

PM Tests Snow Eagle— First of the Fast ATVs

By JAMES JOSEPH



A new machine that
clammers over
boulder and
snow-strewn mountains
yet does 45 mph in the straightaway

EVEN AT FIRST GLANCE, the Snow Eagle (ATV-600) looks like a fast machine. Fitted with a streamlined fiberglass body (high-impact plastic in production models), dual 15-inch-wide tracks and powered by a two-cylinder, air-cooled German-built 634-cc Hirth gasoline engine (equivalent to 39 hp which is considerably more power than found in most ATVs), the McCormack Snow Eagle seemed on the go just standing still!

But it wasn't until after several hours of boisterous running (the dual-muffled engine is quieter than many of its competitors, but the industry is still a long way from a silent engine) we became convinced that the Snow Eagle is an entirely



IMPROVISED SLEIGH RIDE for this youngster is no problem for Snow Eagle's powerful 39-hp Hirth engine



THE EAGLE SKITTERS over rough woods road at better than 30 mph. Battery headlight is for night driving

new and exciting breed of adverse-terrain, any-season fun vehicle.

It's the first—and certainly not the last—of a lickety-split genre of ATV that can swoop over snowpacks at upward of 45 mph, charge through pine woods with the speed of a trail bike, climb sand dunes that would mire all but the heftiest dune buggies—and, on hinterland roadways (were it licensed to tread them; ours wasn't) might run rings around the family flivver.

Snow Eagle is gifted with "bulldozer" steering. This doesn't mean that it's hard to steer; only that turning the handlebars left or right automatically brakes one track or the other, swinging the ATV around in its tracks. Turn the handlebars quickly and far enough, and this little two-track-minded ATV spins about in its own 80-inch length.

This maneuver, however, is one we'd recommend only for stunt drivers and not when Snow Eagle is carrying its maximum load of two adults and a child riding its single, 36-inch-long, 13-inch-wide foam-cushioned seat.

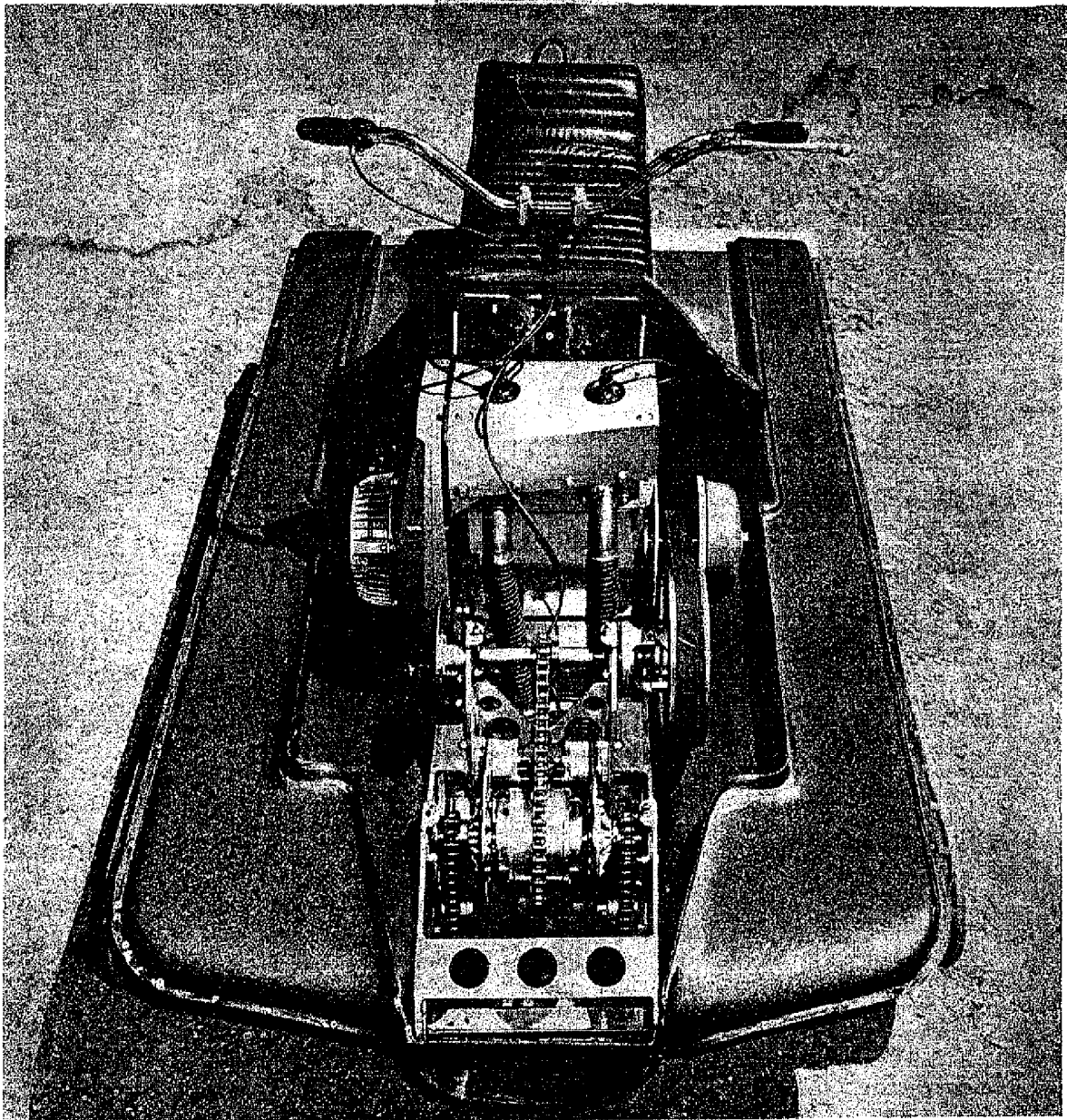
Snow Eagle's really unique feature, though, is its speed. It could probably do 50 mph given some gear tinkering. We estimated our test machine's top speed at about 40 mph. Formerly, all-track machines provided sure-footed-

