

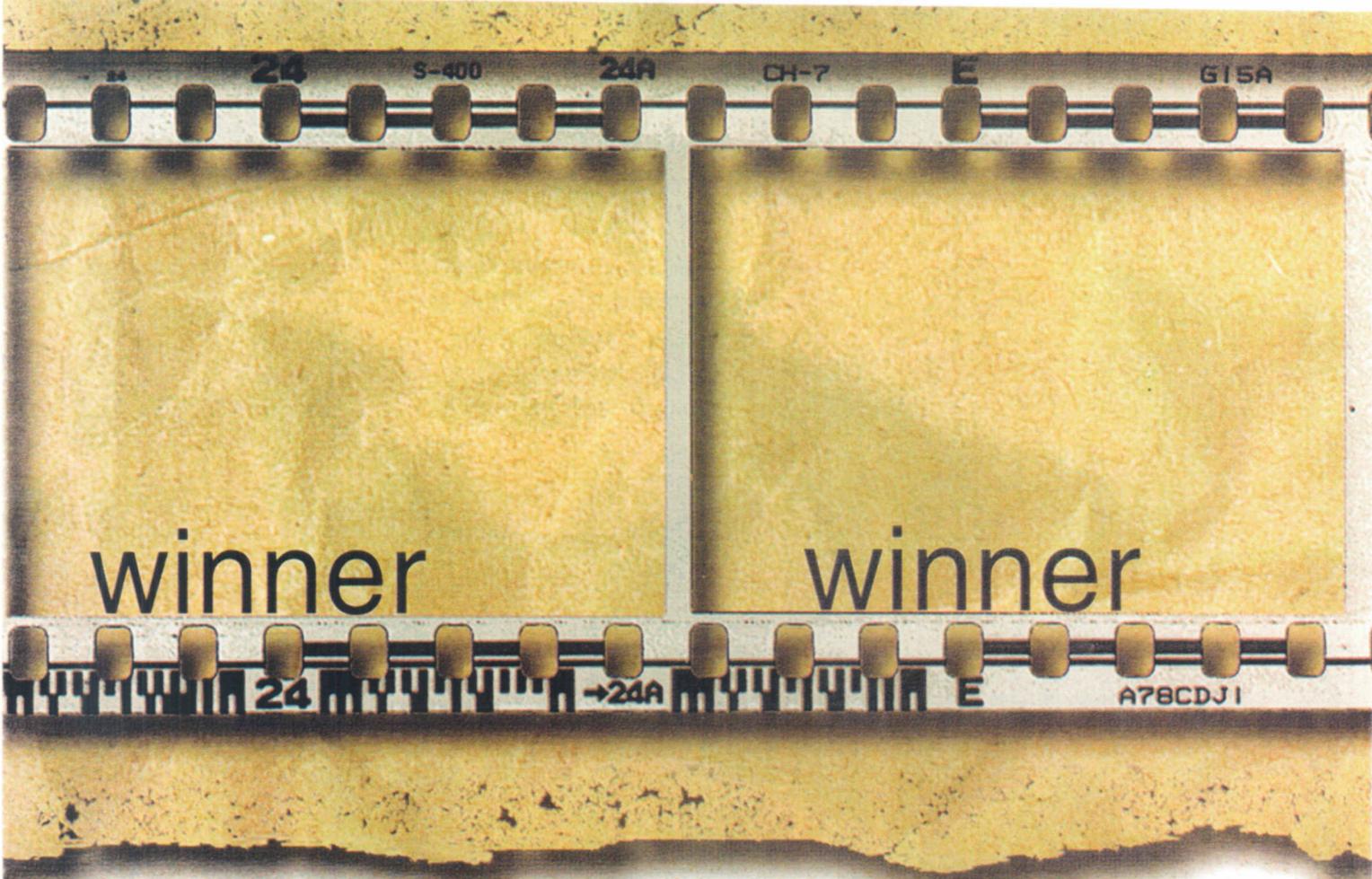


Motocross is a team sport....Sure most consider motorcycle racing an individual action. Yes, you can do it alone, but when we look at the big picture we clearly see there are so many elements that are involved in the sport. Many of us on the outside do not realize the behind scenes preparation. The work that it takes... From sign up to trophies.... An enormous amount of organization is involved.

April 17, 1978, a man by the name of Jerry Sharp opened a European style motocross track in Springfield, Missouri. The name of the track was Possum Hollow in dedication to their adventure in finding the ground. At this time there were only three motocross tracks in the state of Missouri; Cycle World USA in St. Louis, Lake City in the Kansas City area, and Possum Hollow in Springfield. For the next three years Jerry and wife, Ellie, promoted and organized motocross races at the Ozark Empire Fair Grounds and Possum Hollow. It's said that Jerry was fifteen to twenty years ahead of his time in the arenacross style of racing. In 1981 Jerry started a series that included two tracks; Gene Lewis' Lake City and his very own Possum Hollow. Tied to the GNC the events were qualifiers, at that time, for Ponca City and Lake Whitney in Texas. As the years flew by Jerry continued his full time job with Gibson Greeting Cards traveling the states of Missouri and northern Arkansas putting in fifty to sixty hour weeks and still building and promoting the series. In 1997 Jerry mentioned to a few people that the track was for sale in meaningless conversation. Two weeks later during a race a young man by the name of Noah Gates approached Jerry on the selling of the track....

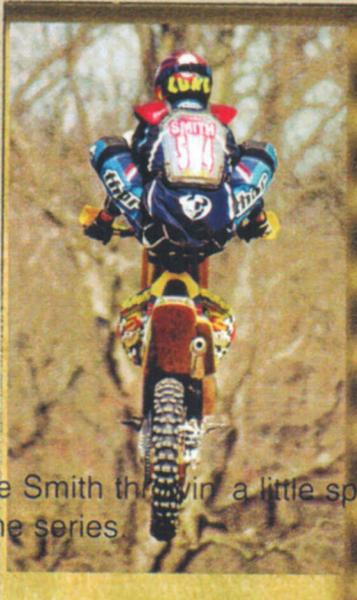
The selling of Possum Hollow allowed Jerry to focus his attention building a series like no other in the state of Missouri. The Missouri State Championship Series has grown from a two track series to involving nine of the best tracks state wide. From early on goggle give-aways to current factory contingencies, this one man has done more for the sport of motocross in Missouri than any other. Our hats go off to Jerry who has made a mountain out of a mole hill.



