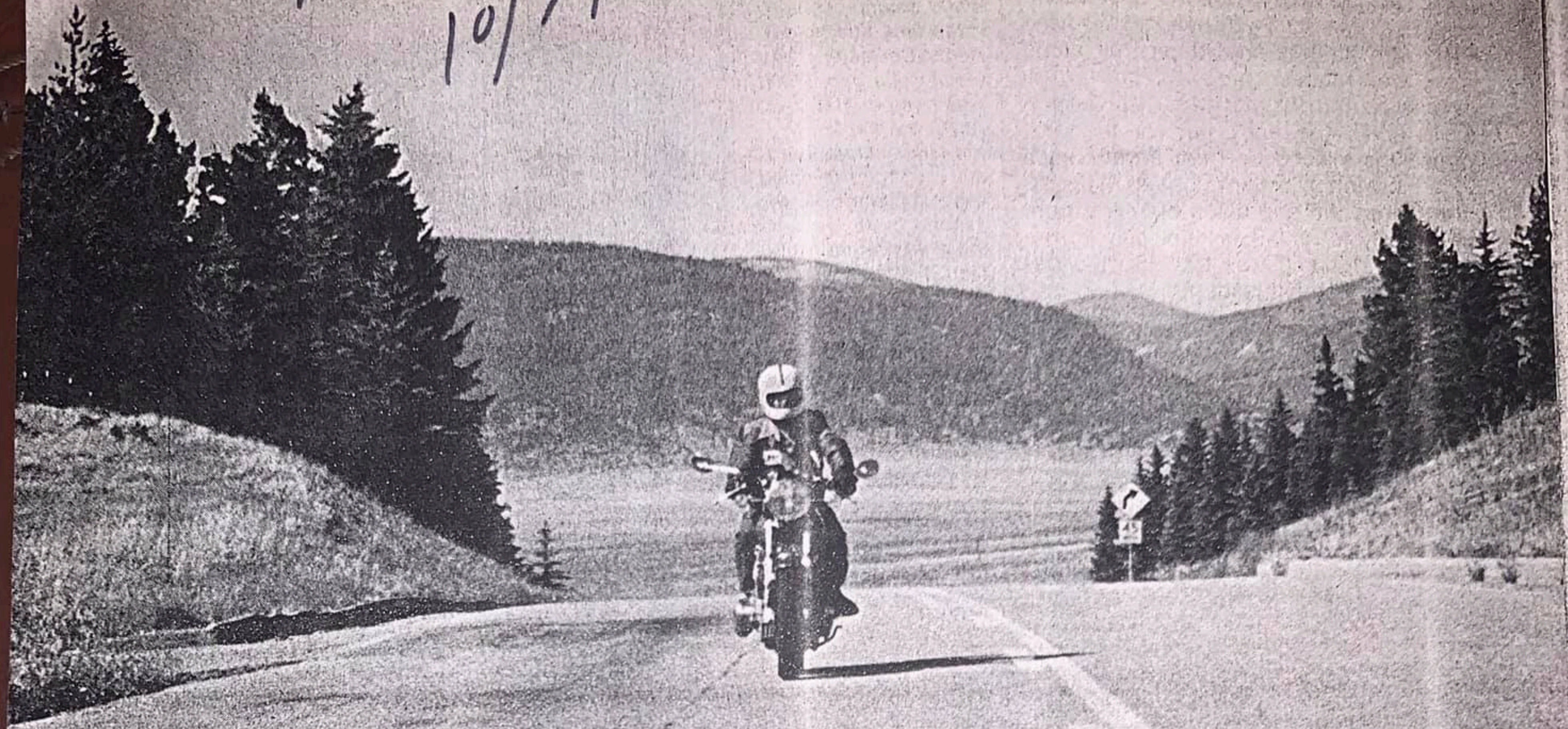


Motocyclist  
10/74

**LAVERDA**

**1000**



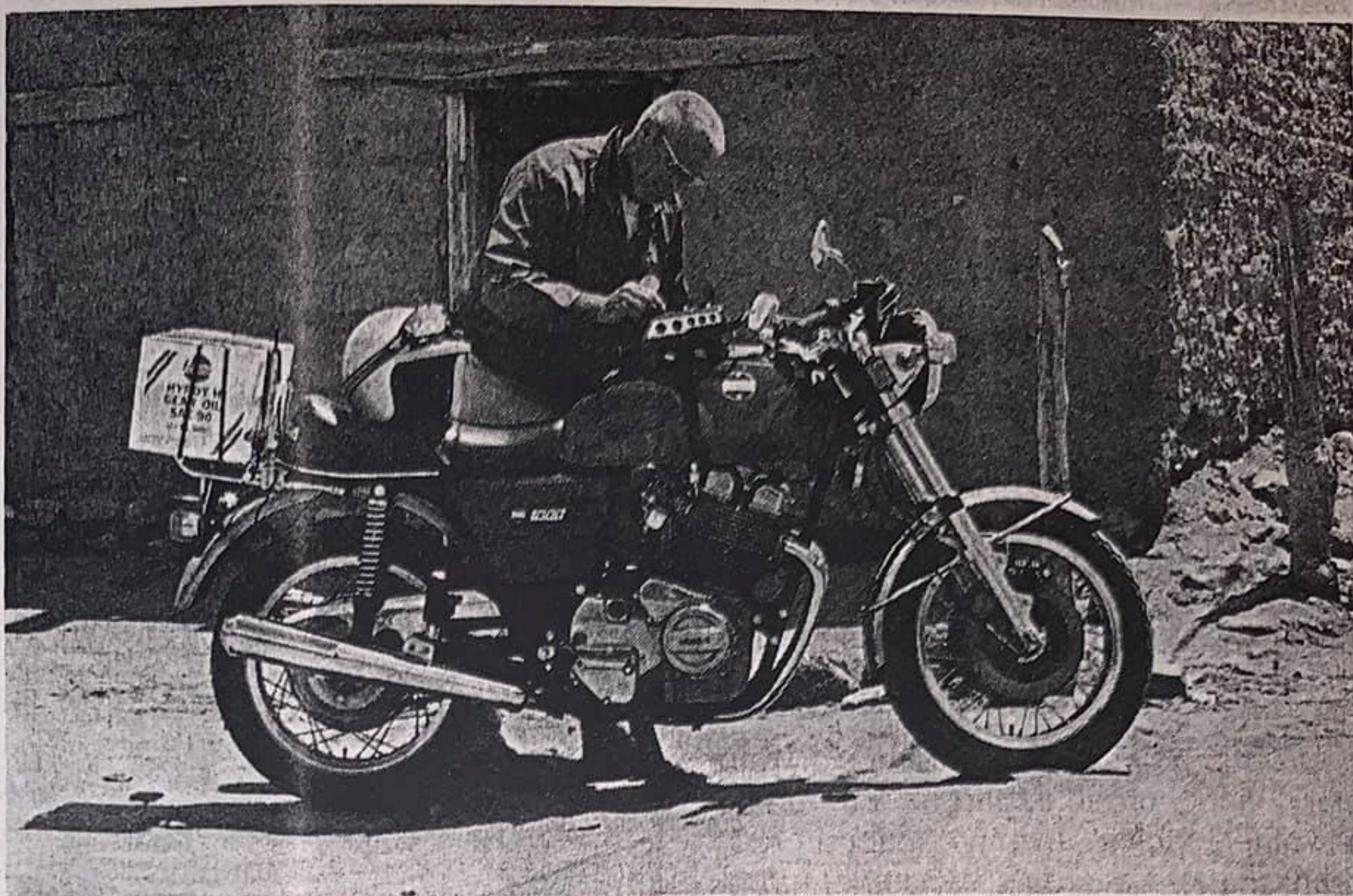
**Way out west with Italy's newest gunslinger; Laverda triple is truly at home on the range with 90 horses and ghastly 130-plus top end!**

