davidsons and Indians.

Collectors tend to keep their bikes close to home—or even in it. Brooklyn attorney

tank, which is just behind the handlebars, sports a chin-deep indentation to accommodate cyclists who like to crouch low to cut wind resistance. Neither machine has been restored, and both bear the scrapes and scars of long-ago race courses.

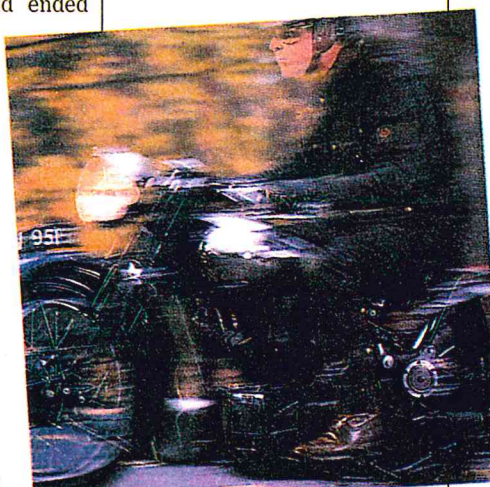
As with any form of collecting, it's all too easy to get taken. There's a big difference between a collectible and an old motorcycle—i.e., between a machine that will appreciate in value faster than the classic mutual fund and one that would take center stage only at a yard sale. For instance, bikes are sometimes tampered with to appear more valuable than they are. Even the savviest collectors have stripped the paint off of their finds, only to discover as many as two dozen bogus serial numbers stamped into the metal tubing.

Also, since even fancy racing bikes are relatively simple implements, it's easy to assemble a Bitsa—made of bitsa this and bitsa that from wrecks and remanufactured parts—and pass it off as an original. "This is not instant

gratification," says Phil Schilling, a longtime Ducati collector and the former editor of *Cycle* magazine. "You have to get into the network and learn before you buy."

**WHERE TO LOOK.** Books on buying, restoring, and collecting vintage motorcycles are available through the Classic Motorbooks mail-order catalog (800 826-6600). The prime source for finding collectible bikes is the monthly magazine *Walneck's Classic Cycle Trader* (708 985-4995). Subscriptions are \$24 a year. *Hemmings Motor News*, the leading classified-ad sheet for car collectors, also has a large motorcycle section (802 442-3101). For virtually every major collectible-bike marque, there are organizations willing to advise newcomers to the hobby.

For many collectors, price is beside the point. "I had this garage full of motorcycles when they were worthless," says Schilling. "Now, some of them are extraordinarily valuable—maybe even six-figure stuff. I'll still have them when they're worthless again. To me, it really doesn't make a difference." Spoken like a true collector. *Stephan Wilkinson*



MIKE FITZSIMONS, 54, TAKES HIS BRITISH BROUGH FOR A SPIN

Rob Ianucci is typical of the breed: He keeps a Matchless G50 and a Manx Norton in his living room. Ianucci's two 1950s road racers are brutal-looking machines, their huge fuel tanks bulging in every direction to provide maximum gas storage. The Norton's

### Worth Noting

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■ **DOWNHILL COURSE.** Some ski resort prices are sliding downhill. Colorado's Crested Butte (800 754-3733) offers free skiing for two weeks, starting Nov. 27. Aspen Highlands cuts the price of its daily lift tickets to \$30 from \$40 (800 356-8811).

■ **CALL FREE.** Toll-free numbers for consumer hotlines and government information are just some of the 66,000 entries in the *AT&T Toll-Free 8' Consumer Directory* (\$9 800 426-8686).