



Nothing makes an ear-splitting sound like a **BIG TWIN** BURNING NITROMETHANE

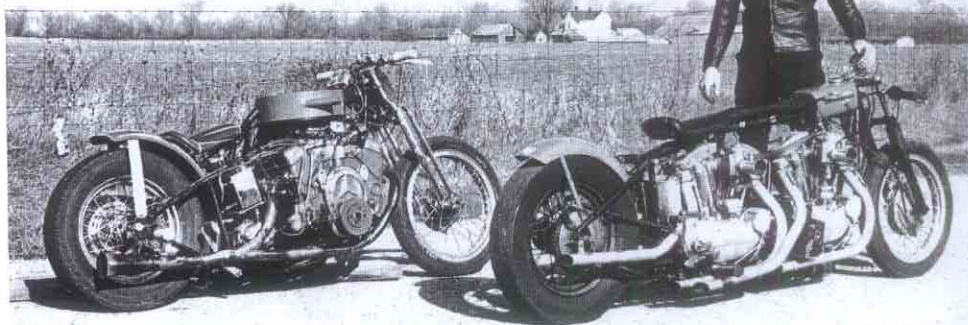
Left: A Reiser hillclimber that ran in a short-lived Unlimited Gas class years ago is now on display in the AMA Heritage Museum in Columbus. Below: Reiser with two of his infamous dragsters—the V-Eight and the twin-engined Sportster.

By this point in time, Reiser had pretty much learned what could and could not be expected of a V-Eight drag bike, and his enthusiasm for the machine had begun to wane. Besides, the big, red-blocked monster had taken a terrible toll on his life. After his marriage failed in 1964, he headed for the West Coast where he worked for Harley dealer Skip Fordyce in Riverside, California.

Reiser ended up staying on The Left Coast for less than a year, in part because Don Farrow encouraged him to return to Ohio and work as general manager at his dealership. Farrow had not only made his peace with Reiser, he had come to terms with Tom's Bomb, as well. He didn't care ever to see the beast run again, but he told Reiser he would foot the bill if he would restore the wreck to its original condition and put it on display in the showroom window.

Reiser willingly complied. That's where the bike was sitting in 1965 when a young Tom Wolfe, with his soft Virginia accent and trademark stylish clothes, walked in and introduced himself to Reiser.

Reiser's need for speed did not end with the passing of his V-Eight obsession. Instead, it became much more productive and less destructive as he turned his interest toward the engines that had been right under his nose his whole life: big Harley-Davidson V-Twins. He even began putting the rest of his existence back together, marrying his second



wife, Beulah, in 1966. These days, Beulah and daughter Chris take care of the front counter in the Big Twin specialty business the Reisers opened 25 years ago in Columbus, while Tom runs the machine shop.

In 1967, Reiser built a double-engined dragster powered by two Sportster motors. After he found the bike much too expensive to maintain, he began to develop the single-engine "Super Sportster," a 1200cc brute of an XL engine stuffed into a lean, Yetman dragster chassis, the whole affair weighing less than 300 pounds.

Then came an introduction to Leo Payne, who began to teach Reiser the alchemy of nitromethane. Payne showed him how to dial-in his carburetor for nitro that was gravity-fed through a half-inch fuel line. Having previously run 136 mph in 10.18 seconds on gasoline, the Super Sportster promptly cranked off 145 mph in 9.55 seconds on

nitro. "Payne charged me \$185 to set up that carburetor," says Reiser, "which we thought was a lot of money in 1967. Or at least my wife thought so, because that was money she was saving for a couch. She says I still owe her a couch!"

By the time 1969 rolled around, Reiser had taken the Super Sportster about as far as it would go. He and Bob Barker had earned a National Drag Racing Association championship, an American Hot Rod Association national championship, and an NDRA world championship. At the end of 1969, Barker hung up his leathers and never raced again.

Reiser took what he had learned about nitro with his Super Sportster and applied it to his return to professional hillclimbing. Adding to his early success on a gas bike in 1964, he won the AMA's Top Fuel class in both 1992 and 1993. In addition, five hill-climbing championships have been snagged