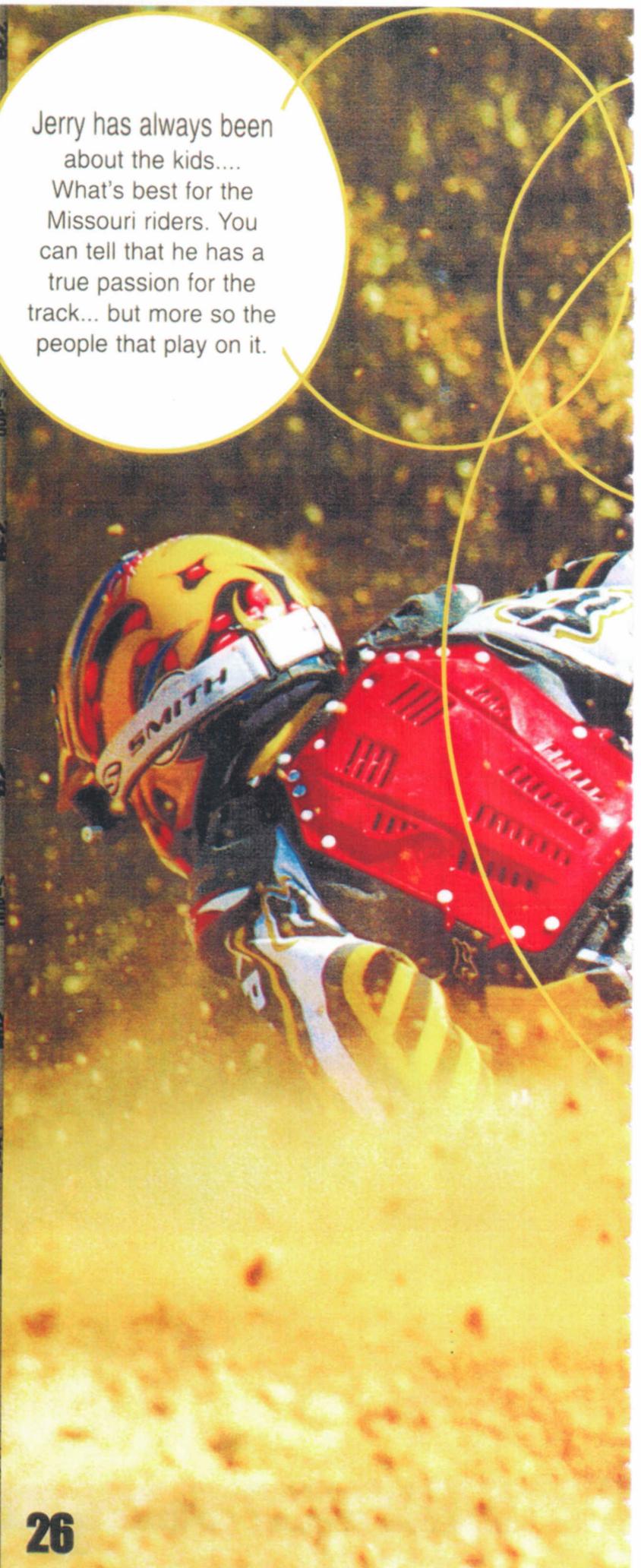




Jerry has always been about the kids... What's best for the Missouri riders. You can tell that he has a true passion for the track... but more so the people that play on it.



Luke Smith throws a little spice to the series.



Give us the basics... What was it like growing up in the Sharp household?

I was born in 1937 in Minnesota on a farm. My father went to WWII and my mother taught school. So I was probably one of the original latch-key boys. My mother taught school in the country so she would have to go out early and build the fire so the kids had a warm place to learn. She taught grades 1-6. I went to town school and I would have to get myself going in the morning and home at night. I would wait for her to get home. I had kind of a lonesome life. I had an uncle that helped me. He taught me how to hunt and fish and stuff like that. But it's been a good life. I missed my father. I got to spend some time with him once he came home from the service and he later remarried. I was able to live with him for awhile and got to know him better. Anyway, I went to college and wrestled in high school. Wrestling was the only sport in which I participated. I went to college at Mankato State. I finished second in the Nation in the NAIA, which is now Division Two, at the 130 lb. class, would you believe?... The team that I was on were National Champions in 1957. I had a street bike, a 1945 Harley '45 It was baby blue and it leaked oil and it was hard to start and it made a lot of noise. The girls that wouldn't talk to you in the classroom or in the school wanted to ride at night on the Harley. So I had a great time with that...

So was that while you were in college?

No, that was when I was in high school.

What year was that?

1955.

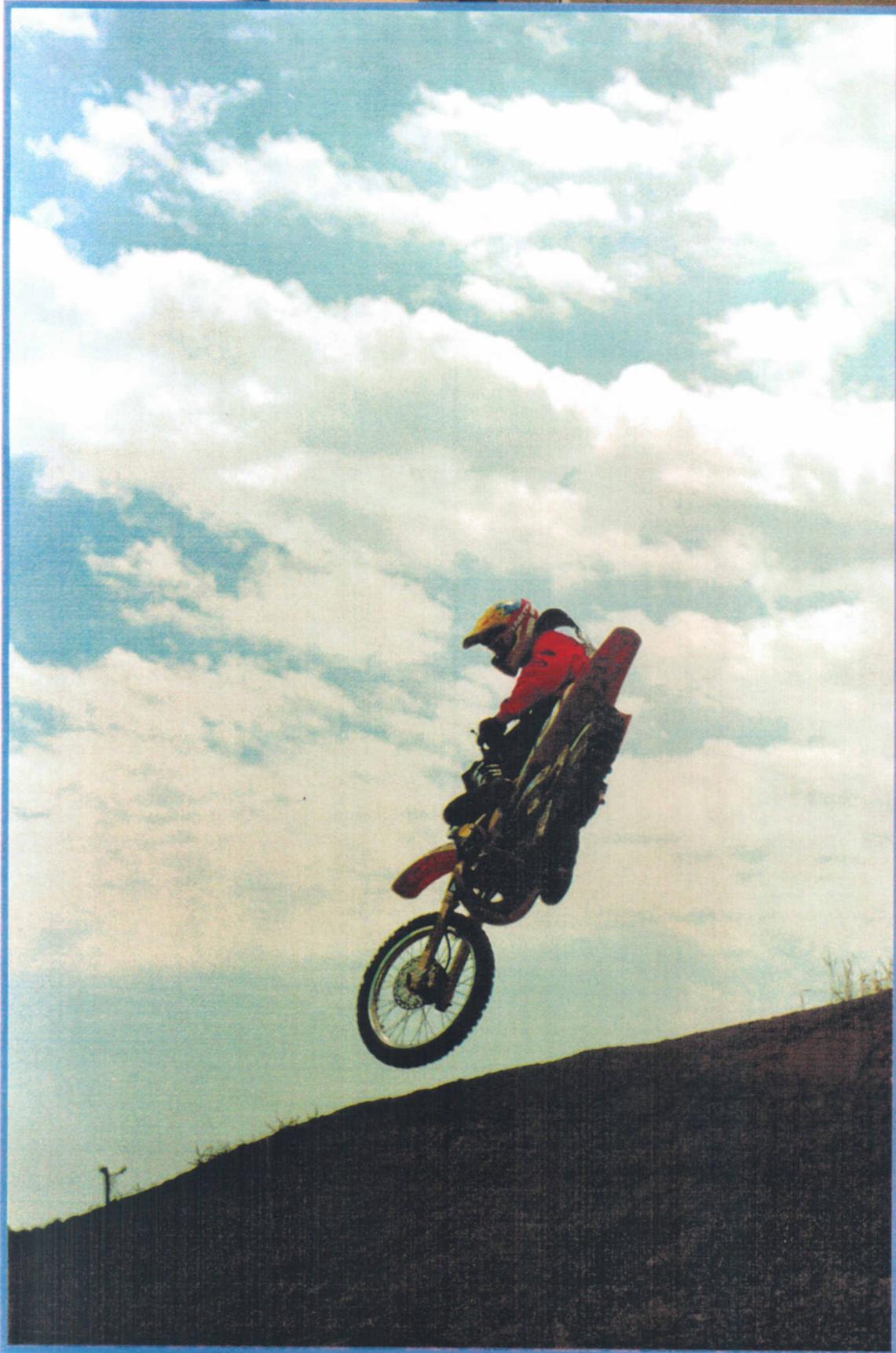
Now how did you get the Harley?

