



VESPA CLUB OF AMERICA

#62

american scooterist





Partial Build List:
2 Wheel Sets (2T2R2T), Rear Shock (83816), Front Shock (137571S), Front Fork Assembly (152300), Engine Side Cowl (100097), Glovebox Side Cowl (91836), Cowl Rubber (135231B), Sprint/Super Seat (CSS1), Floor Rail Kit (FRKVN8), Centermat (85072), Centermat Trim (85074), Taillight Assembly (70700), Complete Cable Set (CCS6), 150cc 2T LML Engine (145227NI), Grips (60304B), Fender/Cowl Trim Set (90522), Speedometer (183586), Centerstand with Boots (91047), Gas Tank (94146), Stiletto Levers (70578), Wiring Harness (92563)

Your Source for Everything
Vintage Vespa & Beyond!



SCOOTER
WORKS
USA

VESPA CLUB OF AMERICA

american scooterist

ISSUE 62

Editor-In-Chief
Dave McCabe · Portland, OR
editor@vespaclubusa.org

Copy Editors
Pete Selkove · Linda Quinn

Art Director
Bryan Bedell · Chicago, IL
illnoise@2strokebuzz.com

Printing
Pacific Graphics · Pasadena, CA
rwasson@pacgraphics.com

VESPA CLUB OF AMERICA

President
John "Jac" Carolan · New Orleans, LA
president@vespaclubusa.org

Vice President
Linda Quinn · Wrightwood, CA
vicepresident@vespaclubusa.org

Membership Secretary
Brian Winter · San Jose, CA
membership@vespaclubusa.org

Treasurer
Melissa Burchardt · New Orleans, LA
treasurer@vespaclubusa.org

In This Issue::

8		4	Weird and Wonderful <i>A Shrunkn GS? The Moto Vespa 125s</i>	John Gerber
		5	Editor's Letter <i>Lost Spanish gold!</i>	Dave McCabe
		6	La Dolce Vespa <i>Discovering the Rat Patrol Vespa</i>	Greg Doane
12		8	Vespa Club España <i>A history of Spain's national club</i>	John Gerber
		10	XX Provincias <i>Spain's most famous scooter race</i>	Greg Doane
		12	Spanish Vespas <i>The unique and little-known world of Moto Vespa</i>	John Gerber
		16	Moto Vespa Advertising	Ashley Lenton
20		20	Around the World <i>Two young Spaniards and the "Dali Vespa"</i>	John Gerber
		28	Weird and Wonderful <i>Almost a GS: the Moto Vespa 160</i>	John Gerber
30		30	In Detail <i>The Moto Vespa 160S</i>	David Dry
		32	Vespa Spotting <i>On the streets of modern Spain</i>	Joe Gerber
		34	Flashback <i>The great Vespa loading wars of 1957-58</i>	John Gerber

Published by the Vespa Club of America,
www.vespaclubusa.org

The vcoa welcomes owners and devotees of all makes of motorscooters. **Dues** are \$25 annually for u.s. and Canadian members, and \$35 annually for others. Members receive four issues of *American Scooterist* magazine, a membership directory, discounts, and other privileges.

Advertising Rates: Contact Mike Bobadilla at president@vespaclubusa.org.

All contents copyright © 2008-2014 by Vespa Club of America except for rights claimed by individual contributors as stated herein. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part is prohibited unless prior written permission is obtained.



A Shrunken GS?

The Moto Vespa 125s



Spain's Moto Vespa is noted for its unusual hybrids. Among the most interesting is the 125s (the s stands for Sport), which was conceived as a Spanish mini-version of the gs. The 125s first appeared in 1957 and was designed for "fast touring" (admittedly an oxymoron for a 125) and sporting use. It was intended to supplement the more utilitarian n model.

The 125s featured the same shade of metallic gray as the gs150 and a similar dual seat (the first dual seat on a Spanish Vespa), but had only eight-inch wheels and a three-speed transmission. The engine was specially designed for the new



VACACIONES *Vespa*

La naturaleza se ofrece en todo su esplendor para nuestro recreo y y recuperación física...

Con *Vespa*, sus vacaciones serán:
"VACACIONES FELICES"

Vespa

vaya donde vaya...

EL PEQUEÑO COCHE DE DOS RUEDAS

model and incorporated a redesigned piston deflector, which substantially increased the compression ratio. The carburetor was redesigned to effectively use the increased compression. The top speed was 51MPH, which was considered fast since many of Spain's roads were not paved until the 1960s. The first model featured bicycle-style handlebars with external cables, but in 1958 the cables were enclosed within the headset.

The 125s underwent a series of significant changes throughout the years. In 1960 the transmission was upgraded to four-speed. The following year it was given ten-inch wheels and a 150cc engine. The model con-

tinued in production until 1965, when it was replaced by a Spanish version of the Sprint.

Despite its small displacement, the 125s was renowned for its sporting capabilities. It was often used to compete directly against motorcycles in Spanish road trails and frequently won. The 125s was the machine of choice for the Vespa Club Spain's famous XX Provincias, a five day circuit through Spain's 20 provinces. Spanish teams often traveled to Italy to compete in the Giro dei Tre Mari (Tour of the Three Seas). Although they were competing against larger 150s and cses (Spain had no 150cc Vespas until 1961), Spanish teams came out quite well. In 1957 a 125s placed ninth out of 110 scooters.

editor's letter

by Dave McCabe

Lost Spanish Gold!



As I write this I'm in a hotel room in Manitou Springs, Colorado, attending Heinkelfest and hanging out with Mike McWilliams. It wasn't too long ago that Mike and I shared a hotel room in Boston while we attended the funeral of John Gerber, our club's late historian. This brings me to the tale of the origins of this special issue on Vespas and Spain.

John Gerber had lived for many years in an unassuming converted attic apartment in North Quincy, Massachusetts, a suburb of Boston. He passed away in this apartment shortly after returning from Amerivespa

in 2010. While he had a rich life as a man of letters and author in the scooter scene, he lived a pretty solitary existence. Sadly, after he expired, he wasn't found for a few weeks.

Our trip to John's funeral quickly turned into a rescue operation for his lifelong collection of scooter-related ephemera. The landlord, for weeks not knowing who to contact, had quickly (and recklessly) dumped almost all of John's belongings into heavy black plastic bags. Aside from his scooters, John had few worldly possessions, with one exception: his lifelong collection of scooter-related magazines, letters, brochures, newsletters, etc. As far as I know, John Gerber had the world's most extensive collection of printed matter related to scooters.

He saved, and actively collected, any and all paper related to scooters. He subscribed to almost every conceivable scooter magazine—many you probably never heard of. Do you remember any of these recent u.s. scooter magazines: *Scooter World*? *Scootin'*? *Scooter Rider*? He had complete editions. Of course he also had a complete collection of *Scoot! Quarterly*, and virtually complete collections of more conventionally collectable scootering Americana: *Scoutourist*, *Scoot* (the original 1950s version) and *Scooter*, a short-lived mainstream scooter magazine.

He maintained long-standing memberships to all of the significant scooters clubs. From some of his club memberships he had complete collections of the club magazines. These include, but were not limited to, The Vintage Motorbike Club (dating to its founding), Cushman Club of America, all of the U.S. microcar clubs, the Vespa Club of Great Britain (dating from when he joined in the early-1960s!), Vintage Motor Scooter Club, Lambretta Club Great Britain, Veteran Vespa Club and Heinkel Club Deutschland.

Then there was his brochure collection. Dating from his teenage years, John saved every scooter brochure he came across. As a scooter-star-eyed teenager, he sent away for brochures from national distributors. Later in life, John developed an avid Ebay addiction. Ebay gave him access to new worlds of scooter hunting. John's interest wasn't in parts but in history and memorabilia. Some of his new favorite hunting grounds were Asia, France and Spain.

Spain brings me to the point of this story. It's the origin of this special Spanish-themed magazine, for late in his life he collected a lot of historic printed scooter material from Spain. John and I had discussed doing a special *American Scooterist* dedicated to Spain but, with the onset of John's cancer, I never knew how far along he had come.

As mentioned, after the funeral, John's family found his apartment a complete disaster. While his apartment was always packed and cluttered, John was a trained professional librarian and archivist. Even though every nook and cranny of the apartment was packed with dusty old magazines, he had a method to his madness. In many instances, he had cataloged, and to a lesser degree even indexed what he had. Horror of horrors, it was now all about to be dropped into a dumpster. John's family generously declared to me and Mike that they had no interest (to say nothing of time or resources, most having driven out from the Midwest) in dealing with the mess.

Mike and I switched gears and set up an emergency salvage operation. While the family focused on personal photos, family items and everything else, our goal was to save John's scooter archive for the Vespa Club of America. Our return flights left in less than 48 hours. We purchased packing tape, boxes, lots of coffee and takeout food. It was still an East Coast summer, hot and humid, and the attic felt like an oven. We put in late nights and got up early to get the work done. On the last night, just before closing time, we made it to a big-box office supply store with ups services. The boxes were shipped off to Colorado where they are now in storage, safe and dry.

During the packing process it was incredibly hard to stay focused. Every black plastic bag yielded a treasure of scootering history. Mike and I frequently scolded each other to stop gazing at each new fascinating and delightful find and stay focused on packing, packing, packing.

In John's living room I found some of his letters, manually-typed stories and old printed-out magazine submissions. In one pile I found an item I had been specifically looking for: the essay that became the basis of this magazine, the history of Moto Vespa and the Vespa Club España. My hopes were further raised when I found a number of computer cds, each referencing image scans for seemingly Spanish-related articles. The typed manuscript was the jackpot. I knew then that I had saved a significant part of John's effort from oblivion.

On the flight home I typed the printed material into my computer for later editing. Over time, John's family found some of the other articles on his computer, and I dug up more stories to round out the issue. The result of the effort is what you have here.

As with much of John's other work for the club, he pioneered new realms of scootering history. Read on and you'll see what I mean.

españa la dolce vespa

by Greg Daane

Discovering THE RAT PATROL Vespa



back in 2000 I took an old Allstate frame to my local media blaster, for a little pre-paint punishment. Usually events like this are, for the most part, rather uneventful. Perhaps a little small talk about the mysteries of rust, or maybe the pros and cons of body filler, but alas, this fateful day was to prove different.

"A scooter, eh? A dude was just in here this mornin' and asked if I knew anyone that might be interested in a couple of old motorscooters. I think he said that one of 'em had some sort of sidecar on it. (*Zoinks!*) I think I got his number on my desk (*double zoinks!*)." Needless to say I left the shop with the phone number and (without checking with the Mrs.) soon found myself talking with one Al Peirish of McMinnville, Oregon.

I broke down and told the wife. My lovely Joanna soon agreed that it was a nice day for a drive out to the country. So, with a "promise me you won't buy anything," we were quickly zooming through the 'burbs down old 99w. As we wound our way through Oregon's wine country, we talked about all sorts of things, and not once were my many unfinished scooter-related projects mentioned. Before we knew it, we were in beautiful McMinnville. The region's rolling vineyards and great pinot noirs, combined with a visit to the home of Mr. Hughes's Spruce Goose at the Evergreen Air and Space Museum (remember Air America?) make McMinnville a great Sunday scooter destination.

We found the house, pulled up Al's long driveway, rounded a bend, and then came upon two

of the nicest scooters I had ever seen. One was a tricked-out sea-foam green touring P200E, and next to it a sexy combination that made the Doublemint twins look like a pair of draft horses. Before I opened the car door, there was a "If we sell some stuff, I think we might be able to swing it..." from my scooter-wary passenger. I love you. It was going to be a good day.

