

Around the world without a drop of petrol

A motorcycle with many years on the counter is like an elderly person: Full of stories about the past. But where a person can speak freely, a motorcycle owner has to open up the historic treasury of his two-wheeler himself. Mark van Lieshout from Schijndel the Netherlands, went rooting and made a wonderful journey through time with his 1967 Moto Guzzi V7.



The purchase of his Italian motorcycle is based on coincidence. Spring 2016 Mark is watching a video on YouTube. It shows a couple of racing motorcycles that were shipped from Italy to Australia for a demonstration. "In a flash I saw an old V7 in grey and red in the background, half hidden in a crate on a rack." Mark immediately contacted organizer Teo Lamers, who sold his Moto Guzzi store in Nijmegen for a number of years and emigrated to Down Under. In fact, to be precise, that belongs to Victoria, the smallest state in Australia. The two have known each other for a long time as Mark bought his first motorcycle in Nijmegen in 1985. The contact was never diluted after that. "We corresponded for at least a year and a half about the asking price of that V7, the shipping, the export and import papers and the customs clearance. Teo helped me a lot."

From the crate from Down Under Australia

At the end of February 2018 there will finally be a package on the quay in Rotterdam. It was no surprise that the elderly motorbike had to undergo some stretching exercises. While the block for overhaul goes apart, the new owner's curiosity grows. "Teo had imported the Moto Guzzi from the United States and brought it to Australia. There he stayed in the crate for ten years. That's all I knew about it. But when I polished away the mud and dust at home, I saw that it was a special specimen. Yes, then you'd like to know the whole story."



Timeline

Where to start? Mark decided to unravel the timeline in two directions. From the present back to the past. And from the past into the future. Mark: "In the frame stood at the headset VS32AB. I sent that number, together with the number of the engine block and a photo, to the office of Moto Guzzi. In Mandello del Lario there is, I discovered, a special archive department for this kind of questions."

A few weeks later an official envelope from the engine manufacturer fell on the doormat. In it two letters were returned. A 'Certificato di Origine', complete with safety hologram and mention of model and year of construction. The second document turned out to be a summary from the historical database confirming that the engine was sold by the factory to dealer Marcolini in Sesto San Giovanni on 20 June 1967. Guzzi's service is not completely free of charge. The costs for the spit work were €125 (\$150).

"The first hundred V7's that rolled off the tire in the factory all got the series AA with the additional production number" Mark tells us. "The next hundred or so were fitted with AB and so on. Conclusion: so my Moto Guzzi was number 132 of all (European, they were shipped already before that to the US) V7's in the world".

As dealer Marcolini disappeared from the face of the earth, the timeline stopped there. But not the story. Enquiries with Teo yielded the name of the American salesman. That's one Mark Etheridge, classic Guzzi dealer in Long Beach California. He owns the bike for two years, from 2010 to 2012. Which closes another gap of two years.

Because at the same time Mark was pushed even further into the past in the Netherlands. He found an old registration certificate from the owner who sold the V7 to Etheridge in the side pocket of the bike. The bike had been registered in the name of David Miller from El Cajon in California since 2005. Mark: 'I couldn't find it via google and social media. The registration certificate did show his address from that period. So on the gamble I posted an old-fashioned letter with a picture of the bike and the American license plate. For weeks I haven't heard anything, until suddenly I get a mail back.'



Indian

The David in question turns out to be a Native American and introduced himself as Dave, a tribal elder of 65 years old who remembers the V7 only too well. The retired mechanical engineer from the San Diego area and has a wealth of information. This small bike was the last addition to my modest collection," he writes. Dave was a fan of the Italian motorcycle brand and also owned a California from 1997 and an 850T from 1975 which he converted to 1000 cc. Due to a heart attack he was forced to sell his collection to the aforementioned



Mark Etheridge. I couldn't get my leg over the saddle', he apologized.

With pleasure he remembers the key work of the old V7 and dreamed away at the rides in the desert hills of the Indian reserve at the Mexican border. I had no idea it was such an early model from the production line. I do know it was a second hand one, a European version on which he had to "tap dance" in an emergency because the operation of the rear brake and gearbox were exactly the other way around than he was used to. This V7 was clearly not intended for export to the United States', Dave replied. He, in turn, is very curious how 'his' V7 ended up in the Netherlands.