Well, I went over to the dealer and saw it over there and told him that I wanted it. He told me that I had to come back my \$495.00. I did and brought it home to my mother's surprise. She was pretty understanding. I had a great mom and I still do fortunately. I laid it down a couple of times. We were riding down the highway, four wide, taking up all two lanes and when a car would come from the other way the two guys in the left lane would drop back into the right lane. And, of course, all of us were wearing the black jacket with the skull... Anyway, I was on the outside, far left of the four of us, and we dropped back when this car came and when it went by I swung out into the left lane again and ran right into a side of a car. I slid down the highway at 60 MPH for awhile. I was really upset because my bike was all scratched up and the poor driver of the car was all shook up. I was mad because it scratched the paint on my Harley. I was in another accident with it also. We were riding... not really off-road, we were off on some two track. And I looked back to see if the other guys were coming and I hit a big rock and it stood the Harley up on end. I came back down and my buddy ran right over the top of me with a '84, which was a big old 1200cc or something like that, and it broke my collar bone and cracked my sternum and a bunch of stuff like that...

Now was this still in high school?

Yeah, this was still in high school. When I went to college I didn't have a scholarship or anything I was earning ninety cents an hour cleaning the cafeteria after 2 hours of wrestling practice. So I had to sell the bike. I don't remember what I sold it for, but it was probably a little of nothing. Anyway, that was my motorcycle experience. It was all in my early age, I didn't ride again until I was forty-eight years old. I bought a 175 Yamaha and started riding hare scrambles. The first hare scramble that I rode, my wife sent my son

James Hudgins buries himself at Hawk Point's Missouri State race in '99.



playground magazine • June 2001

1997 you could see Mark Morris at several rounds of the Missouri State Chamionship Series. Shown here at Challenge Trax in Kingsville, Missouri.

along with me to watch me so I wouldn't get into any trouble. There was a guy on the line next to me and he had on an open face helmet. His face stuck out from it and he had no goggles, the Bates Leathers... the original Bates Leathers with the circles on the side of the hip, no gloves, an old CZ jersey, butcher tape or duck tape, and the motorcycle was at least five or six years old. I don't know if you have ever done that, but I looked up and down the line and thought "I can beat that guy". I saw that old boy three times in the next two hours, every time he lapped me. He was just a hell of a rider and it just goes to show you that you can't judge by appearances. Anyway, I am getting ahead of my self... I was transferred from Minnesota down to Kansas City in 1972. I moved to Parkville, Missouri.

Transferred with what company?

With Gibson Greeting Cards. After I got out of college I spent ten years with a bottling company, two years as a driver, a couple years as a salesman, and six years as a sales manager. Then I left that company to go to work for Gibson Greeting Cards.

Where was this at?

This was in Minneapolis, Minnesota. We were transferred five times within seven years. From town to town to town and eventually I ended up in Kansas City in April of '72. Some how I found out about Lake City MX Park. Gene Lewis was running Lake City at that time. We were racing back in between the hills. If you remember Lake City before Shrou's got it. There was a big long sign up building there and we raced behind that sign up building I say we, that is my son, who was 12 at the time. We raced behind that building up one side of the hill and down the other and back and forth. It was a little old track that was probably about ten or twelve feet wide. The interesting part of it was at the start they didn't have the gates of course and didn't have the rubber band. You started sometimes two or three deep, but you had your hand on your helmet and your bike in neutral running. When Gene would give you the go sign you had to quick run your hand down to the clutch and grabbed the clutch and jam it in gear. You had to grab the clutch, step down, and away you went. And of course everybody was leaning so far, they had their nose on the cross bar, I don't even know if we had cross bar pads then or not, probably not. Anyway, that was the deal at Lake City. I bought an SL 70, for my son Mark, it of course was not doing all that well and so we sent the motor off to Florida and we had the hottest SL 70 in Kansas City. Until the Honda came out with the XR 75 and you would look at the specs and say there is no way that that XR is going to beat this SL. Well, they left us in the dust. We had the hottest bike in Kansas City for one month. Shortly after that we were transferred down to Springfield, Missouri. Mark started riding down here. There was track west of town that was called Clear Creek. Clear Creek at one time had a NMA National. Like the Ponca City race, but it was at Clear Creek. That was probably in 1975 or '76. Let's see '77 was Houston, '78 we went to Ponca City. So it must have been '76 Jeff Ward was here, Mike Brown... the original "Flying Mike Brown", not the latest one, and a lot of those guys were here in Springfield. I didn't have anything to do with it at that time as far as the operation of the track. I did a little announcing for them and that was about it. In January 1978 Clear Creek was getting ready to close down. I was telling Mel and Carol Gere, who were the NMA Regional Managers and still are, that they ought to open up a track because Clear Creek was closing down and you would make a lot of money doing that and it would be a lot of fun. We need a track and that kind of stuff. When we went home my wife said to me if they are going to make so much money at that why don't we do it. This is from a gal, who at that time was

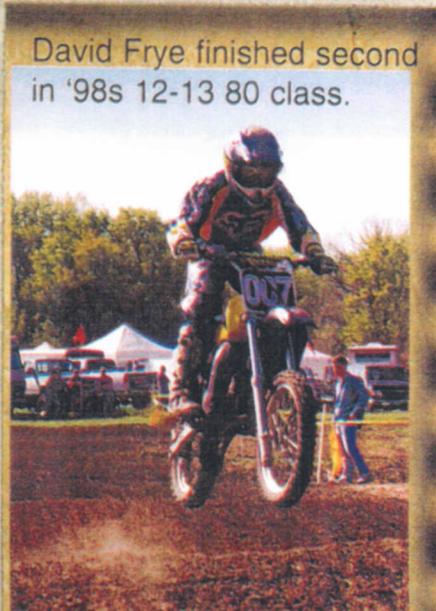
Current intermediate rider, Eric Moore, finished the '98 season with a third in 125 novice class.



Dennis Jonon brought new speed to the mini classes.



David Frye finished second in '98s 12-13 80 class.





Flyin' Ryan Wohlberg*in 80's.



Troy Wohlberg at the first state race Midwest Extreme Park.