It was a strange sight — a scooter sidecar rig with an unusual left-mounted sidecar fitted with a plush interior seat and paneling (even the trunk was custom-lined) mounted to a weird 1966 ss80/Sprint hybrid scooter (see *Weird and Wonderful*, page 28). The sidecar was a Spanish-made S-Boy, a brand I have yet to learn anything more about.

Both wore a nice coat of light metallic-blue paint. The legshield wore badges from the cities of Madrid and Almeria, and the Piaggio badge at the top of the horn casting read "Moto Vespa Madrid." It all started to make sense now. I popped the engine sidecowl off and I was immediately confused once again.

A large airbox and ufo (unidentifiable foreign object) carburetor sat on a flange over the cylinder, but the engine case also had a flat spot machined to accept a carb where a crank-inducted unit might sit. I knew that the Spanish had made a 160cc motor, but it didn't look like anything I'd seen before. Everything on the bike was Spanish: from the "El Tigre" seat, to the Spanish Pirelli tires, to the Bilbao-made Dell'Orto fuel tap, down to the weird crimped exhaust pipe. Being a bit of a Spanish history buff (my wife and I did volunteer work



with the last of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade veterans here in the Northwest), I had to have this bike. The "must have" got even "must-er" when Al handed me an envelope full of photos and documents handed down to him from the original owner: Hollywood television director, John J.H. Peyser.

One of the letters in the envelope sealed the deal. Written to Al, the letter explained the situation portrayed in one of the photos. "The picture was taken in 1966 in Almeria, Spain, when we were on location shooting *The Rat Patrol*." Wow! Although I was born just after the last episode of *The Rat Patrol* aired in 1968, I was a devoted fan of '70s reruns and often imagined myself out there, eluding "Jerries" across the Libyan sands with Sgt. Troy and the boys.

In the envelope I also found the original 1967 California title and registration paperwork. Sadly the Spanish papers were missing, but I knew from Peyser's letters that the bike had been purchased at "Motocicleta de Almeria, Paseo de Generalísimo Francisco Franco, Almeria, España." I also had a photo of the original license plate and a couple of reproductions, hand-screened by Al. It is interesting to note that I have been told that the plate number 1-AL 0003 signifies that the bike was the third motorcycle licensed in Almeria for the year 1966 (a year before the Moto Vespa 160 apparently made its official debut in Spain.)

Needless to say, we bought the scooter. Although Al had done great cosmetic work to it, the bike still needed some TLC. After locating missing parts, fabricating a few,

translating the strange electrical system, and general reassembly (it had been hastily put together so as to be used as a photo prop at a dinner dance in McMinnville) it was time for a test drive. With the aid of a bottle of Lan Rioja, appropriately offered in sacrifice to the Iberian gods of two-stroke technology, and with thanks to the mechanical wizardry of Rob Pennington and Tom Johel, I was off into the dark Portland night.

Neighborhood locals took a break from pushing their shopping carts along Belmont Street to gaze in wonder as I weaved my way erratically down the road, pulled about by the unfamiliar metal-bodied sidehack. With joyous giggles and intermittent squeals of terror, and followed by the inevitable thick blue contrail so often associated with the maiden voyage, I must have made for some great double-takes.

I soon adjusted to the pull of the left-handed addition to the scooter, though tight left turns at speed (with or without company) can still bring forth the occasional string of blasphemies and moments of distressing heart fibrillation.

While on the computer one night I came across a Rat Patrol fan club based in Canada. I wrote one of their members and told them that I had John Peyser's old Vespa and that I'd love to get video of some of the episodes he directed. They asked if I knew where he might be living and, without thinking, I gave them an address from the letterhead of one of the letters in the envelope. Later, fearing that I might have unknowingly sent some infatu-



ated and crazed Rat Patrol groupie from the Great White North to stalk and terrorize the poor, unwitting director, I was a bit hesitant in opening the email that soon came my way bearing an address of "jpeyser@..."

When I did open it, it was a nice message from a seemingly very nice man. I was very relieved to hear that he had not been assaulted or even shadowed around Hollywood by a hockeystick-wielding psychopath in a desert-camouflaged Volkswagen Thing. Instead, he was very glad that I had put him in touch with a group of people who helped him rekindle friendships that had grown distant over the space of thirty-five years. To show his gratitude, I soon received the original hand-stenciled and riveted Spanish license plate, which had apparently hung on his garage wall since 1967! Thank you! From the Canadians, I received a video chock full o' Rat Patrol goodness.

I took the bike to the yearly Vespa Club of Canada (British Columbia) rally in Vancouver and was honored to win the "Best in Show" trophy. It was especially rewarding as it was only a matter of days since I had learned that John J.H. Peyser had passed away. I am glad to know that he died with the knowledge that his prized Moto Vespa with S-Boy sidecar was in the hands of a scooterist who truly appreciated both the uniqueness of the bike and also the history associated with it. I hope for his sake, and the rest of us, that there are scooters in heaven. p.s.: I still need to put that Allstate together.

This article was originally in the Winter 2002 issue of American Scooterist.



vespa club

españa

by John Gerber

The Spanish Vespa club movement took off in grand fashion and swiftly became one of the most dynamic in Europe. As new owners hit the roads for Sunday pleasure rides they organized local clubs. Only three months after the first Vespa came off the production line in 1953, one hundred Catalan riders gathered for a meet sponsored by the newly-formed Vespa Club Barcelona. A month later they organized an international rally which drew 200 scooters. In October the Vespa Club Madrid organized the first national rally, which attracted 600 scooters. In March 1954 the Vespa Club Barcelona inaugurated their headquarters. Enrico Piaggio, on an early trip to Spain, stopped in to offer encouragement.

Later that year, representatives from the local clubs gathered to form the Vespa Club España (VCE). The club immediately affiliated with the Vespa Club of Europe, the international federation that had been formed a year earlier. Initially, the VCE had 26 chapters. By the end of the year, the club began publishing a magazine known simply as *Vespa Club*, which immediately became the best European scooter club magazine of the era. It was most widely known for its stunningly beautiful artistic color covers, which today are highly valued collector's items.

In its heyday, the VCE was one of the most active national clubs in the international Vespa movement. Few other clubs could match

its enthusiasm. The club's dazzling array of activities reflected the Vespa club ethos and rituals of the era. It was a self-contained world of cog badges, pennants, legshield banners, carnival and pageant floats, mass rides, scooter weddings, and polished performances by acrobatic display teams.

Although Spain gave the world the term machismo, Spanish women fully participated in the activities of the VCE. In a still conservative society, the Vespa was the first motor vehicle that appealed directly to women. For many women, the Vespa was their first possibility of personal transportation and gave them a powerful sense of independence and self-confidence — once again serving as a gateway to modernity. The Vespa helped accelerate the trend toward more informal clothing as female riders took to simpler blouses and pants, particularly Capri pants. The club made a special effort to involve women in scootering by sponsoring women's activities. The first national all-women's rally was held in 1959 and drew participants from all over Europe.

The VCE's publicity stunts often received international coverage and many became legendary. In 1954 two sports journalists made a 3,000-mile "Vuelta en España" around Spain in seven days. The trip was done almost non-stop over mainly unpaved roads on a 125 fenderlight, which could barely exceed 35 MPH.



To sleep, the passenger tied himself to the back of the Vespa. When the 150s came out in 1961 the same driver with a new passenger made the identical trip in five days. And when a French Vespa enthusiast crossed the English channel on a Vespa-powered pontoon boat in 1952, a Barcelona dealer responded by





crossing the 75 miles between Barcelona and the island of Mallorca. On another occasion, a friendly "mini-war" developed with the Vespa Club of Britain (see "The Great Vespa Loading War," *Flashback*, this issue). Perhaps the most daring stunt came in 1962, when two Spanish law students, inspired by Jules Verne's *Around the World in 80 Days*, made a Vespa trip around the world in an astonishing 79 days, which received enormous international publicity (See *Around the World in 79 Days*, page 20).

Coming from a country that gave the world bull-fighting, Spanish Vespa riders were not hesitant about competing in sporting events. The appearance of the sporty 125s in 1956 launched an era of scooter competition. Many events were

covered in the leading sports magazines and newspapers, often with lavish photo spreads. At least one of Spain's most prominent sportswriters was an active Vespa enthusiast.

The earliest competitions were at Moto Club of Spain regularity trials. Vespa riders competed directly against motorcycles in the up-to-125cc class. In many cases, they came out quite favorably. In fact, they did so well that the Moto Club had to set up a special scooter category. Spanish teams traveled to Italy regularly to participate in the grueling *Giro dei Tre Mari* (Tour of the Three Seas), perhaps the most famous Vespa sporting event of the 1950s. Although they were competing against 150cc Vespas (Spain did not have

150cc Vespas until 1961), the Spanish teams always came out quite well. In 1957 a Spanish 125s placed ninth out of 110 scooters.

Spain was still relatively isolated from the European mainstream during the 1950s. Spanish Vespa enthusiasts tried to compensate by becoming ardent internationalists. For many, participation in international Vespa events was their first significant contact with the larger world outside their village, another of the many ways in which the Vespa served as a gateway to modernization. Despite the long distances, Spanish teams made appearances at most European Vespa events. In fact, the third Spanish national Vespa rally in 1958 was a ride to Rome. A total of 84 Vespas made the 1,500-

mile journey, which included a stopover at the Piaggio factory in Pontedera.

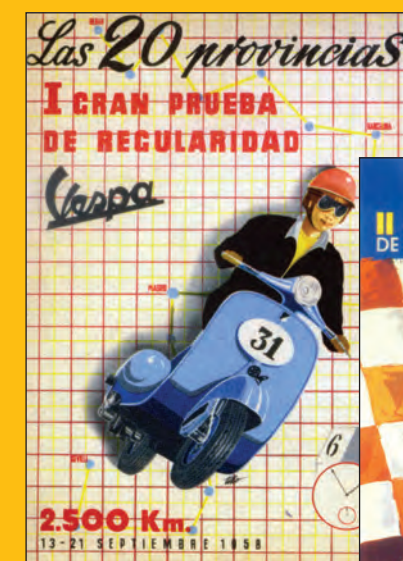
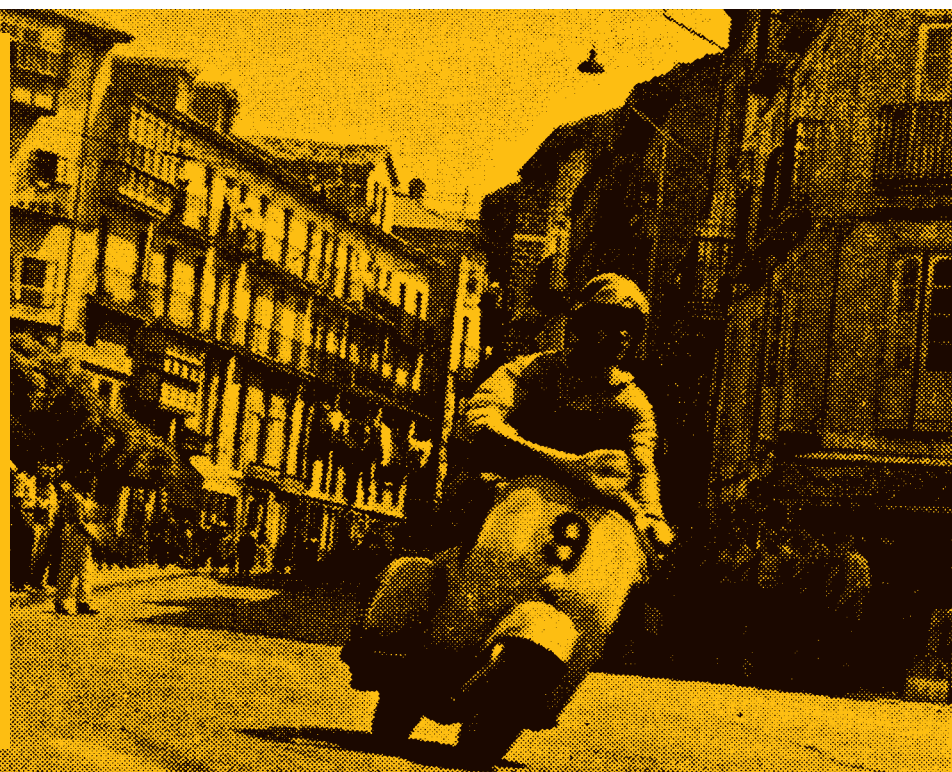
The highpoint of the VCE's involvement in the international Vespa movement undoubtedly came with the five Spanish Eurovespas. The first was Barcelona, in 1957. The fact that it was only the third Eurovespa attests to the importance of the Spanish club within the international federation. By now, the basic form of the Eurovespa was fully in place, a yearly Olympics for Vespa enthusiasts, an international gathering that was part organized pageantry and part competitions. Teams from all over Europe were formed and converged on Barcelona, riding in formation in highly organized, uniformed groups. Village after village turned out to applaud the riders. Local Vespa dealers and clubs organized speeches and banquets in the towns they stayed in or passed through.

