



# FROZEN IN TIME

THE COVINGTON COLLECTION AT LAS VEGAS 2015

by Ron Christenson

In 1995, David Silver of David Silver Spares (vintage Honda parts specialist) saw an advert in *Dealernews* for old Honda parts from a dealer in Covington, Virginia. As he regularly visited the U.S. back then looking for old Honda bikes and parts, he decided to pay this dealer a visit. The dealer was located just off the I64, and his main showroom overlooked the

freeway in which a virtually new CBX1000 could be seen as well as many other old Hondas. The visit did not result in any deals being struck.

In 2013, David Silver was visiting another dealer in Princeton, West Virginia, again looking for NOS Honda parts. The owner said that David should investigate this old dealership in Covington; the shop

had been closed for years as the owner had died, but many had reported seeing the showroom overlooking the I64 full of old Hondas. Using his laptop at the local Starbucks, David set out trying to trace whoever the next of kin might be. The original dealership name and address was emailed over from his UK office; the name of the owner was known but that was





all. From the Internet, he found details about the owner's funeral in 2002, and the names of his children who were still living. He picked a real estate agent from out of the town, called and asked if she had heard of Covington Honda. The agent said that she hadn't, and just before ending the call, David mentioned the owner's name and his son, to which she replied, "Give me 24 hours and call back."

The following evening, the real estate agent gave David the cell-phone number of the dealer's son, advising that he was ready for a call. David called the son who, upon hearing his voice, launched a verbal assault for insulting his father with a miserable offer for his parts 20 years earlier. Once he calmed down, he explained to David that everything was just as it had been on his last visit in 1995; nothing had been sold, and the building had been sealed since his father died. He agreed to meet David over the weekend as he now worked and lived 50 miles away.

David hastily rearranged his UK return flights and booked an extra flight to Roanoke, Virginia — the nearest airport to Covington and also the place where the original English 17th century settlers were left and subsequently disappeared. Undaunted by history, David headed up the mountain to Covington in order to meet the dealer's son the following morning.

Upon meeting, the son explained some of the history of the dealership. Covington Honda was one of the earliest dealers and was very successful in the days when the town had several industries going. By the mid-'80s, the owner, looking to expand, purchased some land overlooking the I64 and built a large showroom, which meant all freeway drivers would see it. He started moving his bikes into the showroom when the Honda rep came to visit. Much to the owner's shock, he was chastised by the Honda rep because he only had a license to sell Hondas from his old showroom and wasn't permitted to use the new one. In a fit of rage, the Honda rep was chased out the door and told never to return. The owner then decided he didn't want to sell any further Hondas. The showroom was never opened to the public; the ramp to the door was never built (you have to climb in the door); and new and used Hondas had been lying there ever since.







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David's phone call had prompted both sons of the owner to discuss the option of finally selling the contents of the business. They made it clear that the terms of the sale included a complete buyout of everything Honda-related, not just the parts inventory which was David's original goal to acquire. With that, they set off to go and see the parts, service center, and original showroom.

On arrival, it was clear that the weather over the years had not been kind to the building, and part of the roof had worn away allowing water to rot the wooden floor boards. Nevertheless, the parts were all untouched and mostly in original packaging dating back to the '60s and '70s. "These are wonderful things," thought David, feeling like Howard Carter on discovering Tutankhamen's tomb, hoping that the same curse was not laid on this sealed Honda vault

for those who had caused hitherto offence with derisory offers. The parts counter, posters, books, equipment, and bikes all still laid there as if frozen in time, nothing newer than the mid-'80s. From there, they journeyed to the "new" showroom overlooking the I64 and workshop. Around 60-70 bikes were lined up in the showroom from the early '60s-'80s, some brand new, again all frozen in time. The warehouse behind the showroom was a veritable feast of yet more rare parts, sales brochures from that era, hundreds of unopened letters from American Honda... Yes, wonderful things.

As there was no inventory of anything, David took photos of every motorcycle and as much of the memorabilia and parts as possible, as this would be the only method to gauge and negotiate a value once he was back in the UK. A deal was struck, and the David Silver Spares U.S. team set

to work packing up and hauling everything back to their Pennsylvania warehouse. It required 4-by-26-foot truck-fulls. The U.S. team had to bring its own floor to the Virginia building to prevent a quick exit to the basement.

Some of the Hondas were used only by members of the immediate family and never titled at all. The DSS U.S. team has cleaned many of the bikes, and some even fired up with just a fresh tank of petrol and a new spark plug. As David Silver Spares U.S., located in Pennsylvania, is a mail-order parts operation for Honda M/Cs only, they have teamed up with Mecum Auctions to offer bidders the opportunity to buy some of these historic machines and memorabilia. The collection will cross the auction block at the 24th annual Antique Motorcycle Auction in Las Vegas January 8-10, 2015. 