

I remember when...

For many years earlier, Dad had enjoyed driving a Volkswagen on the sandhills in Mahomets and Southgates, and my mother swears I came perilously close to being born on the top of a sandhill on one of the many occasions he got the tyre pressure wrong and ended up bogged.



Tracey and Sue – Mahomets – circa 1964

When Dad first heard about beach buggies he was inspired to strip an old Volkswagon down to its chassis to create his own buggy. To the chassis he added some flimsy metal panels and a wooden board over the back section, plus a few bars for passengers to hang onto. Painted dusty brown, it was not a thing of great elegance and beauty, but it was a lot of fun!



Beach buggy – circa 1967

As a family we had a wonderful time exploring all the sandhills in the Geraldton area in Dad's homemade beach buggy. Best time for this activity was in winter, after the rains had packed the sand nice and hard.

No seat belts in those days, so Dad would be in control in the driver's seat, while Mum sat in the passenger seat clutching the baby and fearing for all our lives as the rest of us children slid around on the back. We stood, or sat, on the board on the back, clinging tightly to the bars and jockeying for the best position. The family dog slid around the board between our legs and often relied on one of us to save him from rocketing over the side.

It got cold on the back of the buggy, so we soon had a standard outfit for these jaunts: woolen beanies on our heads, glasses to protect our eyes, warm pants and jumpers, and socks with our thongs! The dog of course, just took his chances, but he loved the beach buggy with a passion and often slept in it just so he wouldn't miss out on a ride.



Sue, Tom & Tracey in Beach Buggy outfits circa 1967.

It was always a great thrill to ride the beach buggy down a deserted beach, then drive up the rounded side of a sandhill, over the precipice and down the steep face of the dune. The wind whipped our hair and made our eyes stream. Knees were bent to ride the bumps, and knuckles were white as we hung on for our lives, laughing in mingled fear and delight. Out there on the beach buggy, surrounded by white sand and blue sky we really knew we were alive!



Tom Brady in the beach buggy on the side of Mount Scott circa mid-1960's.