smooth riding, stable bike. It climbs like a Dahl Sheep with hardly ever a loss of traction even when standing. In fact, the bike eats up out-of-the-saddle climbing. The 69 degree head and 2 inch rake gives it the smoothness required for fast riding over rough ground while the short wheelbase makes it nimbler than a rabbit chasing fox. It's a bike that encourages speed.

Aluminum seems smoother than steel and according to engineers, it should be. Whether it is in fact smoother we'll leave to the scientists to decide. Of the aluminum bikes we've ridden, the Klein is the smoothest. The oversized tubing provides plenty of stiffness required for efficient energy transferral but the ride isn't what we expect from a super stiff frame. It's light and lively, almost springy. Jump on the pedals and the Mountain Klein takes off like a road bike.

Three days after receiving the bike, we were in Durango for the Iron Horse Classic mountain bike race, a perfect opportunity for testing it. The course was a combination of a sustained climb up a gravel, washboard road; high speed cruising on a dirt double track; steep, rocky climbs; slow technical sections; muddy creek crossings; and lots of quick transitions from flying along to sudden dips with steep but short climbs out of them. The bike was fantastic! Without it, no way would I have finished seventh in the Men's Open. Throughout the race I had to laugh



Paul Gallaher

Radial spokes as well as internally housed cables on the Mountain Klein.

because I'd be flying along, scaring the heck out of myself, then I'd realize the bike was capable of going much faster than I was willing to go. I wasn't even close to pushing the bike's performance limit. That was a great feeling. I could relax secure in the knowledge that I'd have to do something really stupid to get the bike in over its head.

The key to all this was the way the Klein fit me. Weight distribution is all important on a mountain bike. The frame size, top tube length, stem rise and length, and handlebar rise and curve fit my dimensions perfectly. It was as if the bike had been custom built for me. It wasn't but that was the effect. Had I been two inches taller or my arms shorter or my legs shorter or whatever, I might not have been quite so ecstatic over the bike. But I'm not and so for me, the bike is perfect.

The Mountain Klein continues to amaze me after a month of riding it steadily. I find myself riding through sections that previously always forced me off the bike. Or I'll stick the front wheel in a rut or hole or behind a large rock and I'll muscle it out and continue on without dabbing a foot. The bike has expanded my cycling limits and there's not much more that can be asked of a bike than that.

When the approximately $950 price tag is considered (depending upon how the bike is equipped), the Mountain Klein really stands out. For less than a thousand bucks, you can own a 25 pound, totally tricked out, aluminum racing bike! If you already have components, you can buy a frame set for about $500. With that price, Gary Klein has dramatically upped the ante in the mountain racing bike category.