**text and photos by Bob Greene**

**M**ove over big boy, there's a new bully in the block! Until recently only Harley-Davidson could flex 1000 mighty muscles on the scrawny 750 kids, but now Laverda of Italy is about to rattle Milwaukee's cage with a Latin version of what the Triumph Trident might have been. For Laverda's elite *dual overhead cam* thousand in three truly is everything the European press proclaimed it... the Lamborghini of motorcycles.

Tossing somewhere on the choppy Atlantic is a small fleet bearing this invasion group girded to battle the majors for the Yankee dollar. But even while this task force is still at sea, *Motorcyclist* intercepted and interrogated one of their advance scouts that slipped in during the night. The confrontation took place in Albuquerque, New Mexico at Joe Turney's shop, one of half a dozen Laverda way stations west of the Rockies. Joe graciously extended an invitation to test the savage subsequent to our earlier introduction of Laverda's 750 twin back in April of this year, and at the first opportunity B.G. and his Bell Helmet overnight bag were wingin' it for the land of the Zia Sun God—Indian country.

An hour and forty-five minutes later, at nine A.M., the real west swept up to meet the jet (Albuquerque's a mile high) and ol' Injun Joe, originally of the Springfield tribe, vanned your scribe off to his adobe brick shop where wife Mary had lunch packed and boxed, complete with two thermoses of steaming black coffee, in anticipation of a 211-mile adventure into the densely wooded Jamez Mountains, and back under cover of night. Joe and his mini-



#### TEST SITE DATA

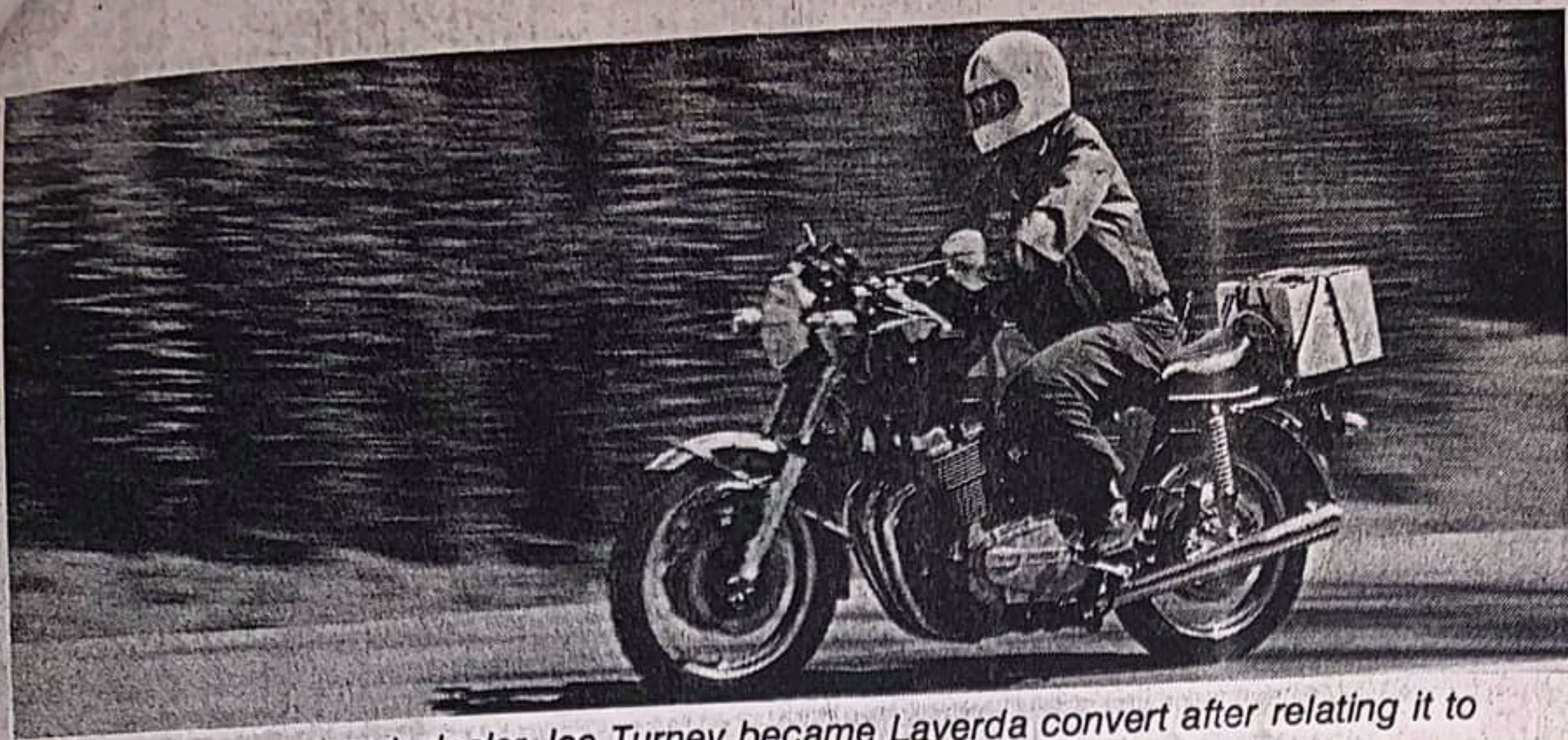
LOCATION.....Albuquerque, New Mexico,  
 DATE.....Tuesday, July 16, 1974.  
 TIME.....11 A.M. to 8:30 P.M.  
 TERRAIN.....Open highway, twisting mountains.  
 ALTITUDE.....5290 to 9000 feet.  
 TEMPERATURE.....84 degrees.  
 HUMIDITY.....High 40's.  
 MILEAGE.....Start: 1877.0. Finish: 2088.1.