not pro-motorcycles. She would come to the race and watch a little bit, but every time somebody would crash or something she would want to stay away. So that was in January 1978 and on April 17th, 10 weeks later we opened Possum Hollow. We had pretty much a grass track kind of a European style track. It was not very wide and we had wood rail fences that we just cut some trees and leaned them up against one another. I had an M-Farmall and those boys that have lived on a farm before would remember old tractors with a trip bucket. A trip bucket is when you raise it up in the air you just pulled this lever and the dirt dropped. You had no down ward pressure at all and it didn't hold much dirt. So it took a lot of time. We carved that track out of the woods, my son and I and some of his friends and my wife. The name Possum Hollow came from... Well, we were looking around for land south of Springfield in an area called Boas, Missouri, and this land was located on a road that was called Possum Trot Road. We were down there talking to some neighbors the first guy that we talked to we told him who we were and what we had in mind. And he said there is no way in hell that you are going to have a motorcycle race track next to me. So we obviously had to go looking somewhere else. We found the next spot, where Possum Hollow now is, and took the Possum Trot and then the fact that it was in a hollow and made it Possum Hollow. We went to the neighbor and knocked on his door, he was out on his porch, but he wouldn't open the porch door for us at all and he wanted to know what we wanted. We told him who we were and that we were thinking about building a motorcycle race track on the land right next to him. He said, "You know it is about time we had some excitement in this area." I could have kissed the guy. Anyway, he was of great help to me. We let all the neighbors come in free and we became a part of the community after twenty some years. A couple times I got chewed out by some of the neighbors wanting to know what I was doing with that good hay field putting all those piles of dirt on it. The first race we had it rained on us. But that's typical, I think that we had around 117 riders, if I recall at that first race. Now there was only three race tracks in the state of Missouri... Cycle World USA in St. Louis, Lake City in Kansas City area, and Possum Hollow in Springfield Tulsa had a track, Wichita had the Jeeps, so there wasn't a whole lot of competition, but there wasn't a whole lot of bikes either. There were not a lot of riders. The gate fee was \$3.00 and to ride was \$8.00. We bought a 125motorcycle for \$800.00. Then you would have to turn around and spend \$150.00 to \$200.00 to make it race ready. In 1982 we went to the people here at the fair grounds in Springfield with the idea of building race track inside the stock car track. Turned out at that time they were very receptive to something like that. They were several thousand dollars in the hole and they were looking for something to generate some volume or cash. We built a track inside the race track. It was probably, now that I look back on it, was a combination of a arenacross stretched out a little bit. In other words we weren't quite as cramped on space as an arenacross is. It was an arenacross/supercross type of thing. It had a lot of jumps and doubles and table tops. We had terrible dirt with clay and rocks. We built this thing inside there and the first year we had some sponsorship from Suzuki. We gave away a new Suzuki at the end of the series. The second, third, and fourth year that we ran it we were part of the Ozark Empire Fair, which runs for ten days down here, we were the opening show on Saturday night of the opening weekend of the ten day fair. The kids at this time had the chance to ride in front of about six thousand people that the Grand Stand would hold. We packed them in all three of those years and in fact the fire department would send people out there to make sure that they didn't have too many people in the Grand Stand at one time because in case there was a fire it would be a hazard. We packed the



Jimmy Albertson has delighted the series as one of the top mini riders to come out of the state of Missouri.

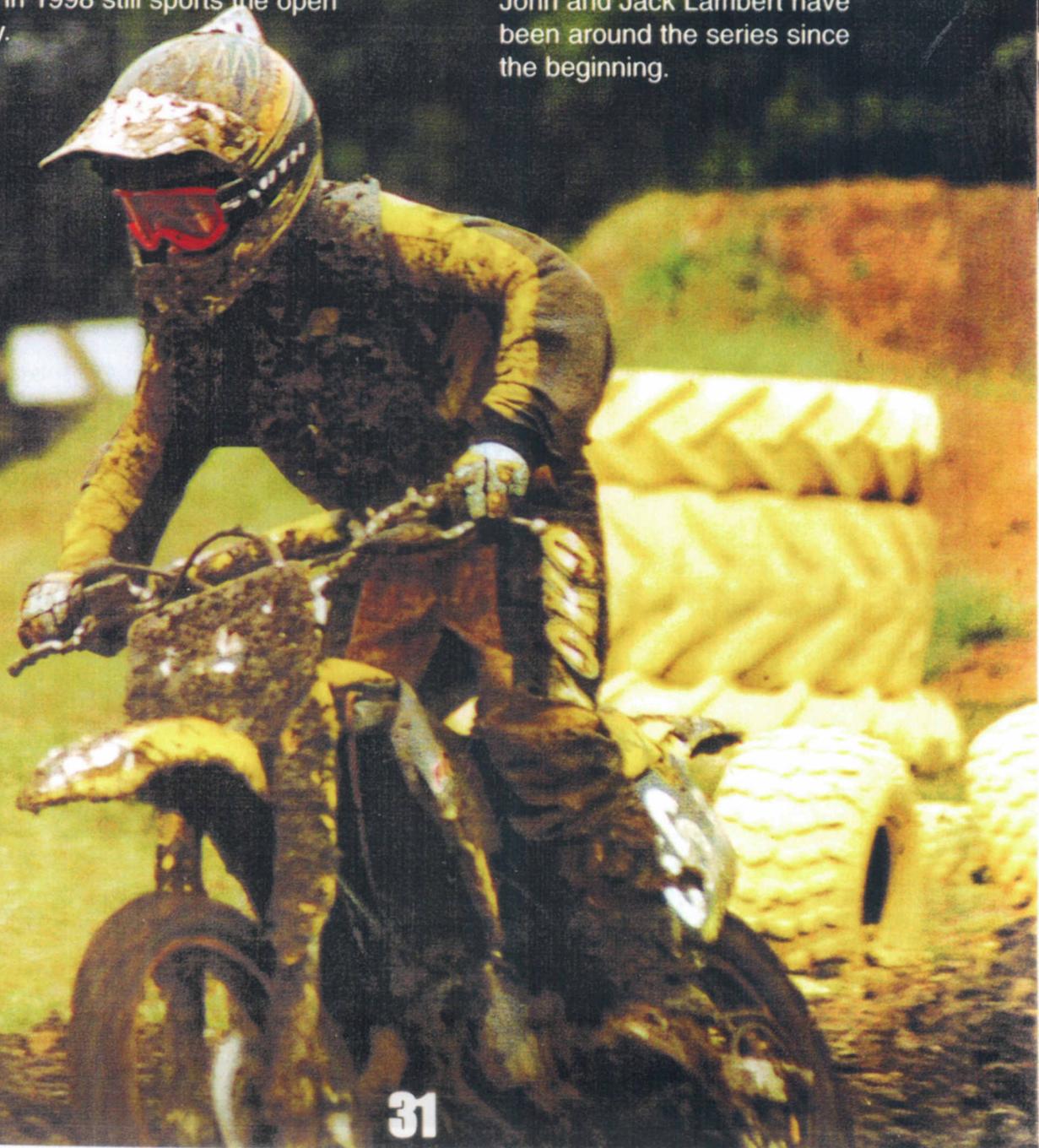




Roger Van Meter in 1998 still sports the open face helmet today.



John and Jack Lambert have been around the series since the beginning.





Brian ShROUT shown here in 1996 still going strong in the A class.



Ryan Shernaman holds titles in the 1997 125 and 250 beginner class and a first in the 125 novice and second in 250 novice in 1998.

walls. I built some wooden ramps... wooden jumps out of two by six oak timber. We had one of these jumps right on the front straight away, right in front of the Grand Stand. We covered it up from the spectators with a big banner from Jim Moon Yamaha. The first moto that we had was the ATV's. The ATV's didn't go over that jump, they rode around it. So the spectator now just saw ATV's on the front straight away on the flat ground. The next moto was the 80cc Seniors and we had some jumpers in there. Those guys come around that big sweeper and head down the straight away and hit that ramp and the spectators would just ahhhhhh!! To us it was not big deal, but to them it blew their minds. We put on quit the show for them. We made them some money and the kids got a chance to race in front of a big crowd. During the fair, of course, we ran a moto in the afternoon and then broke so the kids could go to the fair and then we would have the second moto at night. After about the fourth year of this the fair grounds apparently paid off their bills and they got a little gittery started talking insurance and they were sticking their neck out and afraid they are going to get sued and all that kind of stuff. I was able to get from Yamaha and Suzuki two one million dollar policies or add them to their coverage, but that wasn't enough to satisfy the fair grounds. They wanted us out of there and then, of course, they wouldn't renew our contract. But we were fifteen to twenty years ahead of our time and now a lot of the county fair grounds hold motocross events. My wife and I were the first ones to do something like that. We had a great time at it. It came to an end unfortunately and we went back to outdoor at Possum Hollow. Along that same time was when we started the Missouri State Motocross Championship Series. In 1981 we had four races, two at Gene Lewis' Lake City Park and two at Possum Hollow. They were also tied in with the GNC. They were GNC qualifiers. You had to race a couple of those to go to the GNC Nationals at Ponca City then you had to go to qualify to ride at Lake Whitney. This was back in the days where you had to be there, you couldn't say that the doctors said I shouldn't race until March or something like that. You had to go to the qualifiers, you had to go to Ponca City, and then you go down to Lake Whitney. The awards in the first year in 1981, in fact the first three or four years, you received a red, white, and blue bib with the Missouri flag on it and you were part of Team Missouri along with a plaque and a pair of \$20.00 goggles. That is what you got for being a state champion.

