

# THE VINTAGE NICHE



THE EVENING SUN — SHANE DUNLAP

David Silver, right, looks over the top floor of a former Hanover furniture factory with his brother-in-law David Currie. The building is being converted into a motorcycle parts distribution center for Silver's business, the United Kingdom-based David Silver Spares.

## Specialist rolls into Hanover

■ David Silver sets up a motorcycle parts center at a former furniture factory.

By CRAIG K. PASKOSKI  
The Evening Sun

Need a gasket for a 1974 Honda CL125 motorcycle? In the market for a brake hose for a 1977 CB400F2? Then David Silver is your man. He has connections you seek.

The British entrepreneur deals in tens of thousands of parts for vintage Honda motorcycles.

It's a niche market that Silver has been filling for more than 25 years. His United Kingdom-based David Silver Spares has done so well in fact that it has grown into a worldwide operation.

And his next step is expanding his distribution network with a parts center/warehouse in Hanover.

"It's what we do. We turn a pile of parts, which is no use to anybody, into something that is useful and put it on the Internet. They can see



THE EVENING SUN — SHANE DUNLAP

A former Hanover furniture factory on West Elm Avenue is under renovation to be turned into a motorcycle parts distribution center.

what it is," said Silver as he examined restoration progress Wednesday on the West Elm Avenue factory building he purchased.

Silver bought the brick, two-story former furniture factory there last year because of its location, the rea-

sonable price and the overwhelming amount of space it provides.

"We're going to be storing huge amount of parts, and we'll sell mostly on the Internet, to customers

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THE EVENING SUN — SHANE DUNLAP

David Silver looks over boxes of Honda motorcycle parts he purchased from a dealer in Connecticut that he will stock at his West Elm Avenue distribution center.

## Parts

**Silver said up to 80 percent of 1970s Honda motorcycles went to the U.S.**

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all over the world," he said. "Principally, our customer base from here will be initially U.S. vintage bike owners."

Silver now has some 25,000 square feet to play with.

He hopes to have the upgrades to the old Madison Square Furniture building wrapped up in a couple months and have it stocked with rows of overflowing boxes of Honda parts by mid-year.

From here, he'll fill orders for both common and hard-to-find parts for motorcycles dating as far back as 1959.

"Some of the parts are still available from Honda but an awful lot aren't," Silver said.

At his Leiston, Suffolk warehouse, Silver has some 80,000 parts available in a 30,000-square-foot warehouse complex. Having a warehouse in America will save him, and customers here, quite a bit in shipping expenses.

"We already have quite a strong presence in the U.S. in terms of sales," he said.

Silver notes that 70 to 80 percent of the Honda motorcycles produced in the 1970s went to the United States.

Silver finds dealers, collectors and others that have parts that they are willing to, well, part with.

"You just develop contacts," he said. "A lot of dealers are going out of business."

Silver purchases anything from a single box to tractor-trailer loads of parts.

"It's the strength of knowing exactly what you're buying," he said.

Sorting through those boxes and cataloging the parts is the time-consuming part for Silver and his employees. He has 28 workers at his Suffolk warehouse. Initially, he plans to have about four or five trusted employees here.

"I'll just build it up as we need it," he said.

One of those trusted employees is his brother-in-law, David Currie, who is overseeing the restoration and will run operations here.

When Silver began searching for an American distribution base, he wanted something close to his sister and Currie, who live in Maryland.

But real estate prices in that state where much higher than here, he said.

"Hanover had a good number of industrial properties that, with this business, space is what you need, inexpensive storage space," Silver said.

Silver is the kind that enjoys taking something old and unused and finding a new life for it.

He fixed up old motorcycles and sold them to make extra money when he was young. He still does restoration work.

One of his latest projects is simultaneously restoring more than 50 classic CB400F Hondas, one of the most popular bikes ever in the United Kingdom.

He purchased many of them from people who, because of age or illness, weren't able to use them anymore.

One of those bikes he is working on is reserved for James May of television's "Top Gear."

And while the market for new motorcycles struggles, Silver's business rolls on.

"The new market is suffering, but the classic market is one area that's quite strong," Silver said. "Guys of my age are just dragging bikes out of barns and thinking 'Let's get this going and get this fixed up,' it's going to need parts."

[cpaskoski@eveningsun.com](mailto:cpaskoski@eveningsun.com);  
717-637-3736, extension 147