ature dachshund Fritz would ride shotgun on his 750 twin, the cycle hound snuggled deep in Joe's jacket, while Mary's big red three was reserved for the West Coast Kid.

Ever have premonitions? From the instant the triple's electric starter brought the engine coughing and booming to life I knew we were going to be blood brothers. Thirty-nine hundred big ones is a real bag of gold but,

baby, if you've got it, it's damn near worth it just to sit and listen to this big dude rap. Skin crawls and eyes ratchet back in heads when this thing speaks. "Roll 'em, Joe, I'm ready!"

Clicking the all-needle-bearing trans down into low without the slightest resistance, nor the need to break the clutch plates free from a cold start, one is immediately aware of the wide friction band of the enormous, Har-»



Seasoned racer-wrench-dealer Joe Turney became Laverda convert after relating it to a lifetime experience with almost all other brands: "This one's really tough, over-built if anything." Actually 980.76cc, it has near ideal square bore-stroke relationship at 75x74mm. Physical attitude of seated rider is ideal, infinitely adjustable.

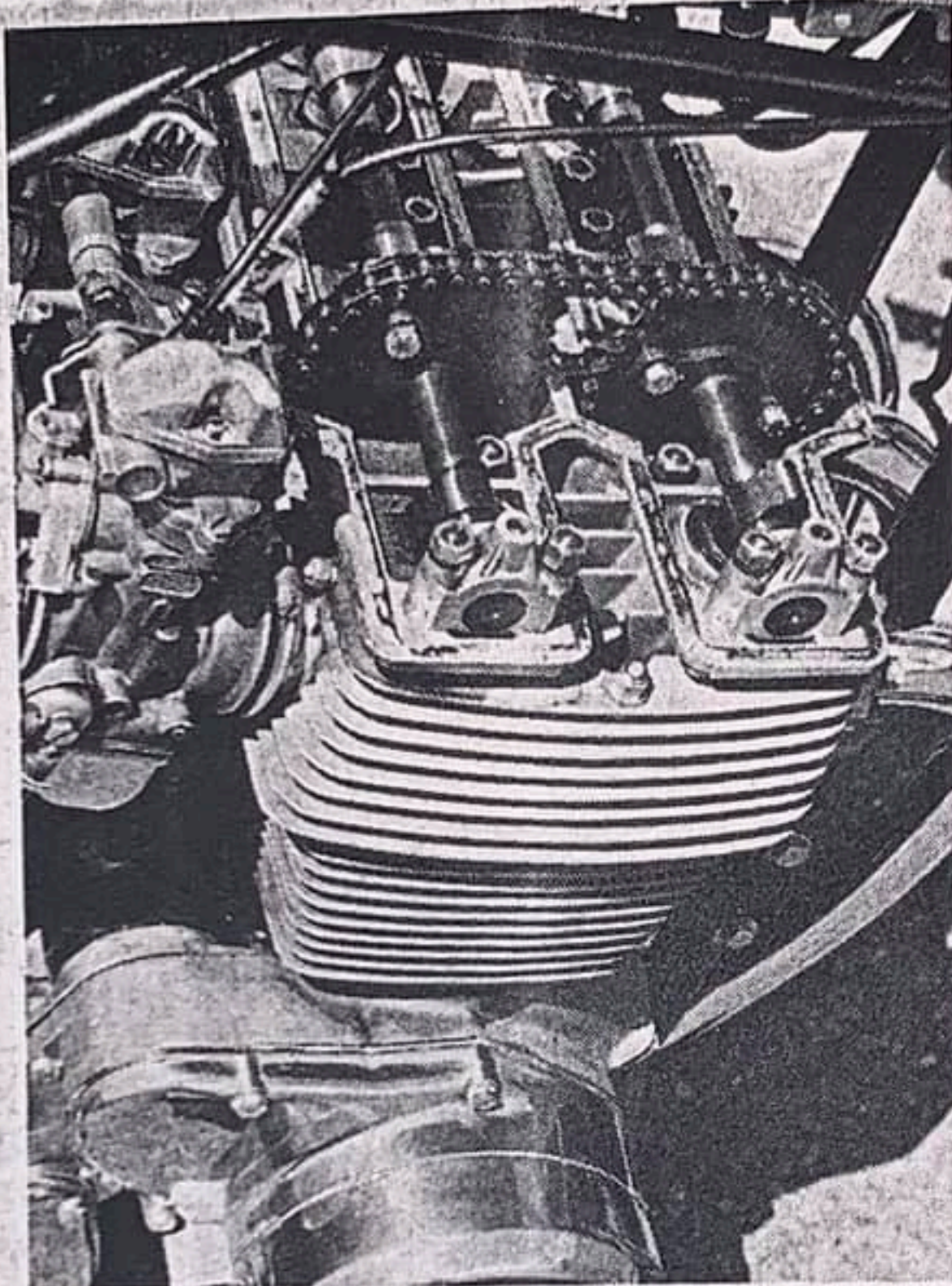
leyesque, seven-plate wet clutch. Even the greenest novice will find it difficult to make a jerky start. The engine can be cranked in gear with the clutch held in, but beware; no starter lockout is provided. Nor is there a manual starter; this appendage has completely atrophied.