The event itself was marked by a kaleidoscope of activities. The most significant were the acrobatic displays, banquet, formal ball, and a majestic grand parade that included many riders dressed in national costumes (each club was required to have a certain number in national costumes). All of this helped foster a powerful sense of belonging and deep attachment to the international Vespa community, which in turn reinforced the cult status of the Vespa. About 4,000 were present for the 1957 Barcelona Eurovespa. Other Spanish Eurovespas included: Madrid, 1962 (which drew 2,500 participants); Barcelona, 1986; and Gerona (near Barcelona), 1994 and 1999.



XX Provincias

The VCE's most famous event was the *XX Provincias*, another of the great events on the 1950s international Vespa calendar. The *XX Provincias* was a five-day regularity circuit through all twenty of Spain's provinces. About fifty riders, consisting of the top teams from the various national Vespa clubs, would ride on a tightly measured schedule (it wasn't a race as such, but a time trial). The exact course varied from year to year and ranged from 1,500 to 2,000 miles. The route encompassed all of Spain's diverse topography, which ranged from Alpine mountains to arid deserts. The event was popular with the Spanish public. City centers were closed off to accommodate the event and wildly cheering crowds lined the roadways. At the end, thousands of Vespisti and non-Vespisti gathered for a gala celebration with banquets, speeches and extended revelry.



The Unique and Little-Known World of Spanish Vespas

by John Gerber



It is a truism to say that after Italy no other country took the Vespa to heart more than Spain. For both sales and enthusiasm, no market was more important for Piaggio than Spain.

Little known outside Spain, the story of Spanish-made Moto Vespa Vespas is one of unique development — a tale of strange hybrid Vespas unlike any others in the world. Spanish models almost never corresponded to Italian models. A single Spanish model often combined elements of three or more Italian models. On the basis of its many unique models it is clear that Moto Vespa prided itself as an entity separate from Piaggio. Until the very end, the company continued to adapt models to suit the special needs of the Spanish market. Many engines, such as the 75 series, were neither developed nor produced by the Piaggio factory in Pontedera.

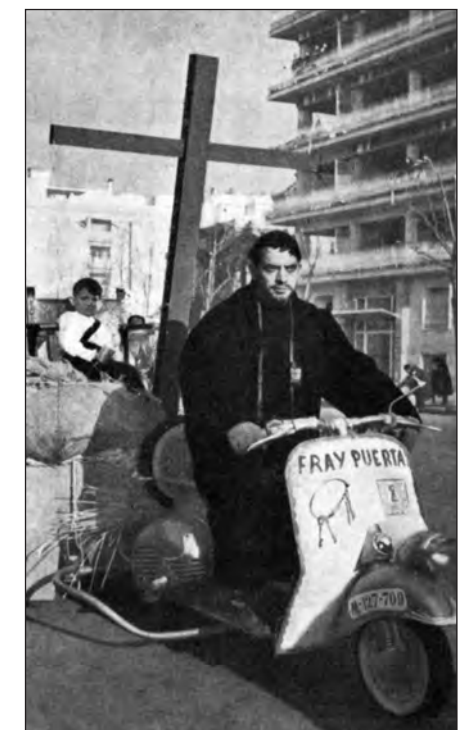
The Vespa swiftly engraved itself on the Spanish national consciousness during an era when Spain ranked among the least economically developed country in Europe. Spain in the early 1950s was a land frozen in time. Extreme poverty and hunger were widespread. Paved roads were almost non-existent. The beaches that in the 1960s would be packed with millions of tourists were largely deserted. Above all, Spain was a pariah state, isolated from the rest of Europe by the Franco government's fascism. Spain's blood-soaked regime was still enclosed in anti-modernity, drawing much of its strength from a medieval, traditionalist Catholicism. Yet within this backward and reactionary land, powerful forces were already stirring, which would dramatically and irreversibly transform the country more than any other in Europe within the next few decades. The Vespa was closely tied to these emerging forces of modernity.

With only 200,000 registered automobiles in 1949, Spain was fertile territory for low-cost personal transportation. The first Vespas were imported directly from Italy, but because of exorbitant protectionist tariffs, few were sold. In 1952, the Spanish Fiat representative, Spartaco Boldori (who had strong connections with the fascist Franco regime) proposed to Enrico Piaggio a joint venture to create a Vespa factory in Madrid. A series of talks was initiated between Piaggio, Boldori, the banks, the Spanish government and the National Institute for Industry (a fascist agency to promote and control state industry). These talks led to the creation of a company to be known as Moto Vespa under the leadership of Lelio Pellegrini, and Spartaco Boldori. By August 1952 they had acquired enough capital to purchase a factory in Ciudad Lineal, an industrial suburb of Madrid. A second group,

the Agencia Comercial Vespa S.A., was set up to distribute the Vespa.

The development of the factory proceeded rapidly. By January, 1953 they had completed installation of the production machinery and hired 60 workers. A few weeks later, on February 22, the first Vespa rolled off the production line. By the end of the month 80 Vespas had been produced. The factory was officially inaugurated with an appearance by Enrico Piaggio at a gala celebration in December 1953. From the very beginning, he considered the Spanish plant the most important outside Italy.

The first model produced was a metallic green, 125cc, fenderlight, which was never given an actual name and was essentially a 1951 Italian v31T. Like most of the other Vespa factories outside Italy, Moto Vespa was given obsolete



tooling for models no longer produced in Italy. In keeping with Spain's basic needs, the new Vespa was extremely utilitarian with no special features.

The new Vespa was launched with a well-orchestrated publicity campaign. Early advertising was dominated by technical details stressing the scooter's economical and utilitarian features, along with slogans such as "The small car on two wheels." Moto Vespa intended to appeal to a broad range of Spanish society. Ads and brochures showed the Vespa being used by students, workers, priests and doctors. Separate ads targeted blue collar and white collar workers.

The new Vespa was an immediate hit. In 1953 4,450 were produced and another 4,855 the following year. By the end of 1953 the factory workforce had tripled from 60 to 184. Production had increased from four to 28 Vespas a

day. The first sales were to the police, post office and the Red Cross. For the general public, supply could not meet demand. In some areas customers had to wait almost a year.

In 1955 a slightly different version of the still-unnamed fenderlight was introduced, which corresponded to the 1955 Italian model. It was offered in two versions, distinguished by different colors (gray and metallic green). It featured an improved suspension, cables routed through a large sheath, and a cowl that covered the fan.

As supply began to catch up with demand, Moto Vespa decided in 1956 to offer two models, although both were 125s. The standard 125, called the N (for normal), was a continuation of the previous model and remained gray. The new model 125 was called the S (for sport) and was intended to be the star of the lineup. The S was designed for





"fast touring" (admittedly an oxymoron for a 125) and came with a completely new engine. The most revolutionary change involved a piston modification. By changing the piston deflector the compression ratio was substantially increased. The carburetor underwent substantial modifications to effectively utilize the increased compression. The top speed was 51 MPH, which was considered fast since many of Spain's road were not paved until the 1960s. Like the N, the S featured a handlebar-mounted headlight. It was also the first Spanish Vespa to come equipped with a speedometer. To accentuate its sporting qualities, the S came in the same shade of metallic gray as the Italian 150 GS. It was also given a dual seat (the first for a Spanish Vespa) that was similar to that of the GS. At this point — for reasons unknown — it was not given a badge identifying it as a S model. The S, a beautiful mini-GS in appearance, represents the first of the crown jewels of Spanish Vespas.

Both machines were big sellers. Production reached 14,640 in 1956. A year later it had increased to 20,452. By now, over 50,000 Spanish Vespas were on the road. The dealer network of 247 dealers reached every corner of Spain. The expanded production capacity allowed Moto Vespa to export for the first time. In creating its foreign factories, Piaggio apparently saw their importance for gaining entry into other markets. AMCA had responsibility for the entire French empire, then quite substantial. Douglas was given responsibility — at least initially — for the entire British Empire and Commonwealth. Although it no longer owned any territory in Latin America, Spain did have trading relationships and tariff agreements there. For these reasons, Piaggio felt Moto Vespa was well equipped to do business in Latin America. The first batch of Vespas exported went to Colombia in 1956. A larger batch of 800 went to Chile in 1958.

Like most Moto Vespa models (and, for that matter, many Italian models such as the 125 and 150) the model designations often encompassed a batch of different models over a long period of time. The first and last batches of a production run often had little in common with each other except for the name. This was particularly true for the N and S models.

By the late 1950s Moto Vespa's customers had become more discriminating and less willing to settle for the strictly utilitarian machines they had been producing. As a result, Moto Vespa began to upgrade its line. To give the scooters a more modern look, both the N and S models underwent major renovations in 1958. Both received a newer, more streamlined frame, a modern headlight that covered the cables, and an improved suspension. The

color of the S was changed to metallic blue. Within a few months the total number of Spanish Vespas produced exceeded 100,000. Production that year reached 256,848.

