

the stop and shut off the flow of gas.

They haul back to the starting line to wait for another run. After a while, away McKibben goes.

And again, he stops. The gadget that shuts off the ignition for full-power upshifts didn't turn the ignition back on, and yes, it's about now that one starts multiplying Murphy's Law.

Meanwhile, Breese's streamliner is ready. But first, a lesson in aerodynamics vs. stability. To minimize frontal area and drag, a streamliner cannot afford a single cubic inch of wasted interior space, meaning that the rider is packed inside like a very large sardine in a very small can. Even for a national-class roadracer like Breese, riding one of these machines takes special skill and a lot of practice. And there's a critical balance period, between the time the pushers reach maximum speed and the time the rider can keep the bike upright with acceleration.

So, when Breese gives the signal, the engine fires, the pushers push, the air pressure for the clutch isn't enough, the clutch won't slip... and the bike falls over. And the watchers giggle. Unfair, but impossible to avoid.

They right the 'liner, which brings us back to the skids mentioned earlier. At one time, Breese's machine had a pair of skids that extended for low-speed support, but one had come loose and caused that horrendous, 202-mph crash. There were no guarantees that the same thing wouldn't happen again, so the skids were removed.

This time the clutch works and Breese rides smoothly away. But soon there's an eerie silence. The engine, a 100-inch Evo XL good for 120 bhp on alcohol, has run out of fuel.

To make a sad story short, Breese and crew replace everything, work all night, perform a miracle repair of a collapsed suspension, but the Bonneville National Speed Trials come to an end before they can figure out why fuel isn't getting to the engine.

Eller and crew? Good news at last. On the next run, McKibben got it right and the Evo 80 pulled hard all the way to 168.431 mph and the first half of a class record.

When the bike is in impound, Eller pulls off the head for the inspectors, and while he's at it, replaces the front piston.

The return run looks easy and nets 171.195. McKibben and Eller take the record.

But wait! There's a gas-class record open. So, Eller & Co. pull off the nitrous and get back in line.

Everything sounds good. The run is 155 and change, and the record is only 148. They line up again, get checked again, wait in line again.

But, alas, this isn't Hollywood.

Just as the speeding bike gets to the first clock, there's what McKibben later describes as a "whoosh."

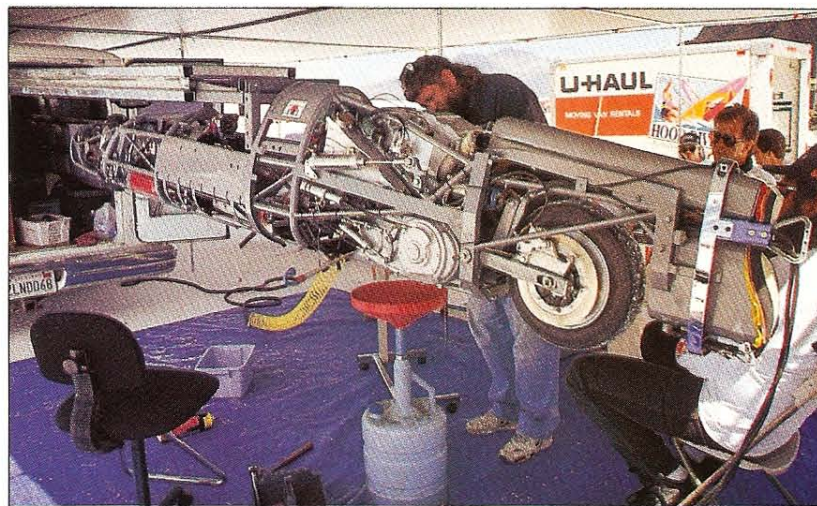
The engine blew. Big time. Big enough to bounce pieces of connecting rod off the timing lights. Big enough for shrapnel to puncture the front tire.

McKibben wobbles to a safe stop and waits for Eller and the van and the ride home.

They'd made it to Bonneville.

They'd busted.

But they'd gotten what they came for—the record. ■



Breese's streamliner travels on davits and sides easily out of van for service and repair.



Like any true motorcycle, a 'liner will tip over if someone—or something—doesn't hold it up.



It also tips over if you don't catch the power curve just right. No harm done, though.