Only at idle is the engine's "waltz step" firing order apparent. For unlike all other triples' evenly spaced 120° crankshafts, Laverda's two outer crank throws rise and fall together, with the loner center throw positioned 180° op-

#### REINFORCEMENTS ON THE WAY

Is \$3900 too much to pay for any motorcycle? The Thousand is indeed pioneering a price frontier made plausible only by maestro Laverda's enthusiastic orchestration of exciting components. Blending incomparable old country chassis expertise with structural overkill and tractable high performance, he has made it hard to say no. Although only a few months into American territory, still short of retailers and hardware, Continental Motors' Michael Bondy is effecting dealer and sales penetration westward at a rate double initial expectations with a line including two 750 twins, one a street-legal but genuine Production Racer with exotic alloy frame and blue-printed engine, and an all-new 250 two-stroke Enduro model. With a new \$3 million factory and 15,000 machines programmed for the next year, Laverda is at long last committed to total involvement on the American continent. Welcome aboard.

posite. In effect it is a vertical twin with an out-of-phase counterbalanced single sandwiched between. Laverda prefers this configuration over the conventional 120° crank because it breaks up the destructive electric-shock-like harmonics and crankshaft end whip of the monkey-see-monkey-do layout. Remember the Army drill about marching the troops rout-step over the bridge to keep it from disintegrating under the rhythmic pounding? Subsequently, engine firing order, from left to right, goes 1-2-3-pause, 1-2-3-pause, 1-2-3-pause and so on; three shots in a row,



Huge diameter of the dual overhead cam chainwheels typify Laverda sprockets throughout, assuring long life, minimum adjustment. Unlike some, the cam chain noise level is low. Engine kept clean.

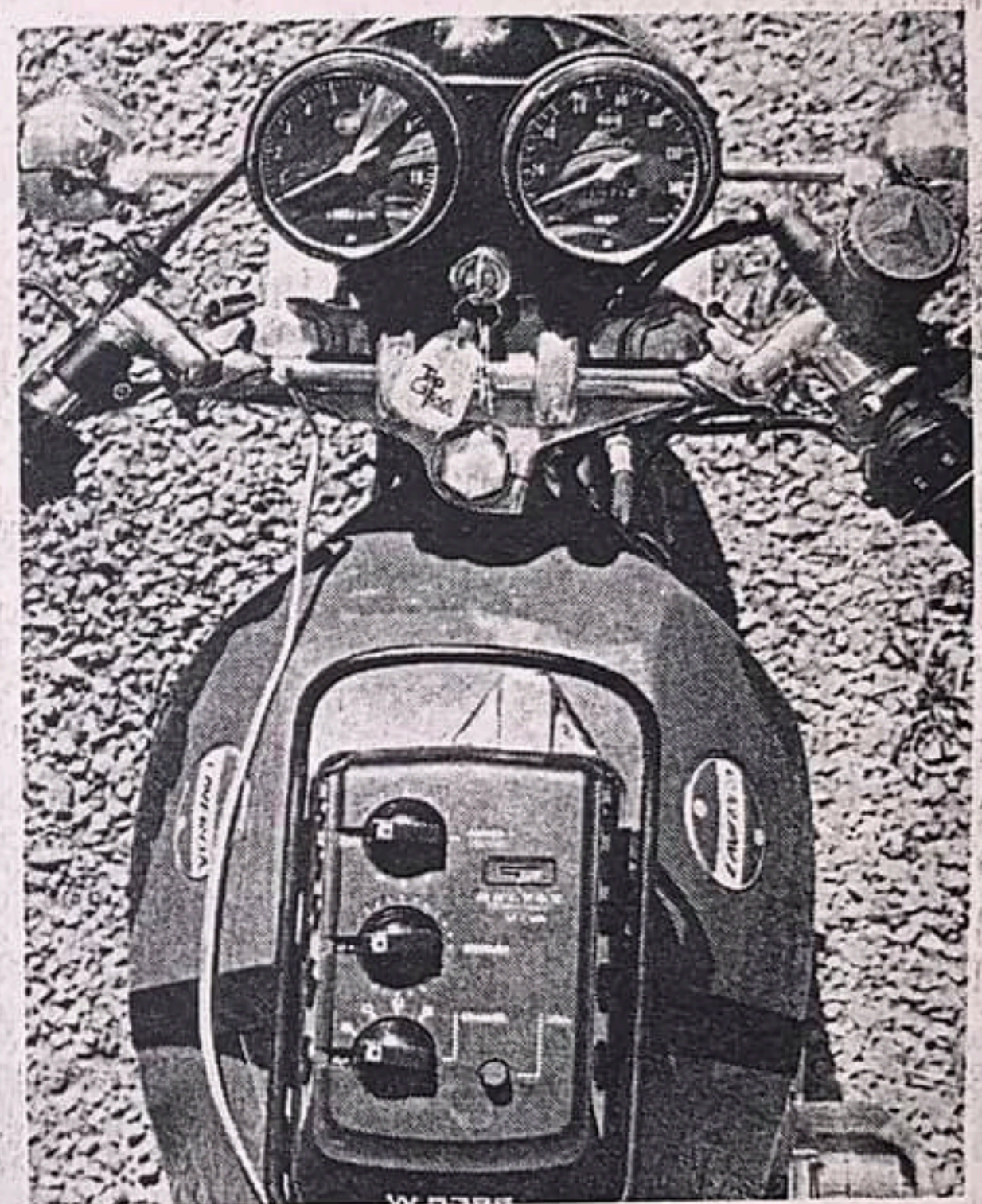
one every half revolution, with a complete revolution, or pause, between each run across. It's the waltz step.

As the R's start to build, the Laverda pins its ears back and runs increasingly smoother; it's one of those. Good, good whackin' vibes right off bottom turning into satin thunder from just below mid-range up. It's Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde on wheels. Only in this case both characters are covered with hair. Imagine the kick in the tail of a Sportster that turns into the banshee wail of a Zee! The staccato, the lusty throb that melts into a throaty purr, all go to make it—to me, at least—the most exciting touring/sport machine yet conceived. The only exception might be Ducati's Vee—never thought I'd say it.