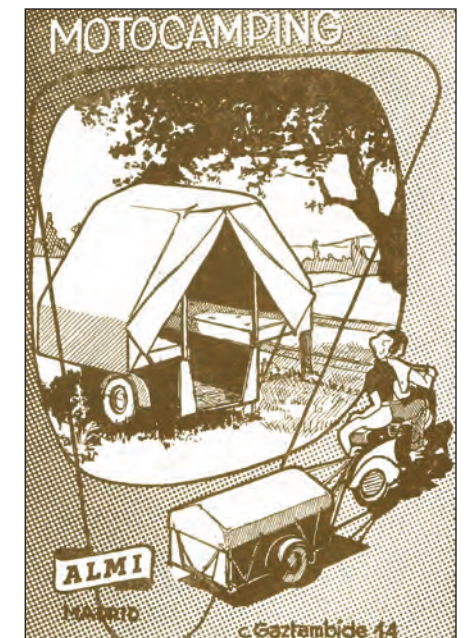
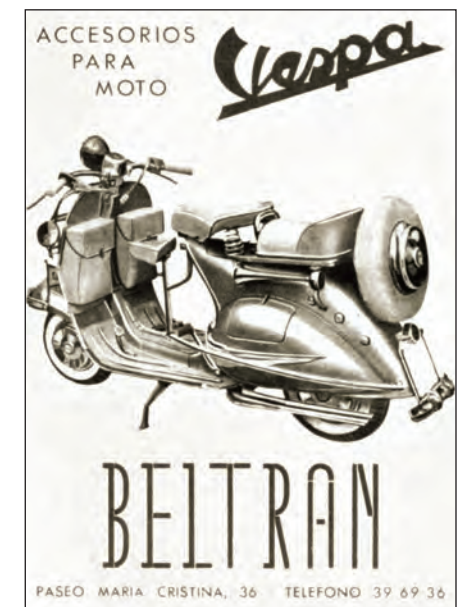
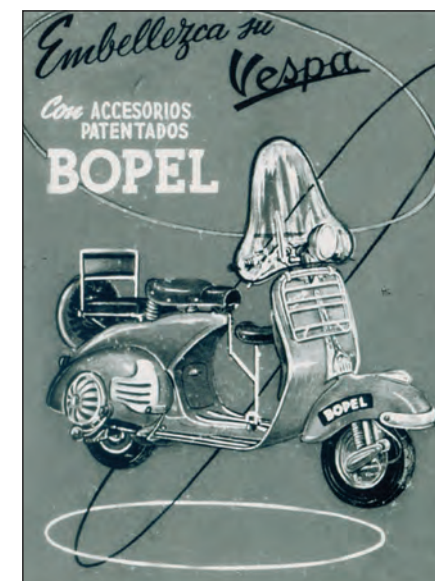
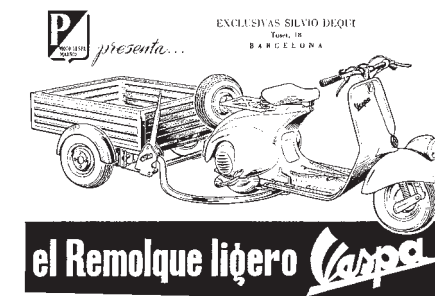
The most far-reaching changes to the Moto Vespa lineup came in 1960, following another major expansion of the factory. Both models were given a more aerodynamic, streamlined body, improved lighting and more comfortable seats. The color of the N was changed to light blue. The model S received even more extensive improvements. The engine was completely redesigned and featured a four-speed transmission. The carburetor was mounted directly on the engine, which enabled the door on the frame to be removed. The compression was raised to 5.5 HP and a top speed of 54 MPH. A more stylish triangular mat replaced the ribs on the floorboard. For the first time the machine was actually badged as an "S". Moto Vespa also introduced its own version of the Ape, which it named the Vespacar.

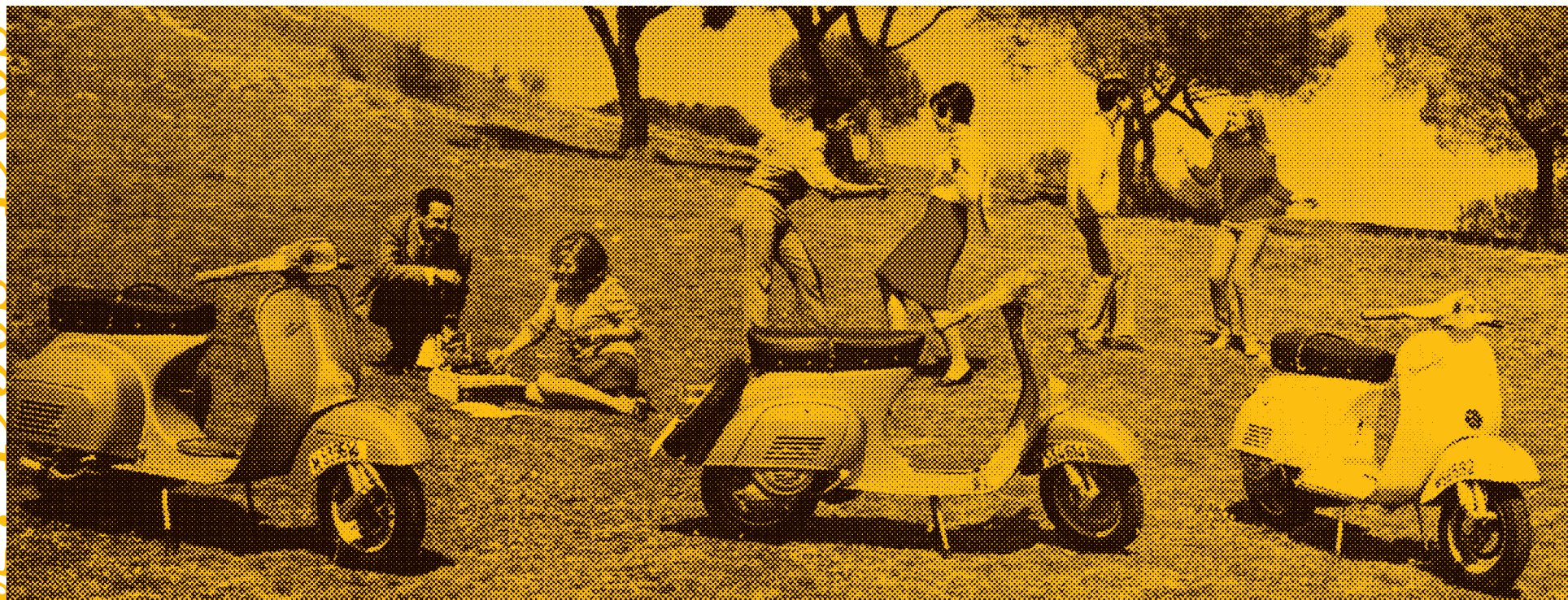
Further changes came the following year. As part of the process of moving its product lineup upmarket, Moto Vespa finally gave the S model a 150cc engine, ten-inch wheels (Moto Vespa was undoubtedly mindful of the fact that Lambretta had gone over to ten-inch wheels), and a brake light. It also featured chrome trim and a spare wheel as standard equipment. With a special high-compression engine, 6.5HP, and a top speed of 55 MPH, the new model S occupied an intermediate position between the standard 150 and the GS 150. The price remained unchanged from the previous 125cc version.

Still not convinced that their product line was upmarket enough, a year later Moto Vespa developed a new 125, the L (for luxury), which came with accessories only available on the S such as a spare wheel, chrome trim, and a speedometer. It also featured a four-speed transmission and came in a light blue.

To keep its hold on the utilitarian market, Moto Vespa lowered the price of the N below the first model nine years earlier. Sales continued to skyrocket. In 1962 the factory employed 648 workers and produced 110 scooters and five Vespacars a day. By now, Moto Vespa controlled seventy percent of the Spanish scooter market.

In 1963 two more new models were added to meet small Spanish market niches: the 150 L and the 150 F (familiar). The 150 L was a 150cc version of the 125 L designed for those who wanted a luxury machine with more power. It still lacked the ten-inch wheels and the sportier engine of the 150 S. The 150 F was a special model designed specifically to take a sidecar. The market for low cost family transportation was still extremely strong in Spain. One source in 1963 estimated that thirty per





It is probably true to say that after Italy, Spain took the Vespa to heart more than any other country. It rapidly ingratiated itself into the Spanish national consciousness after the war at a time when the country was among the least industrially developed in Europe. The Vespa, then, was a relative inexpensive form of stylish transport that the man (or woman) in the street could realistically aspire to. A couple of the 1950s advertisements shown here comprise of figures gazing at a gleaming Vespa—in the distance—a shining acquisition just a few more months of careful saving away.

The use of female images for advertising closely paralleled that of other countries. Thus the restrained (but quite stylish and distinctly Spanish) imagery of the 1950s gave way by the end of the 1960s to an altogether less subtle (but more youthful and vibrant) look.

Advertising by this time also had to pay more attention to the burgeoning 50cc market, and reinforce the adolescent fantasy that owning a Vespa somehow brought the girls flocking towards you. Fantasy or not, the Vespa and the Spanish way of life seen from these images have been made for each other.

—Ashley Lenton



cent of the scooters in Spain had sidecars. The most common Spanish sidecar was the elegant and elaborately constructed Ge Fe, perhaps the best scooter sidecar of all time.

As the 1960s progressed and economic prosperity increased (although Spain still lagged far behind the rest of western Europe) and many Spanish consumers began to take to Seats (Spanish built Fiats), a newer and younger group of buyers became the Vespa's primary customer base. Advertising began to focus on the Vespa as a pleasure vehicle. The images were those of fun, sea, sand and sexuality.

Starting in 1963, Moto Vespa began working with Piaggio to redesign their entire lineup to appeal to this new market. The first major revision was to the 150 s in 1964. The most significant modifications were to the frame. The redesigned s was apparently based on a GL frame with a trapezoid headlight like the GL, but with GS 160-style bubble cowls with aluminum trim. It also featured a GS 160-style front glove compartment, a spare wheel inside the cowl, and the same white paint as the GS. It remains another crown jewel of collectible Moto Vespas. The 125 s received only a facial makeover. The color of the 125 L was changed to Sienna Gold and the 125 L to Alamo green.

Although Vespa sales were beginning to decline throughout Europe and elsewhere, Spanish Vespa sales were booming. Moto Vespa produced 38,221 vehicles and had 795 workshops in 1964.

As the age of Spanish scooter buyers decreased and license and insurance regulations were eased for 50cc machines it became imperative to have a machine to appeal to this market. In 1965 Moto Vespa introduced the Vespa 50, which was the first machine to be offered in a range of colors.

Moto Vespa was still not convinced that their product range was up-market enough, so their entire lineup underwent a complete makeover in the fall of 1965, which brought their products more closely in line with Piaggio. Two new models debuted. The 150 s—the pride of their lineup—was replaced by the 7.2 HP 150 Sprint, the fastest Moto Vespa yet. The Sprint was also Moto Vespa's first large-frame rotary valve engine. It was marketed as "a new step toward perfection" and came in metallic blue, a color which was hugely popular in Spain. The 125 s was replaced by the 125 Super, which was a small-frame with rotary valve engine. Its most distinctive visual feature was a spare tire around the taillight. Its initial color was white but other colors were added. A large number were exported to England. Both of the new models featured more angular and geometric frames. The 50 was also upgraded to a four-speed transmission.



In 1967 a change in legislation allowed machines of up to 75cc to be driven without a license and insurance. Moto Vespa responded by upgrading its 50cc engine to 75cc and creating a new model 75. The 50 continued until 1969. Like the 50, the 75 was available in several colors. In 1968 Moto Vespa introduced the Vespino, a moped that was completely different from any produced by Piaggio (the name would soon become synonymous with moped in Spain). Large numbers were exported to England, France and Morocco.