Let's back up a minute... You started in 1981... Who were your sponsors your first year?

Ha, Ha, Ha.... Gene Lewis and I. We didn't have any sponsors.

That was it? Did you go after any sponsors?

No, we never did. We didn't have any sponsors at all. A little bit later we started to get goggles from dealers. The first year we bought the goggles. The early sponsors were ShROUT's, ...of course Donnell's, Freedom, Letko, Jim Moon Yamaha, Action Cycles in Springfield, Springfield Suzuki - Kawasaki, Surdyke was not there at that time, Lebonon Suzuki - Kawasaki, Lebonon Yamaha was not there at that time, those were the major sponsors. The sponsorship was three pairs of goggles. That's what it was, no money, just goggles. It was kind of the same deal, they got their name in the program and that kind of stuff. The series started to evolve in the late 80's. We started giving jackets to the top two guys and plaques to the top five. By the time we got two races into the series I could see that it was going to be bigger than I thought. So we changed it every year to give jackets to the first and second, then change it to give jackets to the first through third and plaques first through seventh and goggles to fourth and fifth. The kids were supporting the program so much that I just wanted to turn it back to them... Some of the money back to them in the form of awards. And of course it has turned out to be the smart way to do it. If you pour water back down the well and more water comes out. If you take care of people like how you would like to be taken care of and it comes back to you. We are at the point now where we jumped up to six events in the late 80's. By the time we got to the 90's we were running at KCIR, at Columbia, MXP, a track at the Lake of the Ozarks, actually it was on a car race track on Highway 54, and Sprout Patch was open by then, and Possum Hollow. So we were running about six events. There were two in the Kansas City area. Kingsville opened in '93 or '94, I would need to check with RJ to be sure. Along with treating people the way you like to be treated by giving our advertisers the support that they need. I just know that if you treat people the way you want to be treated and give them a fair shake it will all come back to you in good events, good people, and good times. I always try to be consistent in my decisions, if I am wrong, I want to be wrong consistently all the time. I want the rules to be the same for all groups. I've penalized riders of track owners, not because I wanted to and I didn't get any satisfaction out of that



Current A rider, Brandon Stansbury, as an intermediate in 1996.



Lightening fast Jesse Liggett on 60's.

at all. Nothing ruins my day more than having to settle an argument or be involved with a confrontation between riders or between riders and parents. It ruins my day and makes my stomach upset. Last year for the first time in twenty some years we had a race at Cycle World USA as a Missouri State Series and down to two motos left. I said to my wife somebody is going to come over here and tear my head off anytime now just because nobody had complained about anything. We get the one moto done and then the second moto done and everybody is packing up to leave. Nobody complained... Nobody complained about a rider in the wrong class, nobody complained about anybody cutting the track, nobody complained about nothing. I could hardly believe it. It finally happened after twenty some years. Not that I have a problem with complaining. If you come through my gate and pay me \$5.00 or \$6.00 or \$7.00 for a gate fee and you pay me \$30.00 to race on the track, you have a right to complain if you don't like something. I'll listen to you, I may not do anything about it, but I sure will listen to you. I owe you that right for you to tell me how you feel about something. I've learned a lot from riders and riders parents over the years because I have listened to them Rather than just blow them off, not pay any attention to them, and walk away from them. It's not easy to do, as you know, but being in business it's what you have to do sometimes to maintain your particular ethics. I am also involved in hare scrambles. We had our first hare scramble down here at Possum Hollow in 1979. Marvin Pruiett and Jim Moon told me how to lay out a hare scramble and so I laid one out. I had a lot of guys there and I got them all lined up, got them started, and they took off. After about forty-five minutes into the hare scramble I asked Marvin Pruiett, "Marvin, how do we stop this thing." I had no idea of how to stop it even. But anyway Marvin said, "It's two hours and when the leader comes by after two hours that's the end of it." And I said, "Who's the leader?" Fortunately Marvin knew what was going on and Jim Moon was there to help me out. That was the first hare scramble After that I kind of got it figured out and we ran two or three hare scrambles every year since then. Some were at Possum Hollow and some were at other pieces of land in the area. I'm blessed with good relationships with land owners. I have three places who have an access of thousand acres that I can run races on, not whenever I choose, but at least once a year. That gives me all kinds of flexibility. We have a little deal going on in Springfield called the Hill Billy Grand Prix, which is an ATV and motorcycle race through the woods based on motocross scoring. Or a

motocross format, we have two forty-five minute motos instead of one race going two hours long. It is more of a social event, I guess, than anything else. We aren't training anybody for the six day. The course is fairly easy... On a scale from about one to ten, it's about a four. A lot of people come out who have never raced before and have a lot of fun. It's worked out well. I do the Missouri State Motocross and Hare Scrambles also. One ATV only and one with ATV's and motocross.

Tell us about the time when you opened up Possum Hollow... Did that become a full time job for you?

No sir, I still was working a full time job with Gibson Greeting Cards traveling basically through southern Missouri and Northern counties in Arkansas. So I had a forty-five, fifty, sixty hour week with the addition of Possum Hollow.

So what was your schedule like?

Well, I didn't have a lot of vacation time. That is why I didn't get a bike until I was 48 years old. I didn't have time to ride the bike. I wanted to get a bike and ride. My son had quit racing. I wanted to ride in the woods. But every time I would get a little ahead on the money something would happen to the tractor or I would have to buy something else for Possum Hollow and get something fixed. I had to put my motorcycle off and finally I said to heck with it and I'm buying a bike and we'll fix the tractor next month. I had a full time job in addition to the track. In 1981 my wife and I started to build our own trophies. The guys that was building our trophies would give us red, green, and blue and the same thing every three weeks. And, of course, the same riders were winning the same trophies all the time and same color. So we started what we called Possum Hollow Trophies and we did that out of our basement. We built the trophies for most of the tracks in the area. So we were now working... well, lots of hours... too many hours. But it was fun.

So you had the Greeting Cards, the trophy business, and the track.

Yeah, right all three. My wife at this time was helping me a ton. She worked until 1981, then in addition to building trophies she ran the concession stand at the track. So she had all the food to buy and fixings to prepare. Again we were trying to be pretty self sufficient. As far as track



Adam Zarda used to be green in 1998



Jesse George on 80's.

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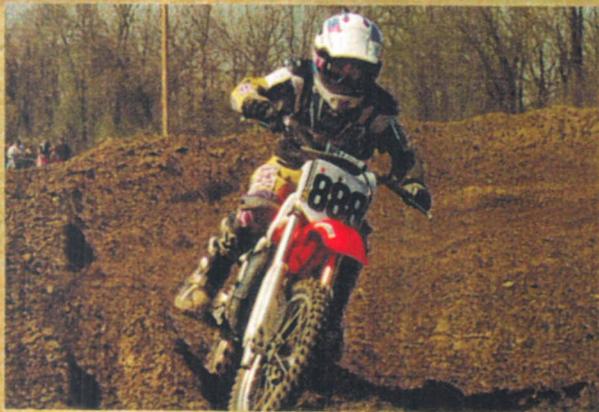
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Cory Smith at Challenge Trax in 1998.



