

6th Annual AMCA Southern National Meet

By Wally Wersching



In 1948, Harley-Davidson introduced a new engine that would be affectionately called the "Panhead". It utilized much more aluminum than its predecessor the "Knucklehead", and hydraulic lifters for a more quiet motor. It would remain the Harley-Davidson main engine until 1966 when it was redesigned to become the "Shovelhead". During the "Panhead" years, the Harley-Davidson motorcycle would go through some incredible changes.

In 1948, when the "Panhead" was introduced, the Harley had a stiff springer front suspension, and a "Hard tail" for the rear suspension. Needless to say that the ride of the Harleys back then was a little rough. It relied on the seat spring for any rear suspension.

In 1949, the Hydraglide was made using telescoping front forks but still the "Hard tail" rear. It was a much more stable ride. I owned a 1957 model and relied on the springs in the seat for a lot of the riding comfort. In 1958, the Duo-glide made its entrance which had the telescoping front forks, and dual rear coil-over shocks. It was smooth riding compared to the earlier models. I had a 1960 model, and it rode great.

In 1965, Harley made the Electra Glide which was the most desirable Panhead because it had everything that the Duo-Glide had along with an electric starter. That was great - no more kicking (and kicking) to try to start

your Harley. It started with just a push of the button, but still had the kicker in case the battery went dead.

The Harley-Davidson motorcycle changed a lot over the eighteen years of the "Panhead" more than any other time in the manufacturer's history.

That little history lesson was because last Saturday, the Antique Motorcycle Club of America (AMCA) held their 6th Annual Southern National Meet in Denton, NC, and the theme of the meet was the 50th anniversary of the last "Panhead". Now you know what a "Panhead" is, and what it meant to the Harley-Davidson company, and their fans.

I left home about 7:00AM heading east on Rt 74. I merged with I85, and followed it through Charlotte until I exited at I485 south. I wanted to stay away from the traffic at Bruton Smith Boulevard because of the NASCAR All-Star Race that

would be held later that day.

I stayed on I485 for only a short time, and exited at Rt 49. I headed east for quite a while. The road changed from a four-lane divided highway to a narrow two-lane. It was early enough so that there wasn't too much Saturday traffic out yet. I arrived at the Denton Farm Park at about 8:45.

I started to walk around looking at all the different motorcycle parts that were for sale. If I was restoring an old motorcycle, I'd definitely stop at all the vendors to get a closer look. Since I'm not, I just looked as I walked by. Many of the parts I recognized as some that I used when I built my two "Panheads".

At one of the tents, I met Mike from the Charlotte Indian dealership. He had a few new Indians on display. They are great looking and riding bikes and I wish I could see one in my garage someday. We'll have to wait and see. The more I walked the more people I met. Dennis from Chesnee Classic Cycle was there promoting his "Antique Bikes on Main". It's always the last weekend in July. It grows bigger every year. This year's should be the biggest yet with the swap meet on Saturday, and the bike show on Sunday. It's always a great time, and I plan on being there again this year.

Farther down the road, I met Rick from Sandy Run Cycles. He was there with a friend looking for British motorcycle parts. He's always in the market for something British.



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I walked into the camping area where the vendors camp during the meet. I saw a man trying to start an old motorcycle. When it started, it sounded like an old sports car. It was an old Indian in-line four. It sounded so smooth even when he rode it around the campground. To hear it run was worth the trip. They are very rare.

Farther into the campground was a small group of motorcycles that were old style choppers with the long extended front ends, and hard tail rears. Those bikes are OK when on the highway going in a straight line but if you try to turn the bars; the front end wants to flop over to the side. It takes a man with strong arms to safely ride one. I tried one back in the day, and didn't have the strength to be comfortable on one.

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