Moto Vespa also sought to strengthen its offering at the other end of the spectrum. In 1969 the company came out with the Vespa 160, one of its most unique and collectible scooters. The body was basically a Sprint frame, including Sprint trim on the panels, and a trapezoid headlight, but with a glove compartment on the leg shield. It also had a rear brake pedal similar to the P series. The engine was a strange hybrid of old and new technology: a piston-ported GS 160 engine featuring a twelve-volt Femsatronic electronic ignition. It became the first scooter in the world with electronic ignition. It was available only in an ocean blue. In 1973 the 160 became the GT 160. The main differences were largely cosmetic. Like the Rally 200, the GT featured racing stripes on the cowls and fenders (although they were removed on some of the later models) and an "electronic" sticker. Most GTs were burnt orange, although other colors are known. Spanish scooter enthusiasts considered the GT faster than the 160 and it became a staple of scooter racing. In 1974 a third version of the 160 appeared: the GTi 160. The GTi was the same as the previous models, but had German style turn signals on the handlebar ends ("i" came from "intermitente," the Spanish word for indicators). The GTi continued in production until 1979, when it was replaced by the P200.



Vespa 160

El primer scooter de serie en
el mundo con



ENCENDIDO ELECTRONICO

In contrast to most other areas outside Italy, the Vespa continued to remain extremely popular in Spain throughout the 1970s and beyond (perhaps due in no small part to Moto Vespa's skill in courting the youth market with an appealing model lineup and effective advertising). By 1972 the company had sold a half-million vehicles. The factory employed 650 workers with a daily production of 150 Vespas, 100 Vespinos, and 20 Vespacars.

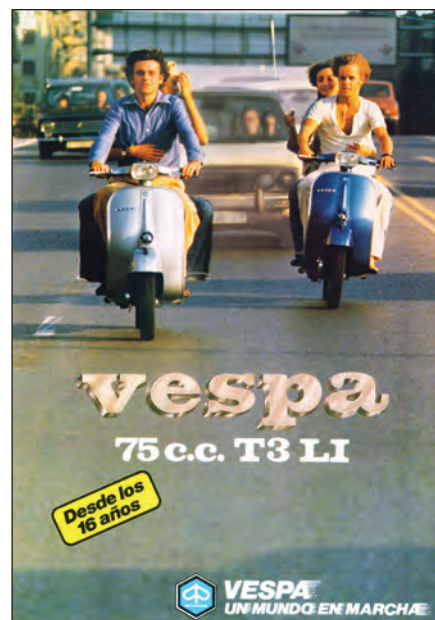
Most models went unchanged until the late 1970s. At this point, Moto Vespa began to align its products more closely with Piaggio. In 1978 the Primavera was introduced. Throughout the next decade the Primavera underwent numerous changes, most of which were simply changes in nomenclature to give the image of modernizing the model. In 1981 the T3 was replaced by the 125 NK, which was distinguished by racing stripes and a twelve volt electrical system (although still with points). Two years later the NK became the PK 125 S, the first small frame with electronic ignition. This model was available in two versions: normal and electric start. In 1985 it became the 125XL, with a new five-port engine. Its final metamorphosis came in 1989, when it was transformed into the P 125 FL.

Since the youth market was its primary target, Moto Vespa paid particularly close attention to the 75 series. Its development closely followed the 125 small frames. In 1979 the Vespa 75 morphed into the Primavera 75, which featured slightly different body and engine specifications. Over the next few years there were two additional versions of it, the PK and the PN, though the mechanical specifications were the same. The PK series was introduced in 1983. It featured a higher compression ratio, which

along with higher gear ratios, helped raise the top speed. Several different versions were available. In addition to the standard PK 75, there was a PK 75 S, a sports model, which had slightly a different compression ratio and gearing. An electric start version, the PK 75 Electric, was also available. In 1983, hoping to capture the lower age range of the youth market, Moto Vespa came out with the PK 75 Junior, which was the utilitarian offering of the PK series. With the intent of making the performance of the PK series more appealing, Moto Vespa came out with the five port 75 XL in 1986. The following year the 75 XL Plurimatic, an automatic transmission version, was introduced. The final version of the 75, the P 75 FL, was introduced in 1989.

At the other end of the spectrum, Moto Vespa began producing the P 200 in 1979. It represented the first Spanish model over 160cc. During the next three years several Spanish versions of the P series were introduced. These included: the 150 CL in 1981; the P 125 CL, P 150 CL, and P 200 DN in 1982. In 1985 Moto Vespa introduced the PK Iris series with the PK 125 E Iris, PK 150 Iris, and the PK 200 E Iris. The PK 200 E Iris was available with an optional electric starter. In 1989 Moto Vespa came out with the TX 200, one of the last Spanish hybrids. The TX 200 featured more sporting lines, with a T5-style body, rectangular headset, and instrument panel.

In 1998 Piaggio bought control of Moto Vespa. Five years later, Spanish production was shut down entirely. Free trade had made it less economical to produce scooters locally. In the end, Moto Vespa had outlasted all other Spanish motorcycle producers. No other Spanish scooter or motorcycle manufacturer could lay claim to have lasted over half a century.





AROUND THE WORLD IN

...or, the Strange Origins of the Dali Vespa

79 DAYS

by John Gerber

According to Piaggio, the most famous Vespa in the world is the so-called "Dali Vespa," named for the artwork painted on it by the renowned surrealist artist Salvador Dali. Although often forgotten, this Vespa is famous for another reason: it was driven by two young Spaniards on a daring 79-day trip around the world in 1962. This, by chance, led to Dali's artwork.

This strange tale begins in December 1960 when two Spanish law students and Vespa enthusiasts, **Antonio Veciana** and **Santiago Guillen**, saw a newspaper advertisement by the Delegación Nacional de Juventudes (Spain was still in the throes of the Franco dictatorship and this organization was a fascist youth group) for a contest with a 100,000 peseta prize for the best youth adventure. They found the contest intriguing but had no plans to enter. Several days later they were both reading Jules Verne's novel, *Around the World in 80 Days*. They picked up an atlas to look at the route. Suddenly the idea hit them like a bolt of lightning. They could do a similar journey. There was never any question about how they could do it. Both were long-time Vespa Club of Spain members and their decision was "irreversible from the first moment." The Vespa was "their vehicle." They knew its mechanics and felt it offered the best and most comfortable carrying capacity

for passenger and luggage. It also offered the advantage of a world-wide service network. They dubbed their adventure "Operation Elcano" after Juan Sebastián Elcano, who took command of Magellan's around-the-world fleet after his death in 1521.

Initially, their expectations were quite naïve. They planned to leave on July 25, the festival of Santiago Apostol, the patron saint of Spain, and return on October 12, the festival of the Virgin del Pilar, the patron saint of all Hispanic people. These were also dates that coincided with their summer vacation. This time period also provided the opportunity to top Jules Verne by making the trip in 79 days. But what they did not know was that it would take a full two-and-a-half years of planning and preparation before they were ready.

Planning became an obsession. To do the trip within the limited time frame required planning every last detail with almost military precision. Endless visits had to be made to embassies and travel agencies.

Financing the trip was the first and most pressing problem. Since the trip had the aim of promoting Spain and Spanish products (and indirectly the Franco government which was still ostracized by much of Europe) the Delegación Nacional de Juventudes (DNJ) and other government organizations were

able to give them some financial support, but ultimately the connections these groups had proved even more important.

Santiago and Antonio first attempted to gain support from their most logical prospect, Moto Vespa, the Spanish Vespa manufacturer. The director of advertising, however, was extremely skeptical of their ability to complete the trip, perhaps because of their young age (Antonio was 18 and Santiago 19). As a consolation, he gave them a world directory of Vespa dealers.

But Santiago and Antonio were not easily deterred. Several days later they read that Paola Piaggio, the wife of Enrico Piaggio, was in Madrid. They decided to try and reach her by calling the three most fashionable hotels in Madrid. To their surprise they reached her on the first call. She invited them over for tea and after a long discussion of their plans gave them a letter to give to Lelio Pellegrini, the head of Moto Vespa.

Once again, the director of advertising interviewed them. This time it felt like a complete exam. But he was still concerned about their youth and expressed doubts about their ability to handle mechanical problems. Pellegrini was less dismissive and gave them a letter — more a gesture than something of substance — to present to local Vespa dealers requesting

that they provide them with parts and services and to local Vespa clubs requesting that they provide them with food and lodging.

Their local Vespa dealer in Albacate, a long-time friend, was more helpful. He gave them a slightly used 150s, Moto Vespa’s top-of-the-line model, which featured ten-inch wheels and a high compression engine midway in power between a standard 150 and a 150GS. Viewing themselves as two modern Don Quixotes, they christened the scooter *Dulcinea* (sweet one) after Don Quixote’s enchanted and elusive love object.

Their biggest hurdle was the expensive air transportation required for several legs of the trip. They first approached General Joseph Caldara, the liaison to the U.S. military mission in Spain about transportation on U.S. military planes. But the Berlin crisis had forced the Pentagon to ban all civilian travel on military planes. Finally, they were able to get a leader of the DNJ to intercede with an executive of the British Overseas Airline Corporation (BOAC), who agreed to provide them with free air transportation on all parts of their journey in return for publicity.

Finding accurate maps was another problem. Many took months to obtain and were often quite rudimentary. In the case of Iran, they had to get the Spanish Embassy to procure one.

During the early months of preparation they learned quickly that planning a trip of this nature could not be undertaken in a couple of months. A year later there were still so many problems to be resolved that they reluctantly decided to postpone it for another year.

Finally, by early 1962 everything had fallen into place. A month before their departure date they began to work three hours a day at the local Vespa dealership to gain a better

understanding of the Vespa’s mechanics.

Two weeks before their departure they decided to make a shakedown run to Barcelona. On the spur of the moment they decided to try and get Salvador Dali, who lived in the nearby village of Port-Lliget, to sign the Vespa as a good luck talisman. When they called, Dali answered the phone immediately. After telling him of their plans and asking him to sign the Vespa, he replied simply: “When can you come?” They arranged to meet the next Monday evening.

On Sunday they began the 420-mile journey. When they arrived, Dali immediately asked to see the scooter. Dali spent two hours with them and showed them around the studio, while Gala, his famous wife, muse, and model (Gala, who appeared in many of Dali’s most famous artworks, was originally a married woman who served as his mistress for 30 years before marrying him in 1958), served them champagne. Instead of merely signing the Vespa, Dali decided to turn it into a work of art. He painted both cowl with a tribute to Gala, with an abstract three-pronged crown symbolizing Gala as the “Queen of Port-Lliget.” Gala wrapped the cowls in cellophane and left them to dry overnight while the boys stayed in a hotel. When they arrived the next morning they found that Gala had also wrapped two cases of champagne in cellophane on their luggage rack.

Back in Madrid they spent much of the remaining time pruning down the amount of luggage they were carrying. Even so, the Vespa and luggage weighed 420 pounds. Almost every space on the Vespa was used to store luggage.

Finally, the big day arrived. Their departure had a surrealist quality to it that would have made Dali proud. It was a snapshot of Spain in 1962, an uneasy mixture of old and new. Journalists were there for last-minute interviews.

A priest was there for benediction and to formally christen Dulcinea. A large delegation from the DNJ was there to see them off, along with five young girls from the C tedra Nacional de la Secci n Feminine (a fascist women’s organization). At the last moment, an elderly woman stepped out of the crowd to give them 5,000 pesetas. And just as they were starting their scooters a television crew pulled up. A Luis Bu uel film couldn’t have done it any better.

Once on the road they had a hard time adjusting to the loaded scooter’s extreme weight. Their first stop was their hometown of Albacate, where their families were waiting to greet them. A group of school children presented them with a plaque of the Virgin de la Llano, the patron saint of Albacate. An interview with the local radio station followed.

The next day, while passing through Valencia, they smelled burning rubber and noticed that their rear tire was starting to deteriorate. They took it to the local Vespa dealer who told them they were carrying too much weight, which caused the rear tire to rub against the suspension spring. More luggage was sent home and the suspension was strengthened.