What makes Big Red such a gas? Power characteristics, riding position, handling, suspension, controls and acoustics are either right on or so close you couldn't slip a cigarette paper between them and the master gage. More important, perhaps, is the way the team plays together; you feel

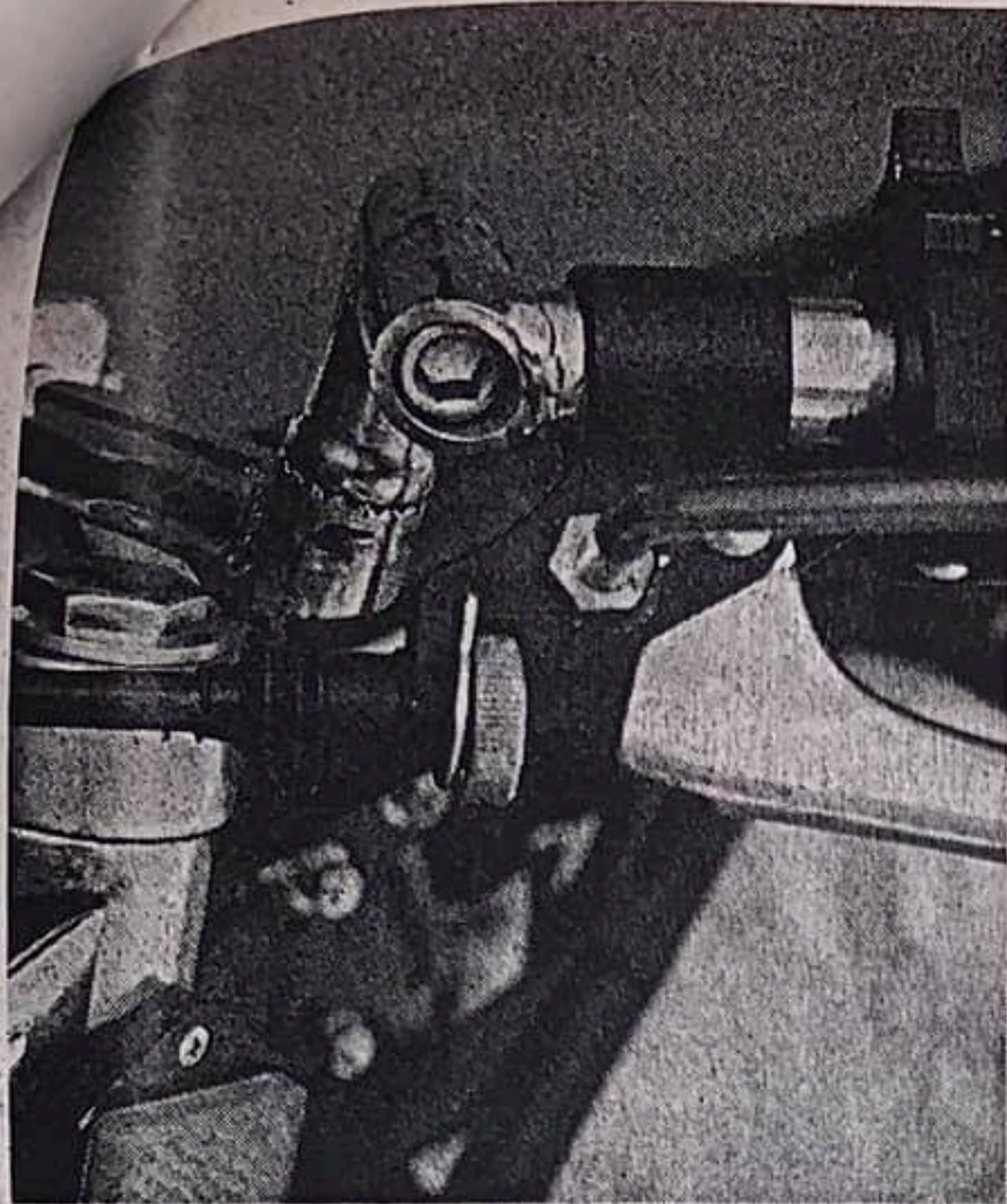


Virile appearance drew crowds and favorable comments wherever Laverda went. 9000-foot altitude and high-speed shots netted low 33 miles per gallon. Normal mileage is closer to 39-40 mpg Joe sez.



How about that handlebar position! Instruments are Japaneseish and very legible, including odometer and trip mileage readouts. Lump on tank is Beltex Intercom between Joe and Mary's bikes.

right when you're up... good... reluctant to climb off even after a long day. Granted, the scenery in the Jamez Forest, the chiseled red bluffs, the scudding cloudy weather, the Turney brand of southern hospitality... it all played a part that may never be isolated, but the bike was there in spades. It had to be; several of the Jamez' long hard runs terminate in hairpins posted "SLOW TO 10 MPH," with an all-day space shot for those who miss. The triple is almost an inch shorter and about six pounds lighter than Laverda's 750 twin and it handles more precisely, more fluidly, more quickly in the tight turns, being at its best with the power slightly on rather



Close-up of trick, three-way adjustable bar that provides heretofore unrealized comfort with standard bar. Notice, too, that lever and switch brackets are independent for ideal positioning of both.



Don't laugh at our down-home tote box; it held all the goodies. I really dug the pipes, the way they quickly tuck in at the front, then crank around axle and shocks at the back for a tight grip on bike. Saddle is 32 inches off the deck. The saddle is not the modern flip-up type, still comes off quickly with two nuts. Side covers are friction-fit, pop on. Test model had right-side shift, good Ceriani suspension.

than the least bit off in the heart of a corner, especially through the occasional sandy one common to this country. For the quicker building triple also decelerates more rapidly than the twin, calling for slightly less enthusiastic throttle reduction when banked over at speed on questionable ground.

By the time Joe, Fritz and I decided to knock off for Mary's boxed lunch, the triple had had its tail twisted pretty good despite the factory's recommended 3200-mile go-easy period. Obviously set up on the tight side, ours registered only 1877 miles back in Albuquerque, but by noon the front-wheel speedo had seen 100 mph twice, with a corresponding tach reading of only 5800 rpm. Since the maximum 90 horsepower is realized at 7250 rpm, the factory claim of over 133 mph—backed by foreign press electric clockings—seemed reasonable though unique among Laverda's multi-cylindered 750cc contemporaries. And the stock Harley couldn't even get a peek at this figure. At 60, 70, 80, 90 and 100 mph the tach read 3500, 4000, 4800, 5400 and 5800 rpm respectively, assuring that at an average cruising speed of 65 mph, for example, the mighty Verdedoo is just loafing along at only a cut above a fast idle, running half throttle, half revs and half speed—disgusting. And this on the way to a 9000-foot peak with standard jets! Bonus: engine and chain life.