Kevin Rix first ride on 125's.

preparation, probably one person could do it. I have had several people who have helped me over the years. During race day especially or mowing grass and that kind of stuff. We were working three jobs from 1981 until we sold the track, what has it been four years ago, in 1997. We sold Possum Hollow motocross track in 1997.

Before we talk about selling Possum Hollow. What did we build up to as far as the Missouri State Series goes?

By the time we were in the mid 90's we were in the plus two hundred area with regularity. But throughout the series it was always over two hundred. By this time we had sponsors from the local shops and that kind of stuff. We never broke three hundred until... The first race of over three hundred, I will never forget, it was 313 bikes at Extreme Motocross Park in Merwin. That was the biggest turn out that we had ever had. We had two full gates of 125 novice and 125 beginners. That was the first time that we broke three hundred. And we do it with regularity now.

That was a good day at Extreme...

Yeah, that was a great day. We ran out of time and we got started late. We learned a lot of things that day. When you go to a new track and the first day everybody is new, not only your help, but the racers don't know for sure what to do. If they go to Kingsville they know exactly how it is going to run or if they go to Columbia they know the same way. But they didn't know and we didn't know. From somebody that has been in the business a long time and looking

from the inside it was a disaster as far as administration was concerned. But the kids had a great time and it was a great new facility and we had a big turn out.

When you sold Possum Hollow in '97 what was the reasoning behind selling the track?

The reason behind it was the three jobs that we were still working.

So were you still working for the Greeting Cards? Yes, selling cards, building trophies and running Possum Hollow.

Oh, yeah. The track... I had mentioned to a couple of people that it was for "sale" for about a year or so. I had a price on it and this young fellow came and talked to me one day and I told him what the package was like. He was interested in buying it. Two weeks later during a race he came to me and asked me if I would take any less and I said, "No, I couldn't hardly do that." So he stuck his hand out, we shook hands and he said, "We'll just take her cash money." I said, "Okay," and I stuck my head in the tower and yelled at Ellie and told her she better come down here a minute because I need to talk to you. She came down and I said, "Hun, we just sold our race track." She said, "You have to be kidding." Anyway we were still pretty stunned. It was a little unnerving at the time because it was our baby. We spent twenty years out there and building it up. While still being a little bit stunned, Sunday night the Regional Vice President for Gibson Greeting Card called and said, "Jerry I'm going to be in Kansas City and I would like to meet you up there for dinner." I said, "Okay."

That was Wednesday night when we met, not knowing what was going on, I had been going up to Omaha helping this kid that was in trouble, he was not doing what he was suppose to do. They have since fired him and I figured my boss was going to ask me to go to Omaha. Or go up there and straighten it out again or something like that. So anyway we sat down to dinner and my boss says, "Jerry, we have eliminated your job and here's your severance pay, here's your vacation pay, and sign these forms here and that's it." After twenty-eight and a half years I lost two jobs in the same damn week. And that was scary. Now I am fifty-nine years old or something like that and knowing that this is what I wanted, I didn't want to lose my job, but I wanted to just do the race track and trophies for many years. But I could never quite swing it financially. Anyway, he says to me, "You are not really upset." And I said, "Well, Gary, if I jumped up and down and ranted and raved, moaned and groaned would I get my job back?" He said, "No." And I said, "Well, let's just enjoy our meal and let it go at that." So anyway I come back home on Thursday morning to tell my wife that I just lost my job in addition to Possum Hollow. We thought seriously about backing out on the Possum Hollow deal because we were a little worried financially. I said, "No, I shook the man's hand and we told him that we would sell it to him and we are just going to have to go with it." And we did and of course it has turned out for the better, but that's the story behind Possum Hollow. Now I am down to two jobs and that is building trophies and promoting races. And if you look back on it that is when the State Series really started to kick into high gear. Because now I have got the time and needs to spend pro-

moting it and hustling it and working it. So we started to get more sponsors and of course last year the Kawasaki deal and Husqvarna. I do want to say something in this interview because everybody is saying to me, "You're doing a great job getting all this factory contingency money." Well, the Kawasaki deal came to Missouri State Motocross Series is because I was talking to Jeff Emig. I said, "Jeff if you are ever in the Kawasaki office and you get a chance please mention our series and see if we can't get a little contingency money." Two weeks later Kawasaki called me. Honda and Suzuki also came in as sponsors.

As far as the 2001 Missouri State Championship Series who are the listed sponsors.

Dell's Honda, Donnell's, Emig Racing, Freedom Cycles, Gary Semics MX, Golden Valley Suzuki, Haven's Motorsports, Honda of Missouri, Honda-Yamaha North, Jones Powersports, Kearney Cycle,

am thinking back a long time now. The suspension, of course, was a big thing. There was probably two and a half to three inches on the front end and about the same on the back. You were looking at two shocks. The first shock thing was on the rear shocks. You would weld two more eyes on the frame and laid the shocks down 2 inches of travel on the rear end. You had to do a lot of bike modifications to make your bikes ready to race. You had to wire the spokes together where they crossed. I'm missing a few things, I am sure... You had to put screws into the rear rims. Screwed the screws into the rear tire so that when you dropped the clutch the tires didn't slip on the rim. The only good thing about it was that you could work on them yourself.

What about the people and the racing is that the same?

Oh, yeah. The people are always the same. Most are always super nice. We have all said this before. You

new rug or washer and dryer. Because it requires so much of a family commitment families become a lot closer because of it. They go through the good times and the bad times. When the rider crashes and hopefully doesn't get hurt, but was leading the pack and goes down and gets up and gets dead last. But through the high points and the low points of the racing career is very similar to life. There are times when you're the captain of the football team or your head cheerleader or whatever it may be and there are downers too when something happens in your family, maybe a relative dies or something like that when you go through the hard times. Motocross teaches families to be together and to rely on one another. And to suffer together and to rejoice together and become a true family that sticks together regardless. People are more dedicated now than they were years ago. Riders will disappear for a year or two and then they come back again. It has a special something within their family

ration and all that good stuff. What do promoters go through?

I think first of all the thing that bothers promoters more than anything is weather. You want to have a nice weekend for your race. So you are constantly worried about the weather. If we are going to get rain on Thursday and Friday, so you don't have to water as much on Saturday. Weather is one thing. For most of us the equipment is the other thing. Unfortunately, most track operators can't afford \$150,000.00 to \$250,000.00 worth of heavy equipment that starts every morning to operate their track. My big concerns going to the track early Saturday morning is the tractor going to start. Has somebody been out there and tore down the fences or did something to the track to destroy something? Is the tiller going to work, is the water truck going to run, is the creek going to have enough water in it, are the people that are suppose to help me going to show up? So many



Casey McDowell

Brian Stone

Bart Shiflett

Brian Shrout

Larry's Honda, Lebanon Cycle, Lebanon Suzuki-Kawasaki, Liberty Cycle, Letko Cycles, Neosho Powersports, Pro Cycle Springfield, Performance Cycles, Pro Cycle Columbia, St. Louis Powersports, Shrout's, Shawnee Cycle, Summit Cycles, Surdyke Motorsports, Surdyke Yamaha, Skyline Honda, Yeager's Cycle, Warrensburg Cycle, McBrann Cycle Shed, and Transport Graphics, and Playground Magazine.

Let's talk about motocross in general from when you first started getting involved in it and started running races to current. What has changed?

