

BY MICHAEL SOMMER

History of the

Our series of articles focusing on the early days of off-roading

During the short period of time that we've been publishing *Sand Sports* magazine, and compiling information for our series of articles on "History of the Dune Buggy," we've been very fortunate to have had the opportunity to sit down and talk face-to-face with many early pioneers who helped launch the exciting sport of off-roading. For those of you who are just joining us, the people that we've interviewed up to this point include Scott McKenzie, of Sandmaster Race Team-fame and founder of McKenzie's Off-Road Center, Roger Smith of Peppertree Automotive, who was responsible for introducing many Southern Californians to the hobby of specialty-built off-road buggies, Bruce Meyers, who was undoubtedly one of the earliest leaders in the kit car industry, having created and produced thousands of fiberglass kits up through the mid-'70s, and Gil George, founder and current owner of Funco Manufacturing. Gil George produced one of the first tubular chassis that was designed and built specifically for off-road racing nearly 30 years ago, and he is still at it today, along with his son, Grant, building their Big 5 line of multi-passenger, long travel suspension buggies for sand duning and desert exploration. These four individuals played a very valuable role in the development of our sport as we know it today. And, there are many others, too. However, we have yet to meet up with them and hear their interesting stories firsthand.

Before we do continue our series of informal interviews, though, we thought it would be a good idea to take a look at another vehicle which first arrived in the early 1960s, and was a big part of the buggy scene, having glowed in the limelight of this wonderful sport for several years. The car we're talking about is the Burro, and it was created by the



ABOVE, Chuck Andrae behind the wheel of a Burro at 1968 Borrego Desert race. LEFT, are current Burro owners, Weelo Anderson and Martin Frost. BELOW, is only photo we could locate of Hilder "Tiny" Thompson, posing with street version, and his personal Burro, too.