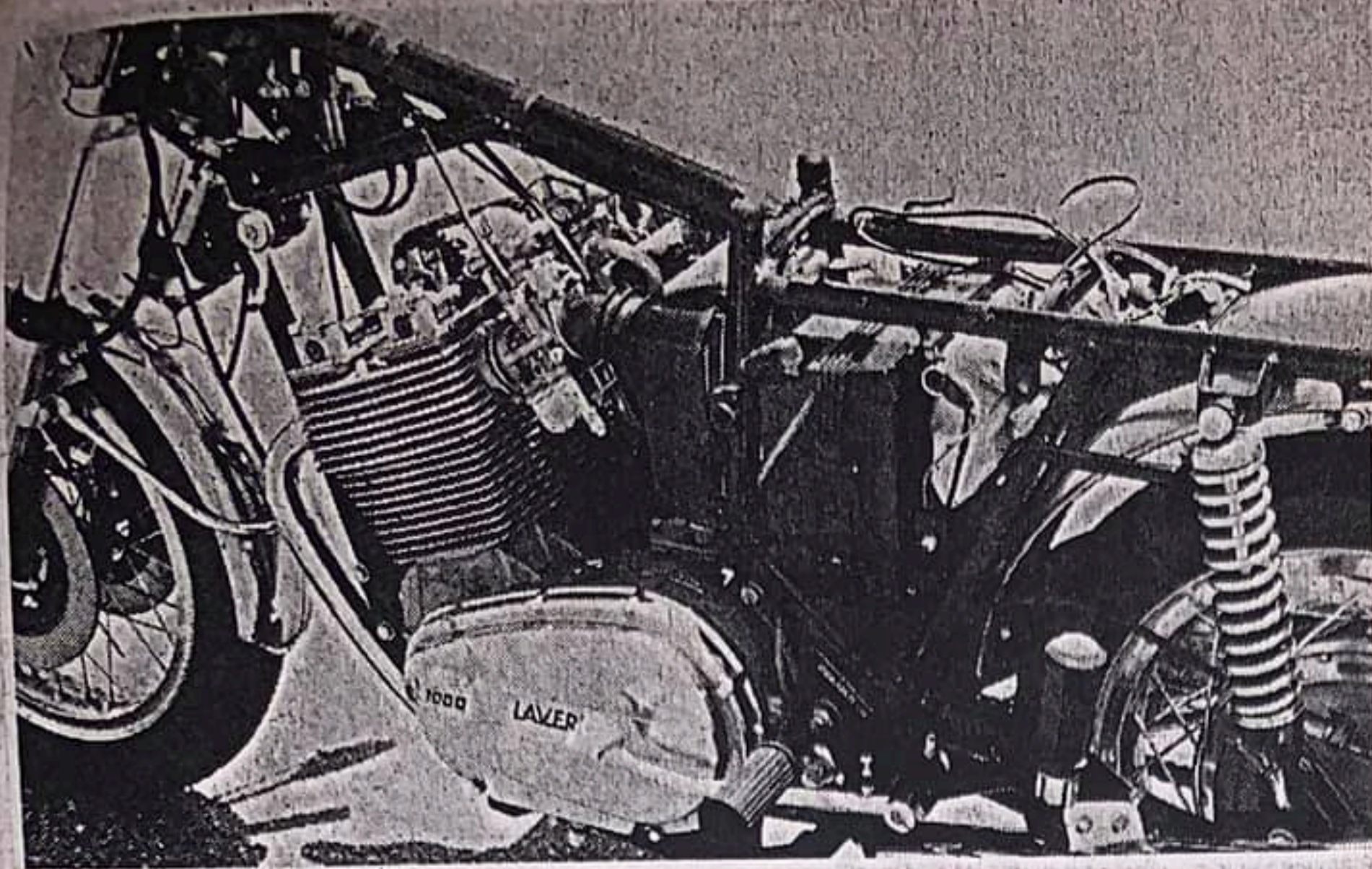
While we're munchin' that ham on whole wheat let's get into the chain thing. Neither the overhead cam chain nor the triplex primary or final drive chains had been adjusted during the initial 2000 miles, and I personally checked the cam and rear chains following our 211-mile dash and was amazed that they were in exactly the same tension as when we had begun! No rear chain oiler, either, other than

Joe. No, the secret lay in the grand oversize diameter of the cam, engine and gear-box sprockets that spread the load over many bearing surfaces rather than the frightening few seen on some of the machines presently suffering chain miseries. Another rare and commendable factor supporting Laverda chain life and stabilizing chain tension is the unusually short span between countershaft sprocket center and swing arm pivot center, only 5-7/8 inches! This keeps chain tension fluctuation to a minimum, reducing whip to a virtually harmless state, as born out by our experience this day. So even though the Laverda engine is of larger displacement and pumping out gobs more horsepower—90 hp @ 7250 rpm compared to the Kawasaki Z's 82 @ 8500—it is kind to chain, all because it was designed with this in mind. They've got old world savvy. For although Laverda's first motorcycle effort was vintage '49, the company dates back to 1873 when the family started producing agricultural machinery, mainly wine presses—from grape stompers to ground stompers in 100 years. Since their outright wins three successive years in the Giuseppe Dragoni Gold Cup races—a two-wheel Mille Miglia with an ISDT format—with their initial 75cc four-stroke the Laverda clan has been gung-ho on competition. They still are, as evidenced by matter-of-fact victories in present day road race endurance runs such as the Barcelona 24-hour classic.

