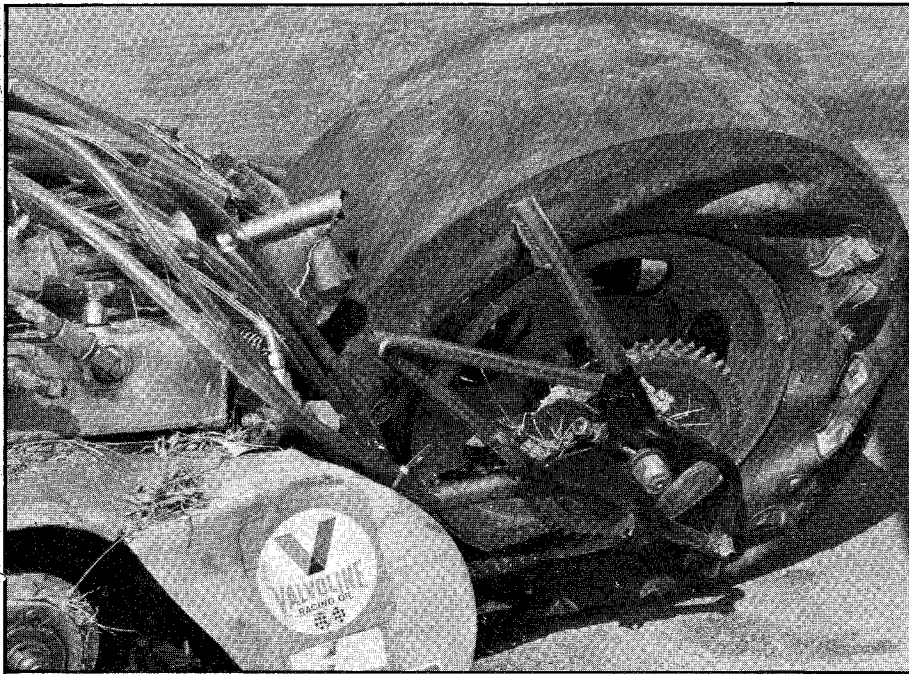
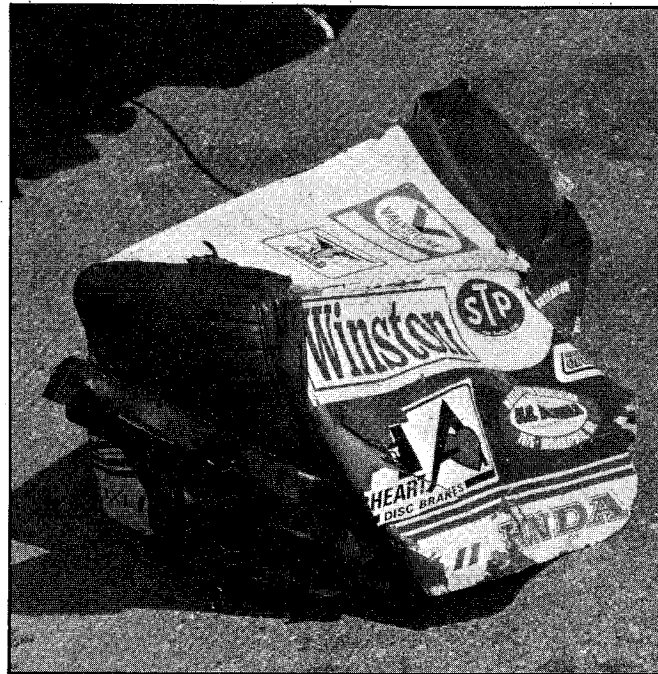


Off at 170 mph

He also holds the fastest time recorded for falling off a motorcycle.



Totally ravaged.



A seat. Note lower and back cushions.

bad. I walked the track before the race and Christenson (T.C. Christenson, currently No. 1 license holder in Top Fuel, riding a double-engined Norton) and I rode down the track just before we ran.

I knew there were some little bumps and ruts, but all tracks except maybe the NHRA National tracks have those.

Certainly the track wasn't to blame. I just fell.

My number was up, like Danny Johnson (another Top Fuel rider) says, so now I get a gold star on my license.

That was another thing that was bothering me. All of the Top Fuel riders have fallen at some speed. Maybe not as fast as I went down, but at 150 or 160. It's as if all Top Fuel riders have to crash at least once.

Besides T.C., I was racing Boris Murray (rider of the Denco triple-engined Kawasaki 750) for what's called Rick Case Appreciation Day. That's when they take over the dragstrip, and all the street riders race all day, and then they have a rock 'n' roll show at night. We were hired for exhibition and match runs.

Boris, T.C. and I were running kind of on a two out of three match race

thing, plus each of us would make a solo pass.

The first pass I made was against Christenson. I had a new tire on the bike, and it felt OK. It was printing very well and I was impressed with it. It was a little more of a wrinklewall than what I normally ran.

The first pass was at 147 mph, and I wasn't into any wobbles. It wiggled a little at the big end, but that wasn't uncommon.

It's really hard for me to talk about what that triple was like to ride.

It was always a thrill.

But it was always like a cross between the ultimate thrill and the ultimate fear, because it was a very gruesome motorcycle.

It had a mind of its own. It weighed so damned much that my body had no bearing on its handling. The bike either went straight or it didn't.

It was pretty uncontrollable. You had to aim it and hope for the best. If it didn't go straight, you had to shut it off and try, after it slowed down, to maneuver it back onto the dragstrip.

On some tracks, like Indianapolis or Ontario, it was just awesome. Off the starting line it would leave so hard that

the bike would completely take my breath away for the whole quarter-mile.

For the first 200 feet it would roll my eyes back in my head, and I couldn't even see. There was enough of a g-force to produce what fliers call a gray-out.

If you look at some of the photos of the bike running, like at Englishtown, Ontario or Indy, you can see that my leathers are all puckered up for the pull.

My whole body was held on by that contoured seat. If I would have had to stay on just by hanging on to the bars, it would've been impossible.

The machine under acceleration felt like Big Daddy Garlits had run into my back and was accelerating.

Once the bike got up to speed, assuming there was some kind of traction, the machine was a pure pleasure. On the big end it ran very straight, and it was so big and so massive that the thrill was kind of unexplainable.

It was sort of like maybe going 180 mph lying on top of a freight train.

Anyway, that was what the machine was like to ride.

It was just something you had to get used to. I probably had 350 or so passes on it, and it should have thrown me off about 200 times. Because a lot of the