

Dune buggies: rebuilding the craze

[Literature](#), [Books](#)



When the automotive industry was first founded many years ago it was all about providing transportation. People wanted a vehicle that would help them get around faster and assist them with their jobs and chores. Later, other vehicles were invented like sports cars and muscle cars where people had more fun and enjoyment driving. Some vehicles made a good impression on American automotive industry such as the "Meyers Manx", a dune buggy created by Bruce Meyers in 1964 (Webster). Bruce Meyers developed the fiberglass dune buggy called the Meyers Manx.

Bruce decided to make the Manx after seeing a "water pumper" at Pismo Beach, CA. The "water pumper" was a heavy and crude version of a dune buggy. Bruce thought that he could make a light weight version that would be great on the beach and in the world of off-road racing, specifically at the Baja. Bruce succeeded in his goal by modifying a VW Kombi bus, popularly known as "Little Red Riding Bus", which was equipped with wider rims and tires. He used his knowledge on boat building to make the body of the dune buggy using fiberglass. His first Meyers Manx design was named "old red" ("Our History").

History Bruce Meyers was born in Los Angeles, California. In 1944, he served at the Navy where he survived an attack in Okinawa. After the war, he stayed in Tahiti where he spent his time building sailboats made of fiberglass. He then moved to Newport Beach, working on surfboards and boats, and trekking to Baja, Mexico. His knowledge on fiberglass and boat building greatly helped in building his own vehicles such as the Meyers Manx. When he first saw a dune buggy, he decided to re-design it into something that would not look like an old jeep.

Additionally, his dune buggy would also be an efficient vehicle for travel (Webster). In August 1966, Hot Rod - "everybody's automotive magazine", featured Bruce's VW Beetle engine-powered dune buggy. The naked Beetle floorpan that he saw at Pismo Beach was now covered with lightweight fiberglass body. Everybody went crazy over it and words about Meyers Manx spread. His creation became popular reaching for about 6, 000 vehicles of production (Temple). Imitations According to Hot Rod's article "Return of the Manx", Meyers Manx has been the most imitated car in the automotive history.

Hundreds of companies have tried copying Meyers Manx, while others tried reshaping the fiberglass. There were over 250, 000 look a likes and near look a likes of Bruce's buggy. Despite that, the uniqueness of Bruce's dune buggy remains a trend. "When you create something with an original thought, and grace, and a sense of balance in its form and function, it's timeless," Bruce quoted on Hot Rod magazine (Temple). The imitation by various companies, both from US and Europe, caused a crash in profitability of Meyers Manx.

This opened the automotive market for other companies showcasing their buggy designs such as the Simca-based Shake buggy created by Carrozzeria Bertone. Buggy then became an influential vehicle especially in motor shows and as recreational vehicles (Hale 10). Pismo and nearby beaches has been the center for recreational activities for South Californians. People are used to drive over the sands with their jeeps. However, the usual jeeps were not as efficient as the buggy designed by Bruce Meyers. It is considerably lightweight with better tires and lighter body structure (Webster).

The influence of Meyers Manx has reached as far as Europe. This buggy which can travel even through the desert dunes is designed in such a way that even the youth would enjoy riding on it. It has been especially designed as off-road vehicle; but many were more astonished by its ability after winning the Mexican 1000. Even if it was patterned after the Beetle, Bruce Meyers did not fail in modernizing its design; not just a durable one, but also the stylish and sleek structure (Hale 8). Meyers Manx Bruce made his first vehicle for 18 long months.

He quit his job and worked full time on his Manx. It took him some time to finalize his buggy. His first Manx used a Beetle floorpan and engine, fiberglass monocoque bodies, with pedals, seats, windshields and lights components. His first Manx was sold for \$995 until the demand increased, soaring the prize as high as \$5000. However, the cost of producing one kit was expensive that's why he re-designed it into a cheaper one, as low as \$495 (Webster). Meyers did not realize that soon his business would expand until he moved to Newport Beach.

Joe Vittone, owner of EMPI - a VW company, offered a partnership with him yet he refused and made his way alone (Webster). Meyers Manx became even more popular when it was featured in famous magazines such as Hot Rod and Car and Driver. This brought a dramatic increase in the number of orders reaching over 300, but Meyers was unable to cover it all. The demand was very high that time. Meyers' inability to produce all orders opened a chance for other companies worldwide to produce their own versions of a dune buggy.