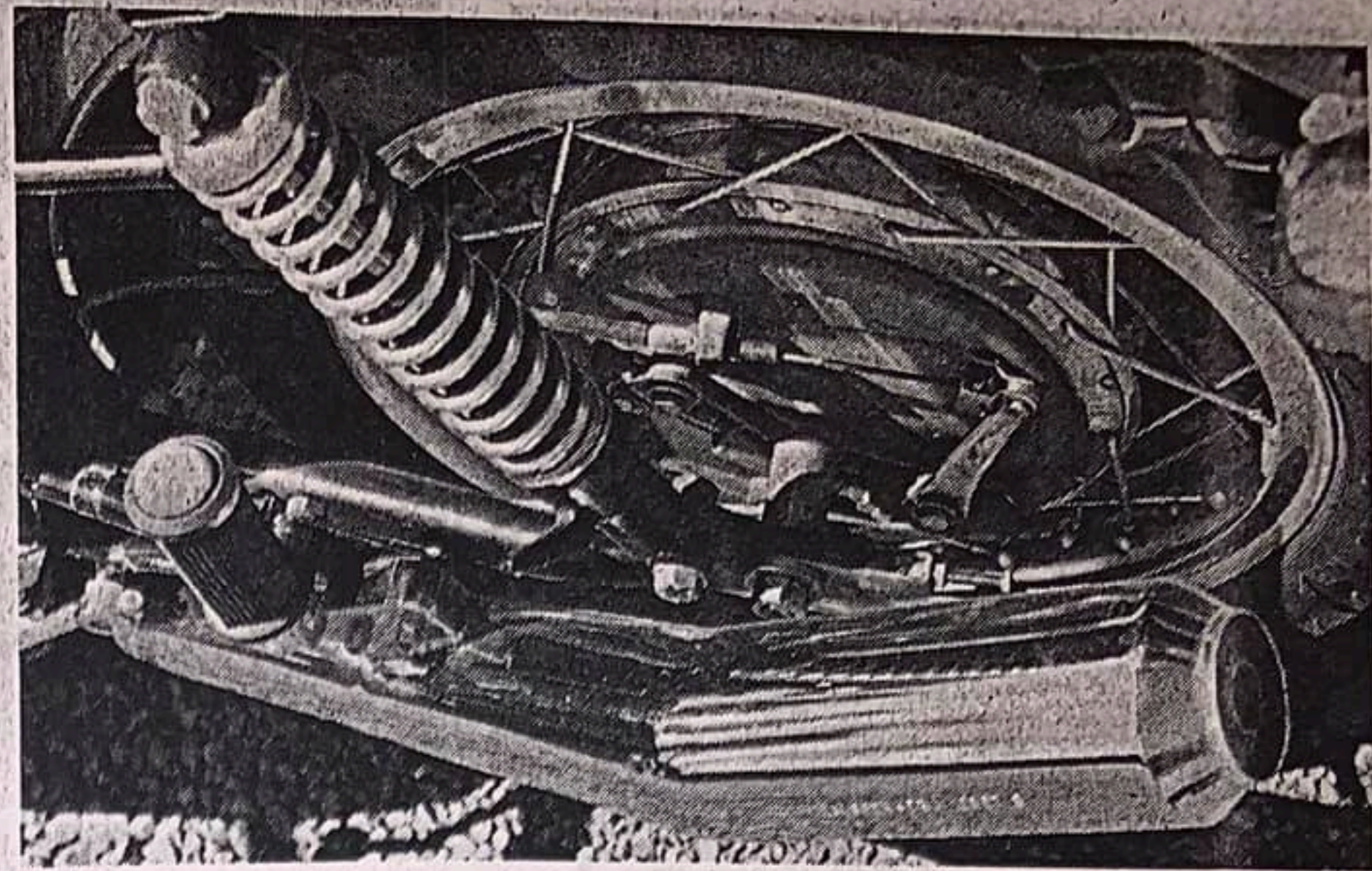
But it takes more than reliability to win a race. The triple tracks rock-steady at speed, yet is light on its feet at a walk. Ground clearance is low, at 5 1/4 inches, and center of gravity seems likewise. Again comparing it to the Kaw, it is 100cc larger, yet 26 pounds lighter at 519 pounds fully gassed. And the brakes complement

the speed scene, with a cable-operated twin-leading-shoe rear drum and 11-inch dual hydraulic disc setup with dual calipers at the front. They really do a job, easily and progressively. The discs bear the Brembo brand and feature replaceable discs apart from the hub. My only disappointment with the rolling stock came upon noticing that those beautiful 18-inch Borrani aluminum rims lace to hubs with conventional bent-tip spokes. Sure, the heads fit the hub countersinks better than most but it's still a second-class way to go for such an otherwise sophisticated machine—compared to the straight-pull spokes featured on such as the Benelli, BM and Guzzi. Excellent by any criteria, however, are the trick Dunlop Roadmaster TT-100 skins, the first tires to handle an over-100 mph lap on a production machine—Triumph twin—at the Isle of Man in 1969. Formerly known as the K-81, they have since become the revered choice of not only the pukka Production Racer but his understudy, the Cafe Racer, as well.

We learned a lot that day up in the Jamez, that the Suzuki-style ND switches and instruments are easy to manipulate and read, that the five-speed box shifts smoothly and positively, that the engine stays clean under fire. Greatly appreciated were the unique three-way-adjustable handlebars that can be swung up or down in two places and in or out at still another. Similarly, the footpegs and levers are fully adjustable to compensate for individual physical deformities. We've all got something that's too short. Right? And the Laverda 1000 dual horns are fantastic, for bike or car, as is the huge Bosch quartz/iodine headlamp; you can blow or burn traffic out of the way day or night. In fact, Joe warns that a feller's got to be careful not to get on the horns when overhaul-



Rugged frame felt extremely rigid in action, has swing arms pivot ends located wide apart for maximum resistance to twist, with pivot in close to final drive sprocket for minimum chain fluctuation. But air filter access could be much improved with side-load setup.



Features out back include Ceriani suspension and dual-cam brake. Bob Hansen, formerly of Kawasaki Team Hansen Racing Division was recently appointed Manager of Western Operations of Continental Motors, is establishing west coast outlet in the Los Angeles area.

ing VWs lest they do a panic get-off right in front of you. No wonder Laverda has it made during the night sections of the 24-hour track enduros; for them it never gets dark.

Although the riding position per se was ideal for my six-foot-long bod, the buns eventually complained that the saddle was growing harder as we neared Albuquerque, now resembling a bolt of black velvet strewn with glittering diamonds. So Laverda would do well to take a look at the Guzzi V-7's equally sporty but considerably softer saddle. And the ol' achin' back was beginning to protest the lack of a side-stand, a barb softened only by the fact that Laverda has finally ripped-off BMW's balancing centerstand, a truly ingenious contrivance that permits removal of either wheel without propping or upsetting the bike. Take the front wheel off and the front of the motorcycle rises, or take off the rear and the back obligingly levitates. Every motorcycle manufacturer should condescend to pinching this feature that makes wheel service or roadside tire repair practical if not downright possible.

