

Flathead four set record with restored motorcycle

No guts, no glory

Opening in theatres everywhere Feb. 3, Anthony Hopkins stars in *The World's Fastest Indian*, the life story of New Zealander Burt Munro, who spent years rebuilding a 1920 Indian motorcycle, then set the land-speed world record with same at Utah's Bonneville Salt Flats in 1967.

No need to envy New Zealand, friends, because as of last September we have our own "world's fastest Indian" right here in the 'Peg!

The adventure began back in November of 2004, when vintage motorcycle maven Ross Metcalfe picked up a "basket case" 1938 Indian Junior Scout motorcycle from a fellow collector in Regina.

Ailing antique

Purchased by Ross and three other vintage iron flathead fans, Siggie Klann, Gary MacDonald and Ted Hector, the ailing antique was brought back to Ted's Thunder Road Motorcycle shop on Sargent Avenue, and the restoration begun.

Looking at it now you'd never guess what a labour of love the project was. Just a few of its afflictions included a bent frame, bent front end, seized motor, and transmission rusted solid.

Thanks to Ross's penchant for amassing antique motorcycle parts, many of the replacement pieces came out of stock in his garage, including a 1938 aluminum transmission to replace the former cast job, with Siggie bringing cheers by

sourcing vintage aluminum heads to replace the casting.

Cutting to the race, it wasn't long before the "flathead four" decided Junior should be capable of beating the present world speed record at Bonneville (go big or go home) and the restoration was focussed on that goal. Aluminum replacement parts had been a real bonus. When chasing speed records, the lighter the bike, the better.

Six months later, after endless hours of old-world mechanical magic by Ted and Gary the racer was born.



BRIAN DONOGH Sun

Ross Metcalfe with the restored 1938 Indian Junior Scout bike that set a speed record at the Bonneville Salt Flats.

For test run times they needed "a couple of miles of good highway" muses Ross, so were most pleased with the Manitoba government's newly paved highway between Fannystelle and Elie.

Three crack-of-dawn Saturday test runs saw Junior achieve 100 m.p.h.-plus speeds, but also a metal-fatigue failure that put Ted into a 95 m.p.h., 200-yard semi-controlled skid. It was only his driving skill that saved him and the bike.

Repairs made, jump ahead to the second weekend of September

2005 with Gary, Ted and Junior poised and ready to kick sandy butt at Bonneville. Ross and Siggie, too busy to go, cheered them on from home.

Bottom line, Junior set a new AMA National Record in the modified vintage gasoline 500-cc motorcycle class, averaging 78.163 m.p.h. (slowed by thin air and sand) over two one-mile runs.

Ted, the lightest of the four, drove with his head tucked beneath the tach and viewing the track only peripherally, to reduce wind resistance. No guts, no glory.

Mission accomplished, with Winnipeg's "World's Fastest Indian" now a showpiece in Ross and Chris Metcalfe's living room. Yours to view not at the bike show this weekend, but at the upcoming World of Wheels at the end of March.

This September, the Flathead Four, currently mid-restoration, head back to Bonneville with a vintage Harley. Godspeed gentlemen.

Laurie can be reached by phone at 632-2749, by fax at 632-4250, or e-mail at lmustard@wpgsun.com.



Laurie Mustard
lmustard@wpgsun.com