

onships in both Top Fuel drag racing and Top Fuel hillclimbing.

Reiser was born in Columbus, Ohio, in 1938. In 1954, his father bought a '48 FLH with sidecar to use as family transportation. As Reiser remembers, "We couldn't afford the whole rig, so we just bought the used bike with a naked sidecar chassis and built a plywood body. Dad and I went all the way to Sault Ste. Marie in that outfit. We fished and cooked out and camped. It was really some good times."

Having that FLH at his disposal, Reiser learned to ride before he was of legal age. "Dad didn't like to ride the bike without the sidecar, but I wanted to learn to ride a solo bike, so I got pretty good at removing and reinstalling the sidecar." A smile crosses his face as he says, "I remember my first ticket. I wasn't speeding, but I was this skinny kid on a big motorcycle, obviously too young to be riding it. I had to go to court."

In 1956, Reiser went to work at Farrow Harley-Davidson, detailing motorcycles. "I didn't actually work for Don Farrow," he recalls. "A guy who was Farrow's top salesman hired me as his assistant. My job was to get bikes cleaned up fast enough for him to sell them." He soon developed a reputation



Despite its rough-and-tumble mission, Reiser's current hillclimb weapon, ridden by 1997-98 AMA champion James Large, is prepared like a showbike. Every detail is clearly planned, masterfully fabricated and lovingly maintained.

## Reiser's hillclimbers are designed to bring the power on **INSTANTANEOUSLY.** **LIKE A BIG HAMMER SLAMMING ONTO AN ANVIL**

around the shop as a good mechanic, and the service manager persuaded Farrow to let him work in the service department at night and on weekends.

With this opportunity, Reiser quit school in 1957 to become a full-time motorcycle mechanic, earning \$30 a week. R.C. Johnson, a local hillclimber who rode out of Farrow's, recruited Reiser to be his mechanic on race weekends. But standing at the bottom of the hill and listening to the sharp bark of open-pipe Harleys and Indians was not very satisfying for Reiser; he wanted to be the one twisting the throttle and attacking the hill. So, he built his own hillclimber, powered by a Harley KR engine. Some years later, in 1964, Johnson would win the Canadian National Championship aboard a Reiser-tuned hillclimb machine; and as a rider, Reiser himself would win his first National that same year in Muskegon, Michigan.

By that time, however, Reiser had already slipped into the dreadful pit of his V-Eight

addiction, having decided in 1961 to build a Chevy-powered drag bike. "Somewhere, I got the idea that God put me on this Earth to build that motorcycle," he says today. "It took over my every waking moment. It is all I could think about."

Reiser had married near the end of 1958 and had a son in 1960. His new family-man status and good work at Farrow's had elevated his earnings to \$60 a week. But his middle-American dream would not last for long, as the job, the marriage and the picket fence with two cats in the yard would all be gobbled up by his obsession with the V-Eight bike. "All I did was work on that motorcycle," he says, "even on company time. Don Farrow would come in early in the morning, and I would already be there working on that motorcycle. He would just give me this hard look and not say a word. I didn't get the hint, or maybe I just didn't care."

Consistent with his compulsive behavior, Reiser had set a deadline for getting the V-

Eight running. When that date finally arrived, he rolled the bike outside and recruited everyone in the shop to help him, leaving customers standing in the showroom. It didn't matter that he had not yet fabricated exhaust headers for the monster; the block was in the frame, the induction system was intact, there was fire in the electrics and gas in the tank. As far as he was concerned, it was ready to go, all 800 pounds of it.

As Wolfe described the machine, "... half the block sticks out of one side of the bike and half out the other, right out of the frame there, right in front of the rider's legs and just in back of the front wheel. The proportions are like a boulder rammed through a sheet of plywood."

On that long-awaited day, Reiser and his cohorts bumped the bike off and, to the surprise of some, it actually ran. It also actually moved, its open exhaust ports issuing a violent racket, belching fire fore and aft ... and setting ablaze the battery located just below