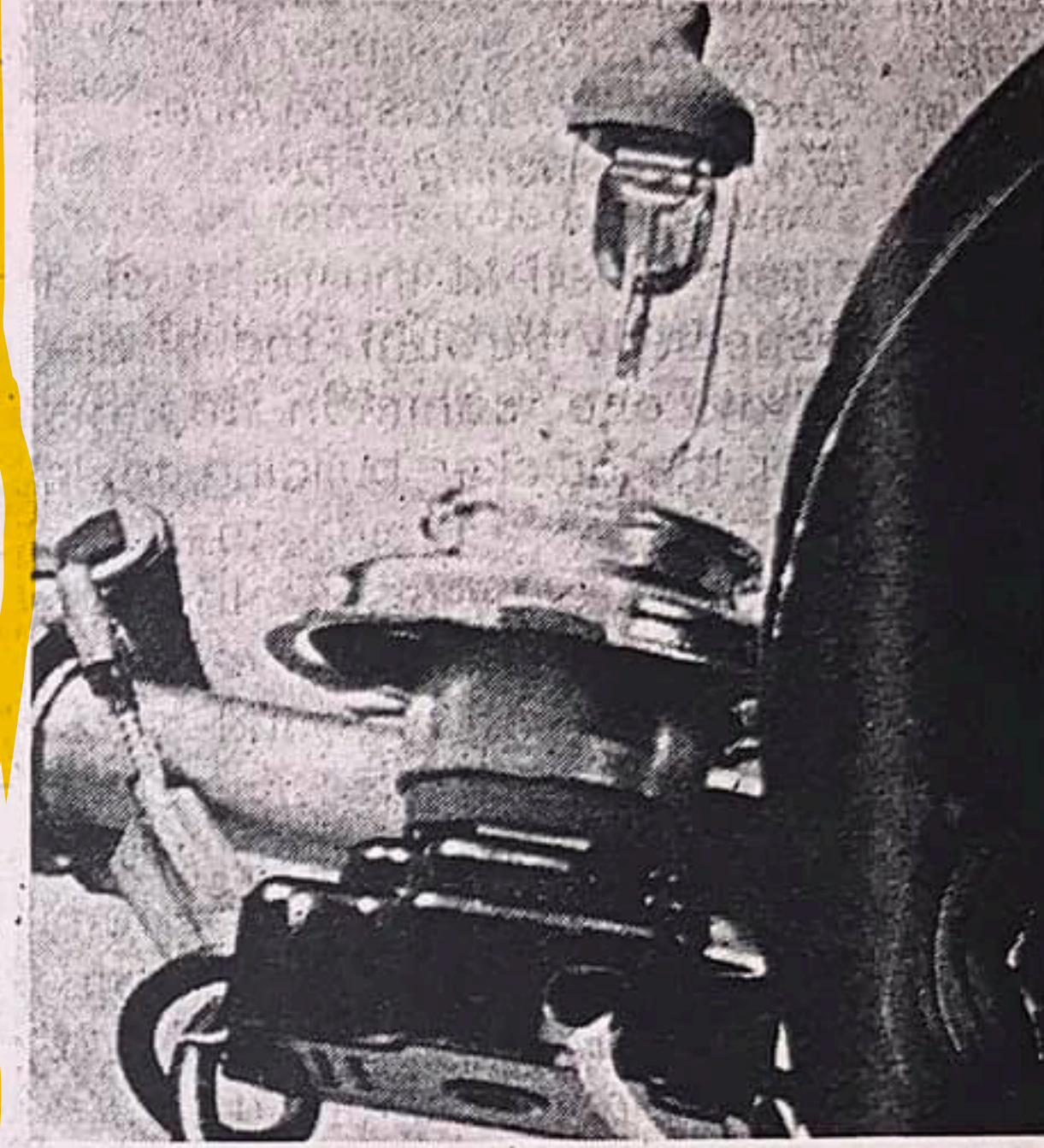
Meanwhile, back at the shop, and still pumped over this unforgettable day, Joe and I sat and rapped about wonders and woes. I liked the Ford-style double-edged ignition key that takes only one stab in the dark. And although he assured me that removal of the foam air filter was no big deal once the battery was disconnected and taken out, I figured it was poor planning and that the filter should be able to pop right out without disturbing the juice bank. No wonder the ride was first cabin; both forks and five-way rear shocks are genuine Ceriani! As Joe proceeded to elaborate on various components and features, such as the starter motor driven off the back of the right side magneto, and how its centrifugal throw-out worked, he was pulling the five-gallon tank, saddle and dual rocker boxes to expose some of the inner workings. "How does valve ad-



Laverda g-r-i-p-s the road with genuine Dunlop TT-100 hides, double puck double discs and Ceriani legs. Warranty covers original owner 6 months or 6000 miles.

justment go, Joe?" "Well, sir, it's like the Jaguar; the cams bear directly on valve cups that incorporate spacer shims between the cup and the valve tip. After noting those chain and sprocket timing alignment marks, uncouple the master link in the cam chain, lay the chain back and undo the six nuts retaining the camshaft, lift it and the cups out and substitute the proper thickness shim, then bolt the cam back in place and hook up the chain." Moral: don't count on doing any roadside valve adjustments. Due to the lack of many moving parts, however, especially reciprocating ones, and the fact that the cams bear almost directly on the valves, efficiency is such that adjustments are quite rare. A plug check showed all three sparklers spot-on and consistent in color. And further investigation revealed an air passage cast between each iron-sleeved cylinder bore for even cooling.

An awkward point was broached when I asked about how one would go to service the reusable, double fine-screen oil filter and Joe explained that it was necessary to pull the exhaust



Quartz/iodine bulb turns night into day. Electrical parts are commonly available at European car agencies. Quarter-mile e.t. is given at 12.4 secs., 107.8 mph.

header clamps and loosen the nuts on the rear muffler mount bolts to allow the headers to swing down from the front and expose the filter cover in the three-quart wet sump crankcase. Well it probably wouldn't take over a couple extra minutes. The three-into-one-into-two pipes did look wild, and provide lots of room for saddlebags, and I wouldn't change anything that might interfere with that hair-raising sound. It's worth the slight hassle.

"Tell me one more story, Joe, then let's go eat. I'm starving." "Well, sir, the electrics are 12-volt Bosch with pointless electronic ignition, automatic advance and 27-ampere-hour battery... and the 32mm Dellorto carbs have automotive-style accelerator pumps for instant passing power... and it's a bullet-proof four-main-bearing engine, roller type, with caged needles on the rod big ends... and you can overhaul or adjust the trans right out the side without disturbing the engine from the frame. The gears are hand-matched and lapped, you know... and..."

"Dinner, Joe?"