ness, but hardly the speeds of a trail-bike. Snow Eagle delivers both.

We jumped this 465-pound (when fueled with seven gallons of gasoline) fun buggy at 35 mph over snowy ridges and tracked up 45° snow slopes at a respectable 20-25 mph. Then, for some tough-terrain diversion, we took to bone-dry (and snowless) woods trails. Snow Eagle leapfrogged sizable logs with ease—and with just as much speed as when hurdling snow banks. It climbed hills with equal facility.

We didn't test this rugged little ATV in powder snow, but by our reckoning it shouldn't find much trouble with any surface, be it powdery snow, sand or goo. Standing still and without riders, Snow Eagle exerts only about one-third pound of pressure per square inch of track surface. With a 150-pound driver aboard, it still has a "footprint" of less than one-half pound per square inch. The usual single-track snow machine often has double, even triple its tread pressure, but Snow Eagle literally surfs the snow.

That alone won't explain its extraordinary speed for a tracked vehicle. What does, though is its combination of increased power, a high-speed gear ratio, a center of balance that's just about even fore and aft with two riders



SNOW EAGLE WEIGHS 465 POUNDS fueled (fiberglass gas tank holds seven gallons), has integral cooling fan, pull starter. Production models will offer optional electric starters, may be longer for extra seating room

aboard, and this ATV's habit of keeping both tracks firmly planted, rather than planing or nosing into drifts, as some snow buggies will do.

Add, too, her relatively high eight inches of ground clearance fitted with a fiberglass belly pan (one of three major bolt-together body members), and she'll ride over snags and snowy outcrops which would sap the speed of other snow-and-go vehicles.

In many respects, "Snow Eagle" seems a misnomer. It's much more than a snow machine, and one that you don't have to put away in the spring. What you get is two, even three or four vehicles in one—ATV, dunebuggy, trail-goer, you name it. Why its makers tagged it with a winter-oriented moniker is puzzling. And as for the "600" part of the name, that's apparently a holdover from its prototype days when it was powered