There was a lively exchange between Mark and Dave Miller. The Native American tells how he tapped the V7 via, via on the head. A friend of mine saw the engine in a dusty garage in the countryside in Jamul, California. That's about 20 miles away. The Guzzi

belonged to a Vicky. She served in the U.S. Army and was stationed in Italy at the time of the first Gulf War against Iraq. She worked at the Vicenza or Aviano airbase in north-eastern Italy when Operation Desert Storm erupted in 1990. Vicky initially bought the engine as a cheap means of transport but soon discovered the charm of the V7 as she explored the winding Italian mountain roads. She fell completely in love with the bike and took it with her to the United States after her military service, cheap on a military freighter. To Colorado where she was in her element with the Moto Guzzi in the spectacular Rocky Mountains. Judging by the license plate it must have been 1996.'



Agents and military

According to Dave, Vicky, now a law enforcement officer, married and moved to Jamul a short time later. Her husband was an avid Harley driver who liked to drive long distances on the highway. In a club context, reserved for (ex) soldiers and officers, they went touring but the small V7 couldn't keep up with the higher speeds. Reason for Vicky to buy such a battleship and to park the V7. Until Dave showed up via his friend, a former employee of the coastguard, and took the Italian two-wheeler under his care. With these memories the swan-stick story of the V7 ends because Vicky is without a trace. With only having this pictures of the V700 with Colorado plate (hard to read L036A) and in black color how it was when travelled from Italy to the US! Dave in one of his later mails: 'I have searched in vain for Vicky. Her husband died, as well as their mutual boyfriend, and she moved under her maiden name. I can't remember. Besides, it's very difficult to get address

details from agents or other law enforcement personnel. Their privacy is very sensitive to prevent retaliation from criminals. So you won't find her on social media like Facebook. Vicky, 'a big strapping girl', did impress the Native American. She was a striking, tall woman of almost 1.90 meters. Very kind and helpful. I suspect she returned to Colorado, a rough but sparsely populated area. If I can help, I'd be happy to. I'm very curious how this ends,' he concluded.

With those last words a fascinating period from 1990 to 2019 has been filled in. There are still 23 years to go. Who sold the bike to Vicky in Italy? Because dealer Marcolini in Sesto San Giovanni is defunct, that question remains unanswered for the time being. There will be one last attempt to find out. He contacts Frank Wedge of the MGNOG, a national Moto Guzzi club in the United States. Wedge also becomes interested and in the summer of 2018 places an appeal in the digital club magazine that is distributed in all US states. The story with Vicky and the V7 are described in as much detail as possible. This will provide a number of tips and suggestions. The search continues unabated.



Vicky 7

Meanwhile Mark has his Moto Guzzi running again. The engine has been thoroughly overhauled, the paintwork remains well weathered, I wanted to keep it that way," he says. According to his philosophy, a bike is feminine, so he talks about 'she' every time the V7 comes up for discussion. Because many owners often give their bikes a name, the Moto

Guzzi V7 is almost there for the taking. Our suggestion: Vicky 7, unless the historical timeline of the bike takes another surprising turn.

Revision

A lot has happened to the engine since the V7 arrived in the Netherlands. Almost all parts needed more or less attention. Tires, battery, alternator, starter, everything... But nothing has been done about the sheet metal. The paint has remained as it was. The tank has been treated with an agent in such a way that nothing further rusts and the rest of the red paint remains. Important repairs on the block: overhaul, grinding, surfaces etc. by BCI.



Other parts came from all over the world, Robers, Retrò, Teo, US MG Cycle parts, Marktplaats & EBay, the well known Mandello Guzzi parts shops, Hans, Hans and Edwin. Welding by A3 and tuning by Jos N.

Finding Vicky

I hope there will be new clues coming up after reading my story. New links to go further back in time to reveal the bikes history. Also to hear about amazing road-trips riding with Vicky 7 in North-eastern Italy around Aviano airbase and the Italian Dolomites mountains. And back in the US in Colorado. It would be great to find out more about that! Any information is more than welcome and you can contact me on mark.van.lieshout@planet.nl