

# Ghosts



## Chris Phillips

Life, to a great extent, is about relationships. Relationships, like many aspects of life, have rhythms and patterns. We meet, learn about, develop, then strive to maintain them. Yet, as way leads on to way, many times relationships drift into the past, and all we are left with are memories of times past. If the relationship was special to us, we yearn for the feeling of connectedness and contentedness of the relationship.

Sometimes, a blue moon shines upon us, and we meet again. Perhaps some time has drifted past. I call these ghosts. Not the howling, rampaging poltergeists of cinema fame, but living embodiment of what we've lost—come back to life. Such was the case last summer. Each year, sometime in May, the beach in Southern California becomes amenable to two wheeled transport. Warm water means no more wet suits, and fins and a towel can easily be stored on a scooter. Throw in free pier proximate parking, and why drive? As I pulled into the full motorcycle parking lot, I noticed a silver Bergman 400 at the end. As I had owned a 2003 model for many years, I naturally strolled over to inspect the bike, and pull in the nostalgia of past times. Then memories began to flood me—was that my old top case? Of course, my ever critical mind reminded me, it was a very common, nondescript case—many bikes no doubt had them. I peered at the VIN and took a picture—I had paperwork at home I could use to verify it's true identity. Then, the certainty struck me—the Leo Vince pipe. No one piece gave away its true identity—but those pieces together made a puzzle I couldn't not solve. Indeed,

when I got home, I pulled out the sales slip (I'm an inveterate documentarian) and discovered it was indeed my ghost, come back to haunt me.

I had to find the new owner. I'd sold the bike to a friend ten years earlier, and he had sold it a few years later, but had no recollection who bought it. It took a few weeks of beach runs, but one warm summer eve, as I began to load up my Vespa for the blast home from a fitful swim, I saw a man stride to the Bergman and open the top case. I walked over and immediately stuck out my hand, "Hi—I'm the original owner of your bike." Obviously caught off guard, a slow smile of recognition slid across his face. We began to bond over 'our' bike—he giving a present to my past, and I giving a past to his present. He had bought the bike off of another man (not my friend) primarily as a commuter. As he worked at the beach, where parking was both terrible and expensive, free motorcycle parking pushed him into buying a used bike as commuter. His assessment of the Bergman was spot on: incredibly comfortable, unbelievable storage (2 full face helmets under the seat, and 2 more in the top case) and it simply wouldn't stop running. I informed him of my many tours on the bike (I'd bought it as the perfect one-up touring bike, and had taken it to Washington state and back twice, as well as numerous in state trips). In our short conversation, details began to fill in the flesh of my former ghost bike. It had not come back to haunt me, but to let me know it lived on, purposefully and practically,

This is the second summer I've seen my old bike on a regular basis. Though the owner began parking in a different location, it was, amazingly, on my to and from the beach. Each day, as my Vespa puts past, I catch a glimpse of it-- a silver ghost, resplendent in the shadows, silently sitting, living its life—both apart from and a part of me.