At Sitges they had their first accident when a car suddenly braked in front of them. Fortunately, there was little damage.

Rolling rapidly through France, they experienced no problems except for dangerous truck traffic. To gain time, they decided to drive around the clock on Europe’s well-paved road system. They devised a system where they switched drivers every few hours. They both became quite adept at lying back on the luggage and falling asleep. Their helmets helped isolate them from the noise and fatigue, allowing them to fall asleep quickly. Traveling along the Riviera, they felt the stillness of the night brought a special tranquility, with the

hum of the Vespa engine the only sound to be heard. Often they followed in the wake of a stream of taillights. At the Italian border they stopped briefly for a caf  latte, their first stop since leaving Spain.

At 7 a.m. they rolled into Genoa. They had been on the road continuously for 60 hours. Drowsy from a lack of sleep, they ran into a tram, an “original way to wake-up,” as they put it. Although they suffered only minor cuts and bruises, it was enough to require their first aid kit.

After briefly looking over the tourist sights of Genoa, they continued on the autostrada to Rome. By now, they had fully mastered the art of both sleeping and eating on the Vespa. Although it was mid-summer, the cool night air made it seem like winter as they traveled down the autostrada at 50 mph. By the time they reached Rome they were completely exhausted. They booked a pension and slept in a bed for the first time in four days.

Since Rome was their first pit stop, they immediately took the Vespa to a dealer to have it greased, de-carbonized, and repairs and modifications made to the luggage rack. They had heard stories of fierce dogs in Turkey so they also had a special airhorn put on to scare them away. After they picked up the Vespa they were received by the Spanish ambassador and met with BOAC’s public relations department for photo shots. These activities would become standard procedure at all their major stops. Several hours were also spent with Piaggio taking publicity shots.

On their second day in Rome, Antonio and Santiago — both deeply religious — attended a mass by Pope John XXIII. Afterwards they buttonholed a Vatican official, explained the

nature of their adventure, and requested a private audience with the Pope. To their surprise, he ushered them into the Pope’s private chambers. After asking them about their trip, he told them they were doing something important and God would be with them. At 10 p.m. they left for Brindisi, on the heel of Italy, where they had to catch an 11 p.m. ferry the next evening for Greece.

Riding non-stop, they arrived at 7 p.m. and congratulated themselves on their good performance. However, when they tried to find the ship they discovered that it had already left at 6:30 p.m. due to an impatient group of French tourists. Moreover, they were informed that there would not be another ship for five days. Their first thoughts were that Operation Elcano would have to be aborted. But one of the port officials told them that a ship was leaving from a different port of Greece further up the coast at 10:30 p.m. that evening. They hopped on the Vespa and drove furiously through the night. When they arrived it was already 10:30 and the gates had just been closed. They pleaded with an official who graciously let them board.

In Athens they stopped briefly to check on their remaining visas. Fortunately all had come through and the last obstacle to the trip was removed.

Crossing the Bosphorous into Istanbul, where East meets West, their adventure really began. Almost immediately, a policeman stopped them and asked them if they were the two Spaniards traveling around the world. They asked how he knew and he motioned for them to follow him. He took them to the manager of the new Istanbul Hilton, who told them that the Madrid Hilton had telegraphed ahead to offer that they be allowed to stay free in any

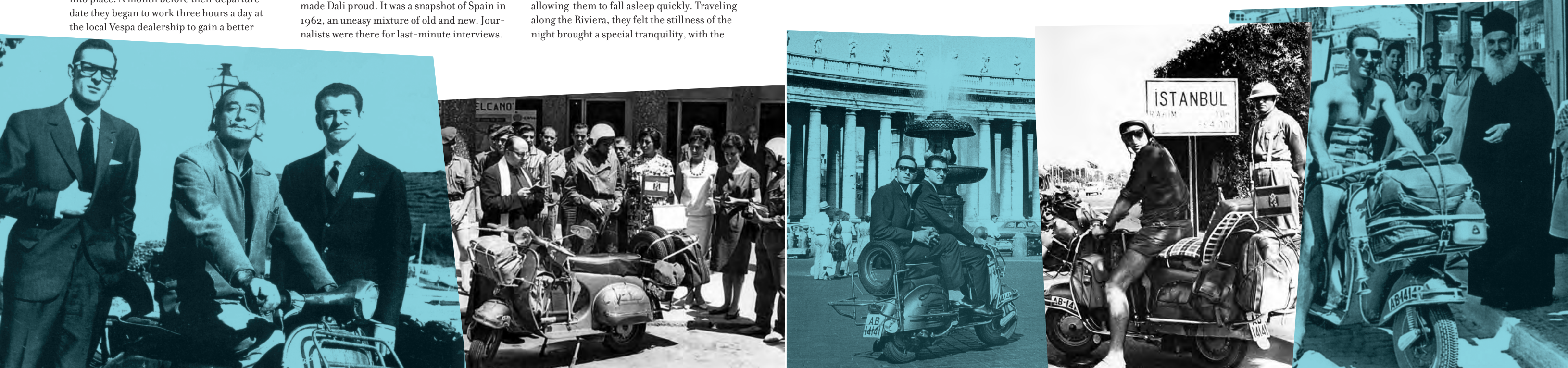
Hilton hotel in the world. The manager then telephoned the police to be on the alert for them. Dulcinea was then parked next to a line of expensive American cars.

Following a day of press conferences and BOAC public relations activities they were back on the road again. The harsh realities of the adventure swiftly set in. The further east they rode in Turkey, the worse the roads became, and what had been pleasant and smooth riding on good asphalt soon turned into a tiring shalom between potholes and bouncing on a dirt track. As they climbed into the mountains a miserable drizzle enveloped everything. Mud-and-water-filled potholes broke any speed they managed to gain. They also began to experience repeated spark plug whiskering. As a consequence, they made only 125 miles the first day.

As they feared, the ferocious sheepdogs were constantly rushing out to attack them. The dogs did not chase for fun — they were out for blood. Rabies was not uncommon. Their new airhorn had little effect. Another less than touching custom was the tendency of local children to throw rocks at passing vehicles. Fortunately, the bandits the Turks had been warning them about never materialized.

In Ankara they had to make an unanticipated stopover to have the badly damaged muffler repaired.

From Ankara, they rode across a vast, barren plain, treeless and windy, with unforgettable snow-capped mountains in the distance. As they neared the Iranian border, the spectacular snow cone of Mount Ararat, of biblical fame, appeared in the distance. Rain and drizzle continued to dog them. Much of the road was also dug up for repairs,



which only compounded their problems. They also crossed several 7,000-10,000 foot mountain passes, which required traveling at a snail's pace for hours on end. Nearing the Iranian border one night they had to sleep in a cemetery.

Crossing into Iran, they encountered ponies and carts, mud hovels, and villages right out of the Dark Ages. Before they went very far they were caught in the worst downpour yet, which turned the road into a sea of mud. Dulcinea often fishtailed back and forth, sometimes dumping them in the mud. At times Dulcinea got stuck in mud that went up to the engine and they had to get off and push. To make matters worse, there were no gas stations on the route and they had to use up the ten liters they carried in reserve. It took them a full day to make the 87 miles to Tabriz.

Leaving Tabriz, they were back on asphalt again. This did not prevent them from having a blowout at 45 mph. But this was the first flat — despite thousands of miles of unpaved roads — and the tire had lasted nearly 5,000 miles.

Tehran was designated another major pit stop. The Vespa was taken to the local Vespa dealership for major servicing. The tires were changed, the scooter prepared for desert travel, and the seat was padded for more comfort. When a group of policeman found out about the trip they presented them with a bouquet of flowers. During their brief stay in Tehran, both Antonio and Santiago were appalled by the contrast between extreme wealth and extreme poverty.

From Tehran, their next hurdle was 1,200 miles of desert over a badly rutted road to Afghanistan, with gas stations 250 miles apart.

Road conditions were horrific and the air was so hot it almost burned. Their skin felt almost like leather. The road was often unmarked and frequently they didn't know where they were going. Often the Vespa would get stuck in the sand and they would have to get off and push it while gunning the engine. On their first day out they made an appalling 62 miles. After several days of grueling desert travel they reached the Afghanistan border. A sign greeted them: "Afghanistan, land of hospitality."

Although the journey through Iran had been unusually harsh, they later learned that fortune had indeed smiled on them. Only a few days later a devastating earthquake struck the areas they had passed through, killing over 20,000 people and wiping out more than 70 villages.

Crossing into Afghanistan, with its fierce tribal culture, their impression was that nothing had changed since the Middle Ages. Much of the countryside was uninhabited. At the time, there were only 6,000 automobiles in the country. Their sense of complete solitude was overwhelming. The austere Afghan landscape would change abruptly from mountains to sandy desert.

The journey across Afghanistan was their most epic ordeal. They had originally thought that nothing could be worse than the roads across Iran, but they soon found out they were mistaken. Both the U.S. and the Soviet Union were in fierce competition to build a paved road system for Afghanistan, but at this point the original unpaved roads were only torn up, which compounded their misery. The Vespa, however, was again interrupted by mechani-

cal problems. A few miles into Pakistan the engine began to cut out. In Peshawar — where there were countless Ape taxis — they found a Vespa dealer, but the language barrier made it difficult to describe the problem. He changed the spark plug, adjusted the points and timing, and it appeared to run okay. But about five miles out it stalled again and they had to bring it back. The mechanic cleaned the carburetor, changed the gas, and again pronounced it okay. They started out again, but after twenty miles they had to return. By chance, they met a passerby who spoke Italian. He had served in the British army in Italy during World War II. He led them on his bicycle to an Italian engineer who invited them for dinner. The engineer reassured them that he and his staff would work on the Vespa throughout the evening. He totally dismantled the electrical system, and with the parts they had brought with them, completely replaced everything. A crisp blue spark soon appeared.

Back on the road the next day, the Vespa again stalled several hours later. The crisp blue spark had disappeared. This time they took it to an electrical shop in Rawalpindi. The shop was closed, but a mechanic opened up just for them. He spent four hours dismantling the electrical system, but everything appeared normal. The next morning they started out again, but made only 25 miles before it stalled again. They returned to Rawalpindi to find a truck to retrieve Dulcinea and met a motorcycle mechanic. He discovered several electrical cables that were improperly connected. They got another good spark, but now the lights did not work. Antonio decided that the best course would be to travel on to Lahore by flashlight and moonlight.

In Lahore they found a skilled Vespa mechanic, but he was unable to get the lights working. They bought a larger flashlight and decided to continue on to the border and cross into India. At the frontier they found the border closed for the night. They explained to the guards the nature of their trip and how far behind schedule they were, but to no avail. A friendly policeman did invite them to sleep in his home in a nearby village. By this time, they both had bad diarrhea.

Heading to the border in the morning, the Vespa had another breakdown. They returned to Lahore and found a mechanic named Aslam. He spent a day dismantling and re-assembling the electrical system. Once again, Dulcinea started right up. Aslam was completely perplexed.

After spending the night in Aslam's house they started out for the frontier for the third time. Aslam accompanied them on a motorcycle. Just as they were getting ready to go through customs the engine stalled again. They felt like crying. Aslam called a friend to bring electrical testing equipment and began dismantling the electrical system again. The test revealed that a screw was improperly insulated and touching and short-circuiting one of the internal coils. This time the problem was fully resolved, but they were now ten days behind schedule. It had taken them seven days to cover 700 miles. Their chances of meeting the 79-day deadline seemed from slim to none. They knew that they would have to travel virtually around the clock to have even a slim chance of making it.