The big change in motocross, of course, is the equipment. Back in the early and mid 70's you bought a dirt bike for a fairly reasonable price. The spokes were not strong enough, the rims were not strong enough, you had to replace a lot of things on a motorcycle to make it raceable. I

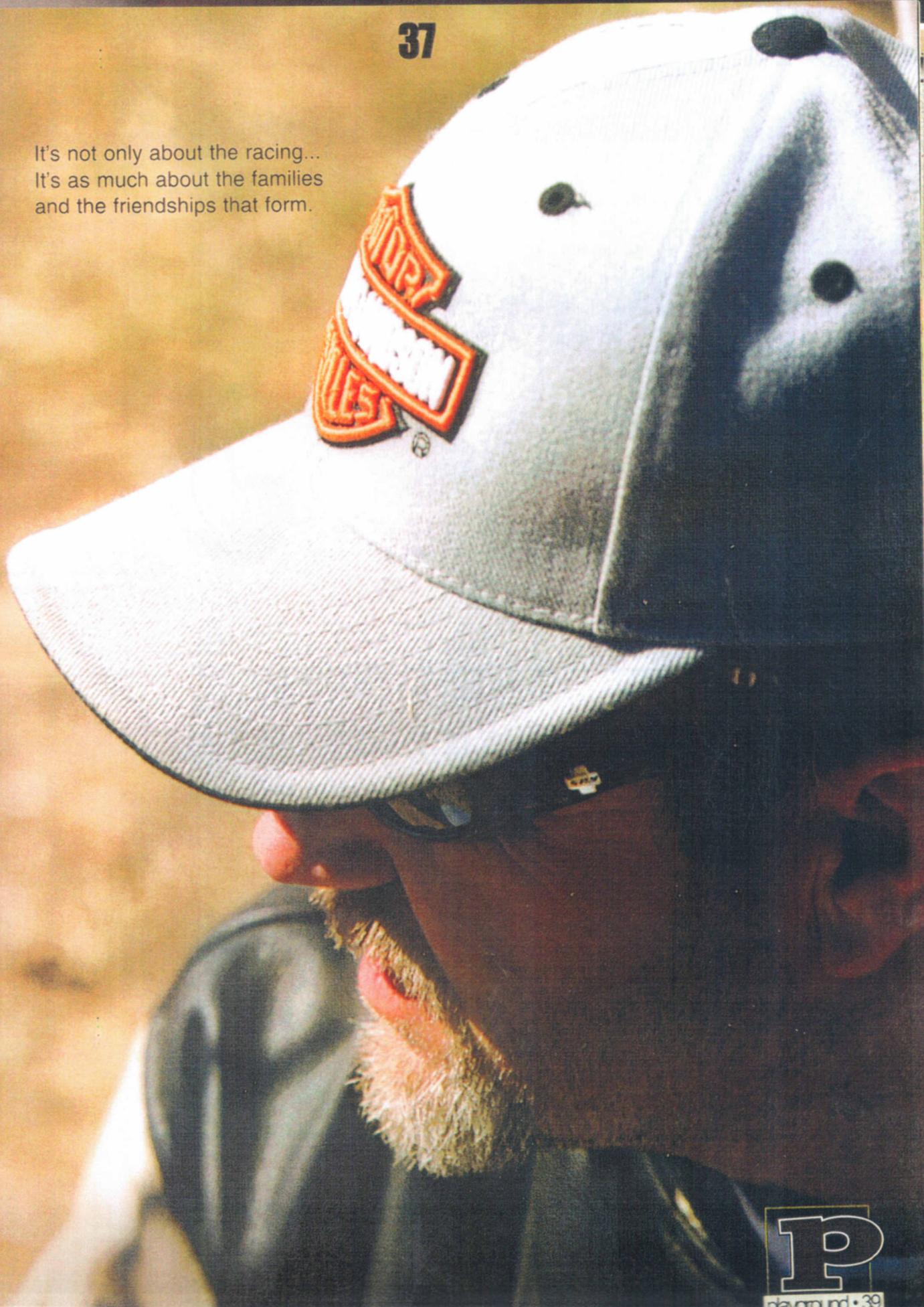
can walk away with your trunk open. Well, now we are talking about back in the day when nobody really never had trailers. Sometime you would haul your bike on bumper carriers. Anyway, you could leave your trunk open or tool box open and if something was gone when you came back it would be back there ten minutes later because somebody borrowed it. Same people, same breakdown, people would lend you anything that they had. That is true today. People will complain a little bit and that is true today as well. The rivalries are the same today as they were back then, just different kids involved. The difference now is the level of commitment that is required from a family. If you take a mom and dad and a nine year old boy and they are going to go racing motocross or play hockey or soccer or whatever, Motocross racers have a very high level of commitment from the family. When a boy gets a new motorcycle the chances are that mom had to go without the

and within their motocross family. When a rider gets hurt within two days or so everybody in the state knows about it. You develop an extended family within the riders and parents. And develop relationships that last a long, long time. After people are gone and out of the sport we still remember them from time to time because of what happened or didn't happen. People have to be committed now because it requires that kind of that thing and sometimes it requires a whole family commitment. The overall make up of the people is pretty much the same just different faces and new bikes.

What about the pressures of operating a track... People that come into race don't really understand what goes on. I have been fortunate enough to see what's happening from being around it every weekend. I see the prepa-

things that you are involved with even before you get to the track. You have trophies to order, you have food to get involved with, I wonder how many hamburgers I'm going to need or hotdogs... Which fortunately is taken care of by a wife or girl friend in the deal. Those are some of the things. The next thing is that you want to have the nicest facility that you can possibly have with your equipment and given weather conditions. Sometimes that doesn't happen. Equipment breaks down and you can't get it the way you want it. Those are the things that would bother me more than anything. As being concerned with the equipment being started is are we going to get through the day without anybody really getting hurt. It's like I tell the grandmothers and mothers it's not if your son or grandson is going to get hurt, it's when he's going to get hurt. Most of us have been fortunate to go through a racing career with a few broken bones and loss of skin and

It's not only about the racing...
It's as much about the families
and the friendships that form.



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some pride here and there. But we have had some of our riders who have been less fortunate and had more serious injuries. That is a big concern, what can we do to make it a little safer. The kids that come to not only me, but they would come to the other track operators. I have heard them talk to RJ and Steve Alterman about why don't you make this a big set of whoops in here or make this an eighty foot double or triple. I would always tell them, "Yeah, I would like to do that too, and I know that you could handle it, but there is a whole lot of riders that can't handle it. And I don't want to build anything that somebody is going to get hurt on. Even though you are a good enough rider to do it, which he might not have been, we can not build something that is dangerous." We try to make it as exciting as possible and there is a gray area in there between exciting and dangerous and you have to keep it towards the exciting area by building table tops and doubles and triples and that kind of stuff. But the worry of somebody getting hurt. Those are some of the things that you worry about as a promoter. You are concerned about having a good day, not financially necessarily, but that nobody gets hurt real bad and nobody complains and you just have a fun day. Everybody has a great day and a couple riders come



Friendship....

up and say, "Hey, man, the track was great today, I really had a great time." Those things go a long, long way in the promoters mind. We always say to the guys that have suggestions for us all the time, I read that as complainers, all they need to do is run one race themselves. It's not just Saturday

before the race and the Sunday of the race. It's the weekend before. And during the week when you are living the event in your mind and you have to in order for it to work out. You have to do as much stuff as you can yourself. You can't hire it all done because that is where the profits go. Those are some of the

things that I worry about and I don't think that I'm any different than Crutcher or RJ or any of the other guys.