Bruce came into battle fighting with these companies over patent infringement laws, but he lost. Nevertheless, Bruce was able to produce more than 6000 kits including 5, 280 Manx, hundreds of Manx 2's, 1000 Meyer Tow'ds, 200 Manx SR's and 75 Resorters (" Our History"). Models Meyers Manx winning abilities, including 39 wins on slalom races, Pike's Peak Hill Climb, and Baja off-road races, proved the buggy's strength thus gaining more attention. Yet, Bruce never failed to improve his buggies for further expansion of his business. His second model was the Meyers Tow'd which become highly demanded.

It was equipped with evolved hood, fenders, engine cover and a soft-top weather protection. However, it did not beat the Manx even if it had smaller and lighter structure (" Our History"). Also, Bruce got into an accident after he entered a race using the Tow'd. He slammed the vehicle breaking its feet causing injuries on his left foot. He was delivered to the hospital after 22 hours of excruciating pain. It took him almost a year to recover from his injuries (Webster). Another model was produced, the Manx SR (Street Roadster). It was produced in order to halt imitators of Manx.

Just like the " old red", it has a VW floorpan. It has an aerodynamic shape intended only for street use, using 13 fiberglass and metal pieces. Manx SR sold for about 500 kits. However, there are three other companies who also produced their SRs such as the Karma Coachworks, Heartland Glassworks and Manx Motors. Next to SR was the Resorter or Turista which were first sold in Puerto Rican hotel chains, others in Acapulco and Hawaii as vehicle carrier of tourists.. The Resorter has lower sides with fours seats. The Resorter offers an easier entrance (" Our History").

Another design of buggy called Utility was produced where two were sold to the Los Angeles Country as Lifeguard buggies. The other was purchased by the California Forest Service. This buggy has a red bed for life-saving gears using a VW pancake engine (" Our History"). The last design on Meyers' series was the Kuebelwagen, which used a full length floorpan. This was a copy of the car used in World War II called German Desert Staff car. They only produced a single copy (" Our History"). By 1970, Bruce got involved in legal cases relating to tax and had losses then. Most surprisingly, the company went down in 1971 leaving Bruce with nothing.

By mid 70s to 80s, he got involved in different automotive works such as working in company producing convertibles and automobile restoration business. The Meyers Manx's craze came into existence again in 1994 after Bruce attended a dune-buggy festival in France where he is greeted enthusiastically. His sixth wife arranged a club for dune-buggy owners (Webster). In 2000, he tried his luck by producing another set of Manx which he sold for \$2000. For a month, he received 100 orders yet he is unable to adjust with the demands. In 2001 however, he made another modernized design which could accommodate four seats.

He used the same VW floorpan just like the Manx. He named it Manxter 2+2 (" Our History"). This model is an attempt to exceed the limitation of the Manx retaining its original appearance; but with modernized parts. This offers a complete seating opportunity for the whole family plus upgraded protection. Features include a removable dash cover, opening engine cover and an opening hood. Its engine has different level which is water cooled,

fuel injected and turbo-charged. The Manxter is available in both "bar bones" kit for \$5,395 and a standard kit for \$7,500 ("Our History").

Bruce Meyers felt the people's need for another stylish, off-road vehicle that's why he made another design called DualSport Manxter, with an aggressive appearance. The DualSport can use both VW engine and the water-cooled engines of the Subaru making it flexible for street and off-road use. The basic kit is sold for \$9,975 only. The Manxter and the DualSport Manxter are the latest of Bruce Meyers' which are now reviving the 60s craze for dune buggies ("Our History"). Works Cited Hale, James. The Dune Buggy Files: Past, Present, Future. 2005. November 11, 2007

amazon. com/gp/reader/1904788084/ref=sib_dp_pt/102-6951580-7892148#reader-link>. 8-12. "Our History". 2006. Meyers Manx, Inc. November 11 2007. . Temple, Steve. "Meyers Manx - Return of the Manx: The Los Angeles Bruce Meyers Launches a New Version of an Old Favorite - the Manxter." Hot Rod 2007. Webster, Larry. "The Father of the Dune Buggy Rides Again - Features". 2006. Hachette Filipacchi Media U. S. , Inc. November 11 2007. .