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### Clark Gable's Knuckle at Harley Museum

By Gunner

Back in March, my good friend Richie Clyne of Las Vegas called me up to take a picture of his bike. I take lots of pictures of bikes, but this one was kind of special. Richie's 1941 Knucklehead had been owned by famed actor Clark Gable. Richie had loaned in the Harley-Davidson Museum for the "Harleys in Hollywood" exhibit they are featuring this year

Gable-the actor with the mustache and ears that your mom or grandmother probably swooned over back in the '40s, was one of the most popular Hollywood stars of that era and was best-known for his role as Brett Butler in the classic film "Gone With the Wind." Gable was also an avid motorcyclist and a Harley enthusiast.



In 1939 Gable married actress Carole Lombard just 22 days after he divorced Rhea Langham. In 1942, Lombard was on tour to promote the sale of U.S. War Bonds when her plane re-fueled in Las Vegas. It then went off-course and crashed into a mountain in Mount Potosi. A devastated Gable rushed to the scene, but was persuaded by MGM to stay behind while others searched for survivors. A short while later, Gable recieved a telegram saying that no one survived the crash. Lombard was declared the first woman killed in the line of duty during the war. FDR gave her the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

The crash had a dramatic effect on Gable for the rest of his life. He was reportedly "inconsolable" according to friends who saw him drinking too much and riding his 1942 Harley Knucklehead at wild speeds. He told one confidant "its not that I want to die, I just don't care if I live anymore."

Around 2001, Gable's 1942 "Knuckle Head" was displayed at the National Packard Museum in Warren, Ohio as part of the "Thunder of the Road" exhibit. That bike was never restored and had only 26,000 miles on it at the time. It was estimated top be worth \$100,000 then.



According to a 2002 Ashtabula (Ohio) Star Beacon article, the owner of that 1942 Clark Gable Harley—76-year-old Joe Hassett—was involved in an accident in which the bike was wrecked after a head-on collision with a Ford Escort in front of the Ashtabula Country Club.

Details of the accident indicated that the driver of the Escort swerved left of the center line to avoid rear-ending the car in front of him. Hassett was wearing a helmet, but was seriously injured and was flown by helicopter to the Cleveland MetroHealth Medical Center.

Gable also had a 1934 Harley, plus the EL Knucklehead that Richie Clyne has loaned to the Milwaukee museum. This bike is all black, as opposed to the 1942 Knucklehead, which had a black and white color scheme.

According to Clyne—the former director of the Imperial Palace Auto Collection in Las Vegas—Clark Gable really enjoyed getting out of Hollywood and often rode with friends of his in rural California. He once said that, of all the opportunities hw was offered as an actor and celebrity, riding his Harley was the most fun. Gable was pictured, with one of his bikes, on the cover of the September 1942 edition of The Enthusiast.



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