





# The Jones Collection



On a typical hot summer morning on the tree-lined streets of our small suburban neighborhood, about twenty miles west of Chicago (Illinois), I did what most six-year old kids did back then; jumped on my bicycle and rode around looking for friends and something to do. There were no cell phones to communicate or arrange plans of any kind, but somehow everyone managed to find one another and hang out for the day; fishing in the lake, climbing a tree, or jumping bicycles over garbage cans. This day however would have an indelible impact on the rest of my life.

It was 1968 and one of my friends had just received a brand new candy red Honda Mini-Trail 50; I think that was the first year they were imported into the US. I was standing in his driveway absolutely awestruck and remember the smell, sound, and feel of that bike to this day. Over the next two years my parents must have said "no" five thousand times before finally succumbing to my relentless obsession. My persistence had paid off; in June of 1970 for my eighth birthday I got a brand new candy blue Mini-Trail 50-K2 (just to shut me up). It was one of the best days of my life as it was for many kids who started out on the most famous minibike ever. I rode it every possible waking moment, and when I wasn't riding it I was talking about it, cleaning it, or staring at it.

By now a few of us had mini-bikes and we were wearing in some pretty good trails in the undeveloped areas of the neighborhood. And we all know what happens when two boys on mini-bikes go riding, it turns into a race!

It was now the early '70s and motocross was quickly growing in popularity. One day at school I had heard of a place not too far from my house where some other kids would ride motocross bikes. It was a couple of neighborhoods over from ours, but somehow I was able to ride my minibike there without getting arrested; pushing it through busy intersections or riding it side-saddle when necessary. When I finally arrived, there were only four or five riders but they were on real motocross bikes, going faster than I ever imagined and wearing actual motocross gear; not my usual attire of helmet, jeans and a t-shirt. I was instantly hooked on motocross.

I met a kid there by the name of Dave Smith who was racing YZ80s at the time. After riding together a few times he encouraged me to give racing a try. His father even offered to give me a ride with them to the track (Dave and I were still too young to drive) as long as my parents gave me permission. Unfortunately, my parents wouldn't have any part of it.

Nevertheless, over the winter, I acquired my first real motocross bike, a Yamaha YZ80 and with it my first set of motocross gear; Lancer Leathers, Hi Point boots, a Genuine Yamaha jersey, etc. and my AMA and District 17 memberships in hopes of convincing my parents to let me try racing.

When spring arrived I mentioned to Dave's dad that I had finally received permission to go racing with them! At sunrise the following Sunday morning they arrived at my house and loaded my bike and gear into their yellow Chev Luv pickup and we were off to the races! I managed to finish second that





day so Dave's father was excited to tell my parents how well I had done in my first race. The problem was; I hadn't actually gotten permission to go racing, I just told him I did. Understandably, everybody was pretty mad at me and I lost the privilege to ride again for an entire month; which really didn't seem so bad because I thought for a while that I was going to have to sell my bike and stop riding indefinitely.

Although it put a slight damper on the thrill of competing in my first race, it was enough to start what would be nearly eight years of motocross racing; starting on '80s and progressing to the 125 A class.

The most competitive class at the time was the 125 class and there were ten to fifteen different brands on the line any given weekend. The 125 class was so popular that they would run an A, B, C, D, and E class with forty to fifty riders in each!

After seeing some progress my parents became extremely supportive of my racing efforts, bringing me to the NMA National Championships and every other race around the Midwest, sacrificing nearly every one of their summer weekends. The only caveat was; after high school graduation motocross was over and I was going to college. That and a string of injuries finally put an end to being at the races every weekend. I didn't ride a motorcycle for the next twenty years, but I had never forgotten the memories, friendships, and lessons learned while racing.

Fast forward to 2002; my wife is the director at a well-known art gallery in Chicago, consequently our house also looks like an art gallery filled with various pieces from her collection. On the way to dinner one night we happened to be talking about her collection and I said "I should start collecting something". Knowing that when I decide to get involved with something I go "all-in", she carefully asked me "what is it that you know something about but also really love?", hoping that might stump me. I think I named a few things, but motocross bikes were the most collectable, affordable, and would definitely be the most fun. I have to admit that I'm really fortunate that rather than trying to talk me out of it or changing the subject; my wife actually encouraged me to pursue a collection. She also suggested that in order to have a meaningful collection that I have a theme or focus, rather than collect any and every vintage motocross bike. I thank her for that advice to this day as my collection could have gone in numerous directions over the years as many do.

