

THE SHOVELHEAD

After coexisting for a year or so with the blockhead, the shovelhead has passed quietly on to the factory and its dealers' parts bins. At the end of its run, the shovel had survived for 18 years (1966-1984), one year longer than its predecessor the panhead (1948-1965), and seven years longer than the knucklehead (1936-1947).

During its first two years of production, the shovel sported a late-model panhead lower end fitted with the new top end, the latter featuring huge valves, a bolt-held exhaust, a Y-type manifold, and removable rocker arm assemblies. Throughout 1966, the shovelhead engine came teamed with new carbure-

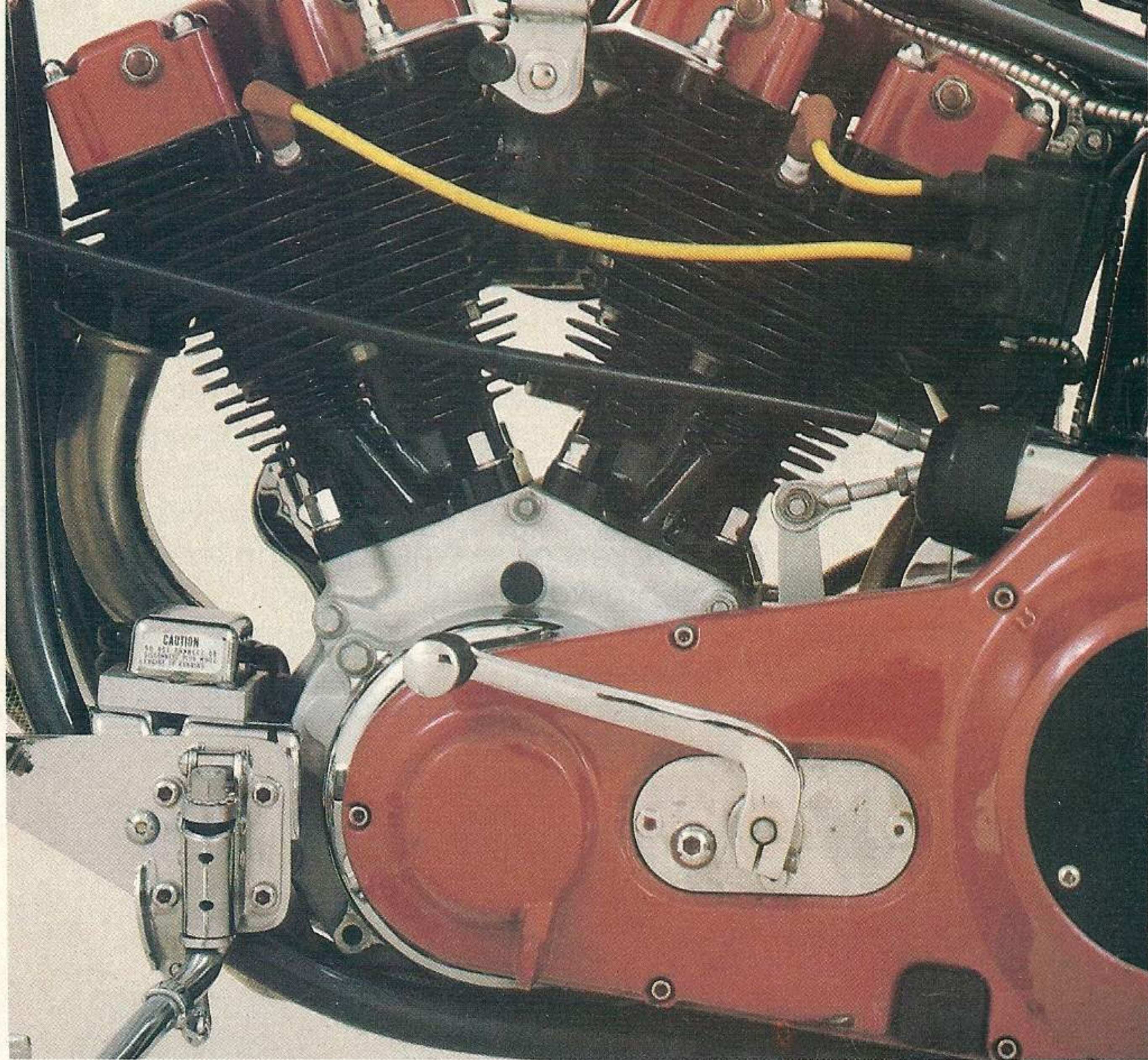
tor design by Linkert — a side-bowl version of the tried-and-true carb that had carried countless H-D riders in the past.

The following year, however, saw the Linkert replaced by the biggest pain in the butt to ever supply gas to a Big Twin — the Tillotson, a monster that H-D riders were forced to endure until 1970 (the same year the factory gave us the alternator lower end). The Tillotson was, pure and simple, either an up or a down carburetor. When it was right, you swore by it, but get a little dirt in the fuel system and you swore *at* it — vehemently — as it poured gas all over the right-hand side of your bike. From 1971-1975, the shovelhead wore Bendix — a work-

horse that's probably seen more retrofit to H-D's other models than any other carb ever made.

And finally, last but certainly not least, came the Keihin, fitted on all Big Twins from 1976 right on up to the last shovel to roll off the line in 1984. Since the year it was introduced, the Keihin's gone through perhaps as many as a dozen internal and external modifications, mainly because of ever-more-demanding EPA smog-reduction requirements. In addition to proving itself highly adaptable, the Keihin's basic reliability has also made it a survivor, keeping it part of the factory package right into the blockhead era.

During the shovelhead years, the Big Twin underwent more



YEARS

After 18 Years, It's Adios To An Old Friend

technological advances than during any other previous model period in the factory's history. Over the nearly two-decade span of time, Harley brought out alternators, electronic ignitions, air forks, and anti-dive front ends, to name but a few of those changes and improvements.

One of the foremost reasons behind the vast number of changes was money. To be precise, AMF's money — lots and lots of AMF's money. Although at first AMF had quality-control problems, within a couple of years of taking over the factory in 1969, they brought out the Super Glide. After that, came the Low Rider, then the Fatbob, and while they were still on the roll, these were followed by the Wide

Glide. Consequently, today we have rubber-mounted engines, five-speed trannies, and rear belts — all pioneered on shovelheads.

And now we've arrived at the final chapter. After working hard at stud for eighteen solid years, the shovel has been put out to pasture. And as it came in, so it's gone. Originally available as a dresser, it seems particularly fitting that the last two production runs at York were also dressers.

The next-to-last run turned out 500 FLHS models, the sport dresser: no bags, no windscreen, pegs instead of boards. (By the way, *Easyriders* is giving away the very last FLHS to roll off the assembly line; see *Easyriders*

#140.) The final factory run using shovel power plants produced FLHXs — special-edition Electra Glides, numbering only 1250 units.

The shovelhead years came to an end in June 1984, with the last bike made going on display at the Rodney C. Gott Museum, there on the grounds of H-D's York, Pennsylvania, assembly plant. Retired it may well be, but it's not too likely that the shovelhead will ever be forgotten. Hell, I imagine that if we could look into the next century, we'd see one or two grand old shovels still keeping on keeping on. That's the nature of the beast that gave us eighteen years of mighty fine riding.

—Wrench