



Reiser's crotch. But his dream had come true. Tom's Bomb lived.

And Don Farrow fired him.

Now faced with the need to earn a living, Reiser became an apprentice ironworker and learned how to weld. He liked welding but couldn't get work. So, he became a drywall worker, then an apprentice heavy-equipment mechanic, working at that for about a year.

By 1963, Reiser had managed to get back on at A.D. Farrow as a freelance mechanic, working only at night so he couldn't be a bad influence with his V-Eight craziness.

Farrow had a basement chock full of frames, engines, sheetmetal and other miscellaneous bits of Harley-Davidsons, and he paid Reiser \$100 each to transform them into complete motorcycles. "I made more money building those bikes than I had ever made working as a mechanic for scale," says Reiser today.

In the meantime, he continued to develop Tom's Bomb. After running the 800-pound brute into a cornfield for lack of adequate brakes, Reiser concluded that it was time to employ a bit of drag-chute technology. He bought a 15-foot parachute from a local sur-

plus store, and he and friend Edgar Thomas hooked it up to a sidecar rig to test its effectiveness. "Thomas sat in the sidecar with the chute in his lap, and I ran the rig up to about 80 miles per hour, then Edgar tossed out the chute," recalls Reiser. "For a long time, the chute just kind of snaked along the highway behind us, then WHOOF! It popped open and the whole rig came off the ground. The sidecar was completely up in the air and the back wheel of the Harley was off the ground, too. Meanwhile, I was doing everything I could to steer and keep from getting tossed over the front of the motorcycle."

Concluding that the 15-footer gave too much braking, Reiser bought two five-foot chutes. This time, Thomas sat backward on a solo Harley, strapped around the chest to Reiser, one chute under each arm.

Incredibly, it worked. "If we had been any smarter," Reiser says, "I'm sure we would have gotten ourselves killed." Taking what he had learned, Reiser built a chute deployment system for the V-Eight that attached one chute to each side of the motorcycle.

How the V-Eight behaved under acceleration, though, perhaps was best summarized in Wolfe's "The Mild Ones" article in 1965. Quoting Reiser, Wolfe wrote, "When I started off, the back wheel bit down so hard it threw me back and it felt like the whole motorcycle was going to go over backward... The whole thing was covered in smoke, and I couldn't see nothing. The guys thought the engine had exploded or something. It was the rubber burning, but they thought the whole thing was on fire and they were going to have to get me out of there with a fire hose... It started off with a whole row of jerks. I don't know what that was, unless there was so much power it was just running over top of itself, and then all of a sudden it shot out of the cloud, and after that there wasn't anything to do but hang on."

Reiser's goal with the V-Eight monster was to break all existing motorcycle drag-racing records. At his first National Hot Rod Association meet, the officials sent the crash truck down the strip into the huge cloud of smoke, thinking Reiser had crashed. He hadn't, but the NHRA decided that Tom's Bomb was unsafe at any speed and invited him, tactfully, not to come back.

The final chapter on the V-Eight dragster was written when R.C. Johnson wrecked it, abandoning ship at close to 100 miles per hour because it wouldn't stop. Johnson was unhurt, but Tom's Bomb was a mess.