

## In Love With A Machine ?

That's how Mark Jurus, founder of Baltimore Vespa and Lambretta describes his relationship with the scooter.

Mark Jurus, a native of Maryland, owns and operates the region's only repair and restoration shop devoted to the Italian scooter. What started as a hobby in 1993, became a full-time commitment in the summer of 1996. Jurus and his shop are now recognized nationally and bikes are shipped from all over the United States for his expertise in repair. Baltimore Vespa and Lambretta is located in Northern Baltimore County. With scooter lines as far as the eye can see, business is clearly booming ! Jurus recently expanded his garage to accommodate bikes that were appearing faster than he could repair them. It was 1992 in Boulder, Colorado when Jurus started his love affair with the scooter. He began riding with friends and purchased his first bike. That bike, which he shipped home, is still floating around town, and was last seen in Fells Point, an area in Southeast Baltimore. Jurus is also the founder of a scooter enthusiast group called the Baltimore Bombers. The group enables people, who share a passion for scooters, to come together, share stories, organize rides, and simply talk shop. The bombers tend to be hip crowd appearing into retro outfits and bomber jackets with nostalgic patches sewn to the leather. When asked who the typical scooter rider is, Jurus remarked "One does not exist." A Baltimore Bomber can be anyone from that hip retro twenty-something to the older generation antique buff. Jurus contributes much of the new interest in scooters to fashion. Style and character embrace the soul of a scooter rider. The Bombers, who meet on the first Wednesday of each month, make up a small part of a national club. The national club, which includes about 600 people from the Mid-Atlantic region, is responsible for organizing a number of events. A newsletter, sponsorship of national rallies and meetings are all part of the club's agenda. This past August the club sponsored a rally at Summit Point. Enthusiasts camped out and partied for an entire weekend. The list of activities included scooter jousting and scooter limbo ! How about giving that a try !! Many ask, is the scooter a stop before owning a motorcycle ? Something to get your feet wet ? According to Jurus, the ration is about 50/50. Many people who own motorcycles also own scooters. Scooter riding is definitely a good way to learn how to handle a two-wheeled motorized machine. On the flip side, some people who ride scooters have no intention of ever riding a motorcycle. The two activities, motorcycling and scooter riding, are very closely related. In fact. Jurus had one of the larger booths at the Baltimore International Motorcycle Show. Many motorcycle enthusiasts have a scooter in their collection. Owning a scooter is an emotional relationship and some people may not ride anymore, but hey find them impossible to sell. One observer at the Baltimore show exclaimed, "I'm getting a Vespa just to say that I have one ! " Another appeal of the scooter is the low price tag. Initial cost of insurance, maintenance, and repairs can be thousands of dollars less than their two-wheeled relative, the motorcycle. A completely rebuilt scooter can cost an average of \$1,500, with insurance topping out at around \$200 a year. Gasoline is another bonus. Jurus is able to fill up for \$3.00 !! The enamoring qualities of the scooter are hard to ignore. Jurus put it best when he described his relationship with the scooter as a "love affair." A love affair that ignited a regional attraction and devotion to the two-wheeler almost forgotten.

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