Once in India, they were on the Grand Trunk Highway, which transverse India from

Pakistan to Calcutta. The road is hundreds of years old and by far the busiest in India. The road was a vast panorama, packed with pedestrians, bicyclists, ox-carts, animals and trucks. Trucks were by far the greatest hazard. At times, big trucks bore down to within only a few feet of their rear end. In India the philosophy of the road is that the smaller vehicle always yields to the larger vehicle no matter who is in the right.

The two adventurers also had the misfortune to cross India during the middle of the fierce monsoon season. As they approached Amritsar they learned that the rain had inundated much of the road ahead. They soon found themselves on stretches where water covered Dulcinea well above the floorboards. Their strategy was to hit the stretch at full speed after first judging the depth and then let the momentum carry them across. Often the smells of dead animals who had drowned in the flooding were more than they could bear. Once, in the middle of the night, they encountered ox heads and other body parts hidden under the water, blocking their path. To resolve the problem, they hired Indian villagers to carry Dulcinea across.

In New Delhi they had a brief respite when they stopped to meet the Spanish ambassador and arrange BOAC publicity. The two devout Catholics were also able to attend Mass for the first time since Rome. Although they were way behind schedule, they decided to make a quick 120-mile detour to see the Taj Mahal.

From New Delhi they had a 1,200-mile ride to Calcutta, which they planned to ride non-stop as much as they could.

Night riding had become more difficult because of a fall in Pakistan that had broken their headlight lens. Driving without it caused further deterioration of the reflector, which gave them only a dim and distorted beam of light. Driving conditions were atrocious. They had insufficient light to see the many pedestrians, bicyclists, ox-carts, and animals that clogged the roads. Many times they had to make last second maneuvers to avoid collisions.

On their first night out from New Delhi a friendly gas station attendant, seeing that they were exhausted, offered to let them sleep on the floor. But with the humidity penetrating to their bones they were unable to sleep and decided to hit the road again at 3 a.m. At 5 a.m. they stopped again to rest under a bridge and fell into a deep sleep. However, they were soon awakened by the sound of soldiers marching across the bridge.

The Vespa became their home on the road. Usually they would try and sleep for a few hours by pulling off to the side of the road. They always slept in the open and needed neither sheets nor pillowcases. Sometimes they made a small room by positioning Dulcinea against a tree or something. The constant humidity kept their clothing drenched at all times. On occasion, friendly villagers would invite them in to eat and offer them a place to sleep.

Late one evening they came to a bridge that had been partially destroyed in a train accident a few days earlier. They noticed that the railway part of the bridge was still functioning and convinced the stationmaster to let them put Dulcinea on a train that was



getting ready to cross. On the other side of the bridge they found the road much worse. Santiago relieved Antonio, who quickly fell asleep on the luggage. But Santiago could not go on either and had to stop by the side of the road. Both immediately fell into a deep sleep. When the first rays of the sun awoke them in the morning they found a crowd of about 30 half-naked Indians, intensely contemplating them with arms crossed.

Racing across the vast plains and endless villages of northern India, the lack of sleep, constant monsoon rains, and harsh driving conditions began to take a toll on the two adventurers. Several hundred miles from Calcutta, both drivers began to repeatedly fall asleep and the Vespa would veer to the side of the road. One night this happened three times; each time they stopped for a short nap by the side of the road.

By now, they were on the road almost 24 hours a day. Even stopping for meals was out of the question. They just grabbed a quick snack or a piece of fruit at roadside stands, hopped back on the Vespa, and ate while riding. At times, they felt that the only thing that existed in the world was the Vespa, the road, sun and rain.

As they neared Calcutta the truck traffic became increasingly harrowing. Trucks sped by at great velocity. Numerous crosses marked the site of accidents. Their trip was almost prematurely cut short when a truck wheel came off and rolled a few feet behind them. They were shaken up but continued on.

In Calcutta, they took Dulcinea to the Vespa dealership for a complete overhaul. They also

managed to finally get the correct headlight lens and reflector. boac held a gala reception.

Following brief stops in Singapore, Hong Kong, and Tokyo, their plane flew into San Francisco in the middle of the night. They were impressed with the beauty of the Bay Area lit up at night. But it was now September 24 and they had to be back in Madrid October 12. They had 3,500 miles of riding to reach



New York. As a consequence, they had no time for sightseeing and left at 7 p.m. that evening.

From San Francisco they continued on the freeway to Sacramento. After a few hours rest in Sacramento, they continued over the Sierra Madre Mountains, just barely managing to tolerate the cold. The American freeways struck them as the polar opposite of the roads of Afghanistan. Even at night they were able to maintain a high rate of speed.

Near Elko, Nevada, they hit strong headwinds, which caused them to lose speed and often threatened to blow them across the highway. Nonetheless, they covered vast spaces of the

American West at a rapid pace, often averaging more than 400 miles a day.

In Cheyenne, a gas station owner presented them with a "Dynatron," a large plastic model of the Sinclair dinosaur. They immediately took a magic marker and wrote "Around the World in 79 Days" on it. To make sure that people knew what much of their trip was about they added in even larger letters, "Made in Spain" and attached it to the luggage. The Dynatron mascot drew almost as much attention as their scooter and became an icon of their adventure.

As the clock ticked away, they continued their frantic pace. The 500 miles across Nebraska were covered non-stop in a single day.

The sight that fascinated them the most was the great roadside billboards, which were unknown in the rest of the world. But they were disturbed and surprised by the amount of litter, auto junkyards, tire heaps, etc. that detracted from the beauty of America.

Throughout their travels across the U.S. they were impressed most of all with the extreme generosity and hospitality of the people. Many times gas station and restaurant owners refused to accept payment. Strangers invited them to eat or stay overnight. Unfortunately, they also got a taste of the American red-neck attitude toward scooters — something most of us have experienced many times. Arriving at the Hotel Gibbon in Omaha, they were granted permission to park Dulcinea under the staircase. When they awoke the next morning they found the scooter dumped in the street with all their baggage

strewn around it. Outraged, they asked to speak to the owner but he was teaching school. They then called the police, who told them they had no one to send over. In the end, all they could do was leave a note saying: "You are a pig." A bystander, who had been watching, sympathized with them and gave them some chocolates and bought them breakfast.

From Omaha they made it to Chicago in a single day. boac organized a gala dinner in their honor at an exclusive men's club.

On the Indiana Toll Road they were stopped in the middle of the night by an Indiana state trooper and told they had to take local roads. They continued on through night and fog. Near Warren, Ohio, carburetor problems forced them to stop. As they repaired it in the dark, a local ham radio enthusiast stopped to talk with them. He radioed to other enthusiasts, who came and escorted them into the city and then as far as Pittsburgh. The Warren Tribune also came and interviewed them for a long article. The newspaper also took a photo of their fully loaded scooter and Dynatron, which became the signature photo of the trip.

In Pittsburgh they made their only overnight stop since Chicago and then continued on to Washington. They now had to make an 8 p.m. flight the following day in New York. The Spanish ambassador offered to have them flown directly to the airport, but they felt it would be a betrayal of their supporters' trust. After a quick tour of Washington they were back on the road. By 6 p.m. the next day they were approaching New York.

Like modern day Phileas Foggs, their last-minute obstacles were many and varied, and each threatened to deny them their

long-cherished goal. Snaking past the long, slow lines of cars in the Lincoln Tunnel at rush hour, they were spotted and stopped by the transit police. They spoke of their urgent need to make the flight and he let them go. They decided that their only chance to make the flight would be to hail a cab and have the driver lead them to the airport. By a stroke of good fortune, the first cab driver they hailed turned out to be a fellow Spaniard. Antonio hopped into the cab and Santiago tried to keep up as it sped away.

When they arrived at the terminal, they found a truck blocking the freight entrance and had to spend precious time finding the driver. By the time they finally made it inside they found out it was two minutes past eight. They felt ready to cry until an airline representative informed them that the flight had been specially delayed for them and the passengers informed about the nature of their trip. Although they were fatigued and covered with road grime, the two adventurers received tumultuous applause when they entered the cabin. Fortune continued to follow them. Four out of five planes on the same flight plan to London that day had to be diverted to Scotland due to fog. They were on the only plane that made it to London.

A crowd of journalists and photographers was waiting for them when they landed. They went immediately to boac headquarters to meet personally with the president who had made their adventure possible.

Later that evening they left to catch the ferry at Dover. The fog—combined with the cold—made the driving extremely difficult and it

took most of the night to make the 80 miles to Dover.

Landing in France, they hoped to make the 185 miles to Paris by 2:30 p.m. But as they headed into Amiens part of the piston broke. A friendly French mechanic had them back on the road in three hours. In Amiens they also stopped briefly to view the Jules Verne statue. At 5 a.m., frozen from another night ride, they arrived in Paris. As they passed through the city the shock absorber gave up the ghost again, but a replacement was easily obtained. They now had 30 hours to make the remaining 800 miles to Madrid. By early evening they had covered the 450 miles to the Spanish border. Members of their family, friends and supporters, along with representatives of the Spanish government and a delegation from the DNJ, were waiting to greet them. As they continued on through the night they ran out of gas at one point. Fortunately, their relatives were following them in a SEAT 500 (a Spanish Fiat) and had a spare can. Once they reached Madrid they were given an escort by the traffic police. Another huge crowd of reporters and government representatives awaited them. Their last act was to sprinkle dirt from each of the countries they had passed through at the Valle de los Caídos (Valley of the Fallen), the Fascist war memorial.

The trip had taken them a total of 11,736 miles. The total mileage on the Vespa was now 17,071.



weird & wonderful

by John Gerber

Almost a GS: The Moto Vespa 160



Two scooters deserve special mention for being in the "almost a gs" category. One, the Soviet Viatka 150 (1955-1966), was a direct, but crude, copy of the gs150. The other, the Spanish Moto Vespa 160, actually used an adaptation of the gs160 engine.

The Moto Vespa 160 first appeared in 1969. In fact, it was originally designated a gs, but was changed to the 160 at the last minute (perhaps at Piaggio's request?). Some of the first batch were, in fact, badged as a gs. To a certain extent, the 160 embodied the type of development the gs



MOTO VESPA S.A MADRID

CON ENCENDIDO ELECTRONICO

might have undergone had Piaggio not switched to the ss and Rally series. It was a hybrid machine encompassing both old and new technology.

The engine was a piston ported gs160 engine (undoubtedly made with surplus Piaggio tooling), but it featured 12-volt electrics and a highly advanced Femastronic electronic ignition. It had the distinction of being the first scooter in the world with electronic ignition. The body was basically a Sprint frame, including Sprint-style trim on the panels, a trapezoid headlight, and a gs/ss style glove compartment on the legshield. It was initially available only in ocean blue but later was offered in orange as well.

In 1973, the 160 became the cr160. The differences were largely cosmetic. Like the Rally 200, the cr featured racing stripes on the cowl and fenders (though they were removed on some of the later models) and an "electronic" sticker. Most crs are burnt orange, though other colors are known. Spanish scooter enthusiasts considered the cr faster than the 160 and it became a staple of scooter racing.