After further thought, I had decided to begin collecting first production year or early year 125 motocross bikes from each manufacturer that produced one. One reason for this decision was because when I was racing 80's, the 125's were the state-of-the-art, but they were unobtainable to me. I was completely fascinated with them and would stare at them for hours at the local dealership. One such dealership that many in the Midwestern US may recognize was Krause Racing, who specialized in European motocross bikes. Another reason to collect early year 125's was the fact that there were so many different brands that I could potentially put together a very diverse and interesting collection without worrying about completing it too soon or possibly becoming



bored with it.

I started by collecting the first Japanese 125's, bikes which were somewhat familiar. After about four months of watching eBay, a very clean, all original 1974 YZ125A appeared. I won the auction and my collection had begun! But more important than that bike to my collection was the owner of the bike Ron Carbaugh, whose name has appeared in this magazine

once or twice. Ron not only began racing and collecting before me, he also worked at American Honda for over twenty years. He helped me make the decision to focus on quality rather than quantity and has since been integral to my collection. Ron is a close friend first and an invaluable asset second.

Although every collector's interests differ, my preference was to have a collection with





fewer bikes of high quality rather than a greater number of bikes of lesser quality. I also made the decision to collect or restore bikes to production specifications. Any restorations therefore require the painstaking task of finding NOS or high quality used OEM parts, which can take a very long time. An example is the 1975 Rupp RMX 125. It's a beautiful and complete original with the exception of the

rear fender, which is damaged. It's all I need to complete the bike, but it's been three years and I've never seen one original fender appear anywhere. By default I now also have a collection of original product brochures and magazine tests for each 125 to see exactly how the production bikes looked.

One of my earlier acquisitions was a restored 1973 Can Am 125MX1. Before

buying it I had only seen one or two digital images of the bike and for some reason was somewhat skeptical before deciding to drive out to see it in person. Walking up to the owner's front door I walked past his garage window, looked in and couldn't believe what a perfect restoration he had done. His work was meticulous and correct, yet not over restored. He turned out to be a great guy and has since restored three other bikes for my collection.

And although I originally wanted to collect the first 125 motocross model year of each brand, I've made a few exceptions. Waiting for the opportunity to find a very clean original can take a long time. On a couple of occasions an opportunity has presented itself whereby a very special early year bike became available although it wasn't the first year of production. For example, the CZ in my collection is a NOS 1976 CZ125 Falta rather than the first year yellow tanker. The Montesa in my collection is a NOS 1977 VB125, not the first year Gray Ghost model. Personal preference is also slightly shaping my collection. In addition to the first year Suzuki TM 125, I also acquired the first year RM 125M, one of my favorite bikes ever. Similarly, I added the 1975 YZ125B because I loved its look and the fact that it was only produced for half the year before they brought out the monoshock model. Again, not first year, but what the heck.

I've also had numerous opportunities to buy very clean, original, early year Maico MC125's; but have made the decision to wait until I find an original 1976 AW125, my favourite Maico. At this point, if I had to pick a favourite from my collection it would probably be the 1974 KX125; not only because it's new or because it's serial #0002, but because of a more interesting and little known fact that I hope to confirm shortly.

I currently have fifteen bikes in my collection, all of which are either new, very clean originals, or showroom quality restorations in an effort to adhere to my original focus. Consequently, I don't intend to ride or race these bikes but rather keep them in their original condition to allow people to see what they looked like when they were sitting on the showroom of a local dealership thirty or forty years ago. It's hard to believe that I've identified over twenty-five other brands that have at one time manufactured a 125 motocross bike during the 1970s, all of which would be a great fit for my collection someday. And, because I'm in no rush to complete my collection, I hope to continue to find the highest quality early year 125's possible.

I still ride current motocross bikes with some of my friends that I raced against on 80's over thirty years ago. Sure, every year I get older and a little slower, but because speed is relative and the inherent danger of motocross is always present; it's still as fun and exciting as the day I lined up at that first race.....without permission from my parents!

Within the next year I hope to launch The Jones Collection website so that everyone can enjoy these bikes. In the meantime, if anyone has any questions or would like to contact me personally, send me an email at [jonesmed1@aol.com](mailto:jonesmed1@aol.com)

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