If you could take everything back and start over would you have done anything differently?



New names are learned...



As they grow...



Jack Jones



Tyler Rickey

No. I don't think that I would have Harold. We put the track together piece by piece. From my stand point and from my family and the end result that we had I would have liked to have better equipment, but I didn't want to commit and buy \$40,000.00 to \$60,000.00 worth of equipment that I would use twice a month. But I don't think that I would have done anything different. I would like to have had less disagreements with people than I had, but no I wouldn't change anything, I do it the same way with all the same enthusiasm. And hopefully with the same result.

Who has been your big influences?

That people that have influenced me the most are some of the dealers that have helped me, not necessarily financially, but with verbal support to other riders and to me. I have learned a lot from a lot of other promoters. I just always go back on the philosophies of treating people the way you want to be treated.

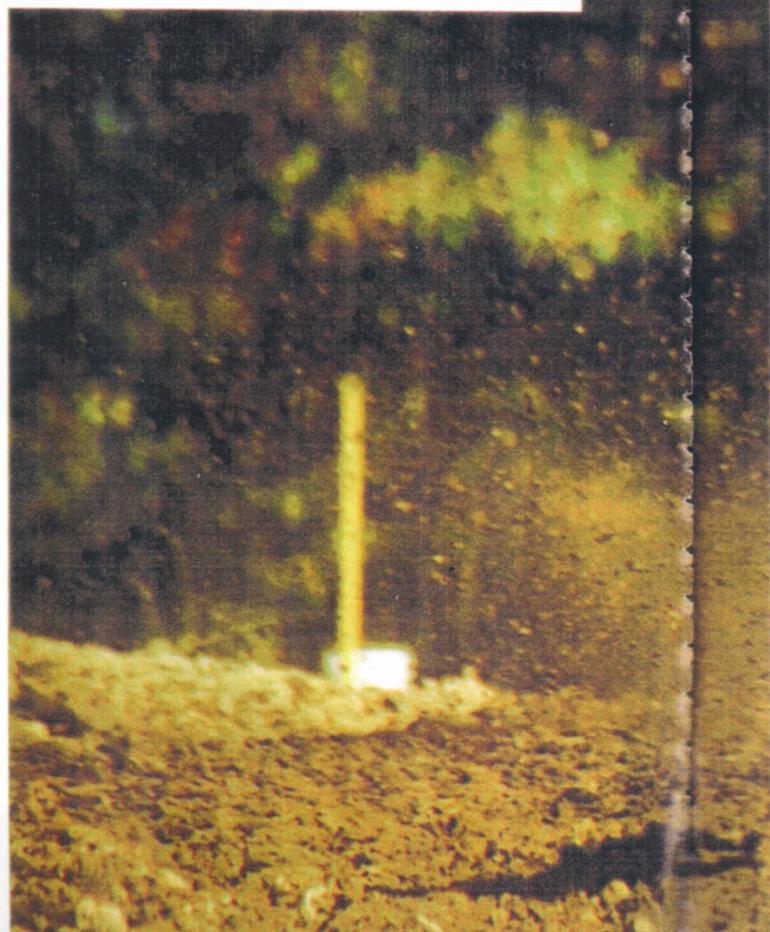
What would you say that the Missouri State Series needs more of?

We need more in the Missouri State Series is for recognition of the guy who finished eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth. The middle of the packer guy that supports the series and is there at every race. We need to come up with, well, everybody can't be first, second, third, or fourth, but we need some way to recognize that guy who finishes seventh and they only gave out six trophies. You know he's always there and he's always one short. I don't know what that would be. If it could be some sort of contingency thing and if you don't get a trophy you could get a pair of grips or something. But those are the people that we need to realize. They are the bread and butter of the series. Their will always be a champion and there will always be a second place, but without the fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth..... seventeenth, eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth place rider you don't have the whole program that we have. So that is what I would like to see.... more recognition to middle of the pack riders.

On the flip side to the previous question... What can the Missouri State Series do without or needs less of?

It would be nice to have less arguments and that kind of stuff... Well, we don't have that many of them... We have a few from time to time and for the most part and unfortunately you remember those more than you remember those where nothing happened and it was a good race. Where guys pulled off of the track and

Dusty Emerson in 1999 at Radical Rob's Raceway in Halfway, Missouri.





Just admit it. It's going to happen sooner or later. Yes, even to you my friend, no matter what, it will happen. If you choose to play "in any way" not only in motocross you will find your ass above your head





Dennis Jonon, Jimmy Albertson, and Jeff Crutcher take the first turn at Radical Rob's first state race.



Wes Parr formed his skills at the Missouri State Series.

high five one another. I tell people that if you are not having fun than I would be out of here. Some parents could "lighten up" on their 6-7 year old "racers" who are really, anywhere but on a racetrack "just little boys".

What would you say or who would you say has been the most exciting person to watch throughout the years?

I would say Jeff Emig, Jeff Shoemaker, Bart Shifflett. Jonon, of course. Wes Parr, Jack Lambert, I enjoy watching Melissa Alyea, she's a good solid rider. I have to be careful with mentioning pee wee riders, but Chris Theis is outstanding and fun to watch and little Munsterman, Pennington. I'm sure I will forget somebody in here, but some of those little guys are just great riders. Ryan Howe and Ryan Wohlberg, it's hard to mention everybody and I don't want to miss anybody. Some of the guys that are exciting are when their feet are flying. The guys that put together a good race were Chris Leas and Jack Lambert and they will have a go whether they are running fourth or fifth or first or second and the will be the exciting race. Some of the better races are in the back of the pack.

What about the different tracks in the series...

At this time we have nine of the best eleven tracks in the state. We are fortunate on having a couple more new tracks this year that their facility is going to be a number one and certainly will have an opportunity to be in a series at a later

date. I don't want to indicate here that I am going to make any changes, but I may. But overall we have nine of the best tracks in the state that are involved in the series. Either from location stand point or facility stand point. Each track is fantastic. We are blessed with great tracks. It wasn't always that way. Back in the 80's and we came to a state race up at Agency and the promoter was taking the money at the gate and nobody was there. The track isn't prepared, he has no scorekeepers, no PA announcer, nobody to sign up, nothing. That was probably the lowest that we ever got as far as a track operator not being prepared. Now we have some great tracks and track operators. We are outgrowing the existing facilities at some tracks..adjustments will need to be made for continued growth of the series.

Last words...

I want to thank the good Lord for looking out for me and for looking out for my family. Without Him we are nothing. Because of my faith I try to treat people with the Golden Rule and the way that I like to be treated. I base my success on my faith, not only on the Lord, but on other people. I think that if you treat people like how you want to be treated it will be returned and they will treat you the same way. It's been a great twenty some years and I'm looking forward to a few more. I'm just thankful for what has happened in the past and I look forward to what will happen in the future.



Kansas native Cody Agler on 60's.



Matt Munsterman perfects his skills at the Missouri State Series.





Look into the eyes of the riders of the Missouri State Series and you will find raw determination in the young and old. Father's become majors in coaching with a minors in Cheerleading.... They support and redefine the meaning of quality time.





"I want to thank the good Lord for looking out for me and for looking out for my family. Without Him we are nothing. Because of my faith I try to treat people with the Golden Rule and the way that I like to be treated. I base my success on my faith, not only on the Lord, but on other people. I think that if you treat people like how you want to be treated it will be returned and they will treat you the same way. It's been a great twenty some years and I'm looking forward to a few more. I'm just thankful for what has happened in the past and I look forward to what will happen in the future".