In 1974, a third version of the 160 appeared: the cri 160. This model had German-style bar-end indicators (the "i" comes from *intermitente*, the Spanish word for indicators). The cri continued until 1979, when it was replaced by the p200. Moto Vespa had carried the gs160 engine almost into the 1980s.



performance & style



REV COUNTER / SPEEDOMETER

- › Available for many Scooter Models
- › Vespa Classic, Modern Vespa, Lambretta
- › All SIP Speedos: www.bit.ly/speedo-sip



HOTLINE +1149 8191 9699969
WWW.SIP-SCOOTERSHOP.COM



MOTO VESPA'S *Vespa 160 S* IN DETAIL

An SS180 Look-alike by David Dry

Very unusual in the rest of the world, but once a familiar sight in Spain, is the Spanish Vespa 160s, or Super. At a glance it's an ss180 with slight but clearly visible differences to those familiar.

The most obvious visible difference is at the front where the forks are similar to the Rally rather than the ss, featuring an external spring and separate damper unit. Attached to these forks are very non-ss-style wheel rims in the form of the classic Vespa one-third/two-thirds split variety.

The chassis is all ss from the front (apart from the Piaggio horn casting badge advertising its Moto Vespa Madrid genesis), but is subtly different at the rear, being rounded in the fashion of the Series 1 cs160.

The air intake under the saddle peak consists of two half-moon shapes rather than the circular cutout usually seen on Italian machines. The trademark bag hook under the front of the saddle has not been fitted; neither are the two holes drilled to enable its fitting. The final difference can be viewed slightly lower

down from the missing bag hook, where the angular black plastic-handled petrol switch sticks out an ungainly 100mm from its hard plastic frame grommet in the chassis proper and — on pulling out the choke knob — the usual round sliding rod of this part has been manufactured using a thin flat piece of steel bar in place of the rod.

The headset is the same as the Italian home market non-battery ss with the ignition switch omitted. An ignition 'kill button' is situated in the dipswitch assembly.



Side panels and mudguard seem to be the same as its Italian cousin, but remove the side panels and the differences become apparent. There is, unsurprisingly, no battery cage inside the spare wheel compartment.

The engine side of the machine displays the most profound Spanish changes to those familiar with the ss180. The engine is a very distant cousin to the Italian ss version and looks more like the Sportique/150 Super equivalent except in this instance the carburetor is not situated over the crank. Instead,



like the ss, it sits on the cylinder. The piston, instead of the crank, is responsible for sucking gas into the cylinder.

It has six-volt electrics generated from a Femsa flywheel/stator unit and sports a very short kick-start with a heavily indented foot pedal cast on the end. The carb is an unusual, non-Dellorto, product and breathes through a rubber air bellows (missing in the pictured example) of the Rally/Rx type. This example (Frame number: v1 04c 19 *171108*, Engine number: 04M *174325*) is believed to date

from 1968/69. Had it been an ss180, the frame number would have started "vsc1r." One of the most striking parts of this Spanish lady is the seat, with its tastefully-moulded 'Vespa' logo in its center section.

The 160s could well prove to be an excellent substitute steed for those on a low budget who aspire to the classic Vespa look and should only command, perhaps, a maximum \$1,400 price tag despite the model's rarity in the UK and US. A modern engine could easily be substituted to offset any problems with spares.





Vespa Spotting in Spain

by Joe Gerber

Recently we headed to Spain for a three-week tour of the Iberian Peninsula. We first visited Madrid, where my son, Brenden, was attending the Complutense University of Madrid as a study-abroad student. Since Brenden was busy taking finals, we were on our own most of the time. Serendipitously, I received an email from Dave McCabe with information my brother, John Gerber, had put together on the Spanish-made Moto Vespa. Along with visiting awesome cathedrals, Roman ruins and renowned art museums of España, the mission of Moto Vespa spotting began.

When we weren't sightseeing or Vespa spotting we were eating. Spanish food is an adventure and nothing we imagined. Obesity is almost non-existent. Restaurants are abundant but the tapas bars are ubiquitous. Eating at tapas bars is more like grazing. You travel from spot to spot and order small plates of their specialties, which include vast varieties of seafood, *chorizos* (sausages), *jamón ibérico* and *jamón serrano* — two types of ham. *Jamón ibérico* is produced from special black pigs that graze on mountain acorns. Spanish food tends to be quite bland. The Spanish simply do not like spicy food. Of course this is a surprise for fans of hot Mexican food. Mexican food gets its great *picante* flavors from the foods of the indigenous population who introduced chilies, moles and other strong flavors. Also, the Spanish do not eat a lot of corn, reserving it to feed livestock. And of course you wash down your tapas with an inexpensive "Vinho Verde," a young wine, usually a house specialty.



We couldn't escape Spanish politics. The summer of 2011 was a time of political upheaval in Spain as the Wall Street-induced crash toppled their economy. In every city we visited there were huge street demonstrations and squares filled with encampments. People were marching from the towns and villages into the cities to protest government austerity programs. Unemployment was astronomical, especially for youth. We witnessed demonstrations of thousands and thousands of peaceful protesters of all ages in Madrid, Granada and Barcelona — from the north to the south! Their movement was called 15M for the date, May 15, that it began. This movement went on to inspire the Occupy Wall Street movement that swept across the U.S. that summer — an incredible time for an unforgettable visit.

Besides political activists, these cities were filled with Moto Vespas. What I thought would be rare proved to be everywhere. Barcelona with its gentle Mediterranean climate had the largest proliferation.

Scooters of all ages and demeanor lined the streets. Some almost new, some having logged tens of thousands of kilometers, some painted and customized with motifs of Holstein cows and Hello Kitty. Of course Chinese scooters and new Italian Vespas were also everywhere. The Chinese, who seemed to have difficulty understanding marketing, produced the inexpensive, oversized "Dink," although the American meaning may have escaped the Spanish buyers.

It's not too late to plan your own visit to the land of the Moto Vespa. You will be deeply rewarded with a rich, warm and welcoming adventure!



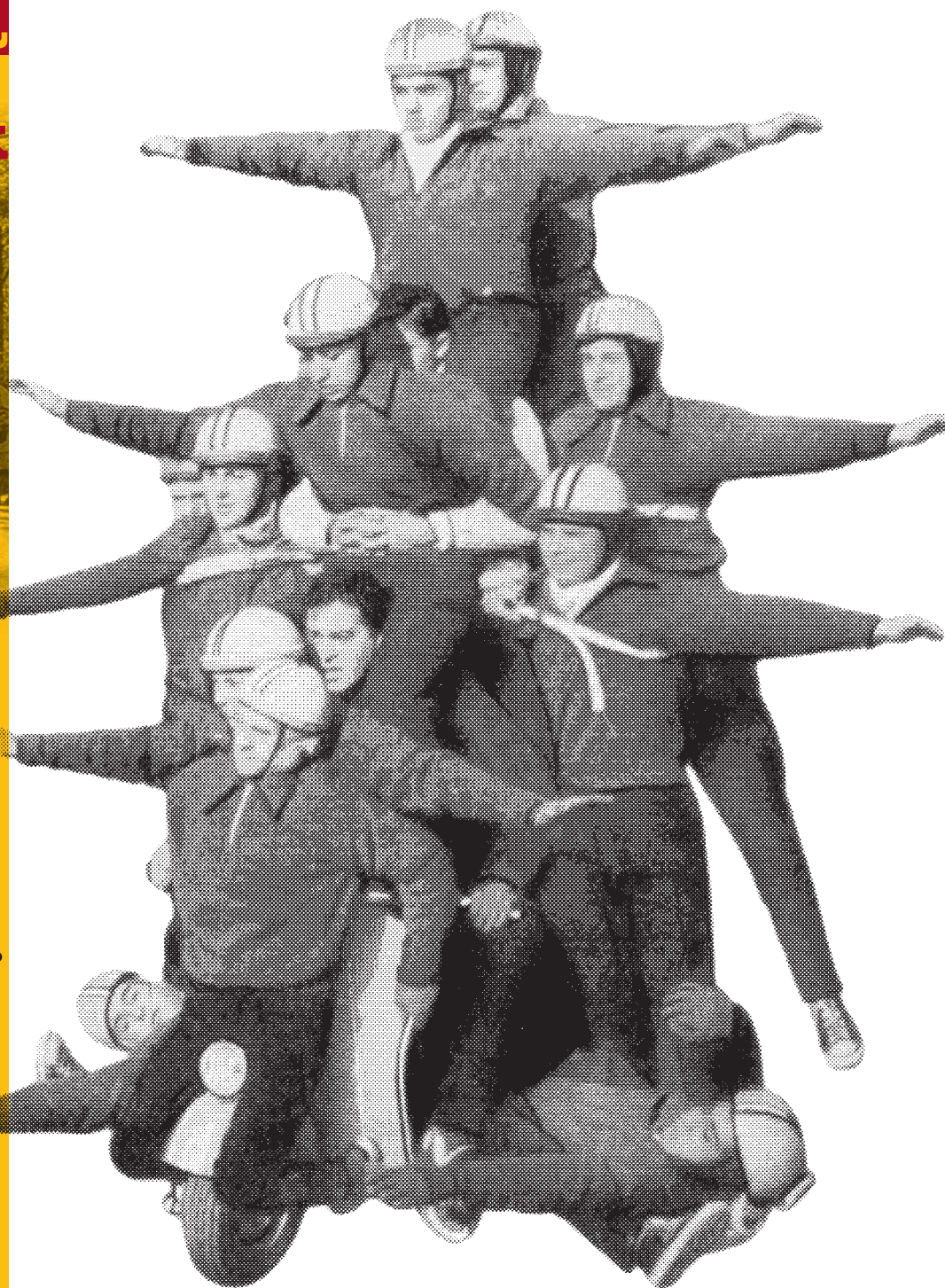
españa flash back

by John Garber

The Great Vespa Loading War 1957-58

the 1950s coincided with the golden age of scootering, which gave rise to a rich international scooter culture that has never been equaled. This culture found expression in an endless variety of scooter-related activities and publicity stunts. Among the most unusual was the friendly mini-war that developed between the Vespa Club España (vce) and the Vespa Club Britain (vcb) over how many persons could be loaded on a Vespa.

The war began in August 1957 when the famous Thames Valley Vespa Club display



team loaded nine persons on a Vespa. vcb president William Bond was so proud of their accomplishment that he sent postcards to the presidents of all the European Vespa clubs announcing that they had set a record.

In October, 1957 the "Diablos Rojos" (Red Devils) responded by loading twelve onto a Vespa. The "enemy" British quickly upped that to thirteen and vce head Luis Felipo Cabezas sent out a call to meet the "English challenge." On January 15, 1958, the Vespa Club Valladolid managed to get seventeen on a Vespa and drove it 300 meters. Cabezas then sent Bond a formal letter on Moto Vespa

stationary challenging the British to beat it, noting that the score now was: "Spain 17, England, 13." The British gave up at this point, but the Vespa Club Valencia took up the challenge and increased it to 21.

The Vespa Club Valladolid was proud of its accomplishment and was not going to be outdone. They responded by loading an amazing thirty (with a total weight of 1,803 kilos) and — if their claims are to be believed — drove the Vespa a full kilometer. The Lambretta Club Burgos then got into the act, but could only manage 26. The record of 30 still stands.

scooterwest.com

Parts • Accessories • Apparel • Memorabilia

Over 300,000
Vespa Parts in Stock!
From 1946-Present!



SUBSCRIBE TO OUR
YOUTUBE CHANNEL



@vespamotorsport

Vespa

SPECIALISTS San Diego, CA Since 1992

Racks & Luggage



Lighting Accessories



Performance Parts



vintage parts & much more...

WHERE MODERN MEETS CLASSIC

