

and

# STREET TIRES

WHAT'S BEST FOR YOUR BEETLE?

# SUPERNATIONAL DRAGS

OIL PUMPS—COOLERS—  
AND FILTERS FOR  
YOUR VOLKSWAGEN

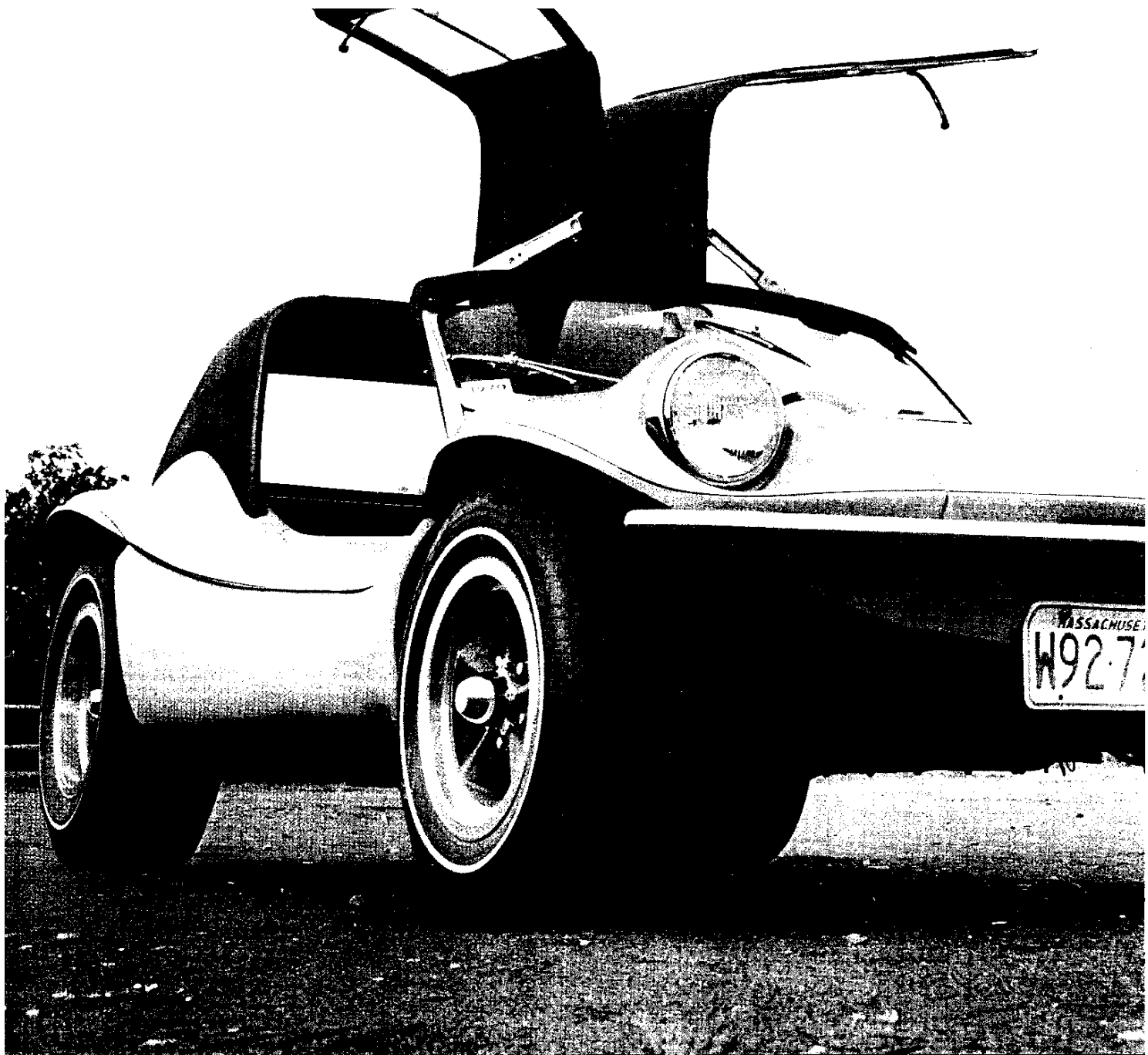
HOT VW: AUTOHAUS  
DRAGSEDAN

LOOKIN' FOR POWER?  
HOW 'BOUT A HEMI VW?  
OR A V-6 OR V-8?

A SNUG BUG FOR  
NEW ENGLAND—  
DESERTER

# GT





**A**UTODYNAMICS IS AN apt name for a company that turns out several different formula cars (F/Vees, Super Vees, F/Fords, and others), built and managed a factory-backed Dodge Challenger on the Trans-Am circuit, with Sam Posey driving, manufactures a couple of interesting dune buggies, and performs development work on many other projects, mostly involving high-performance automobiles.

Autodynamics' president is a short, chunky, and highly energetic individual,

Ray Caldwell. Ray's been involved in one form or another of automobile racing for a long time and, in 1964, he was the National Champion in Formula Vee. Now, in late 1970, he's come out from behind his drawing board and corporate desk to make another bid for that title, against drivers much younger, but not nearly as trackwise. With a couple of victories already under his seatbelt, Caldwell's driving one of his own D-10 Super Vees (DB&HVWs, Oct. '70) at the American Road Race of Champions—the SCCA's big runoff held

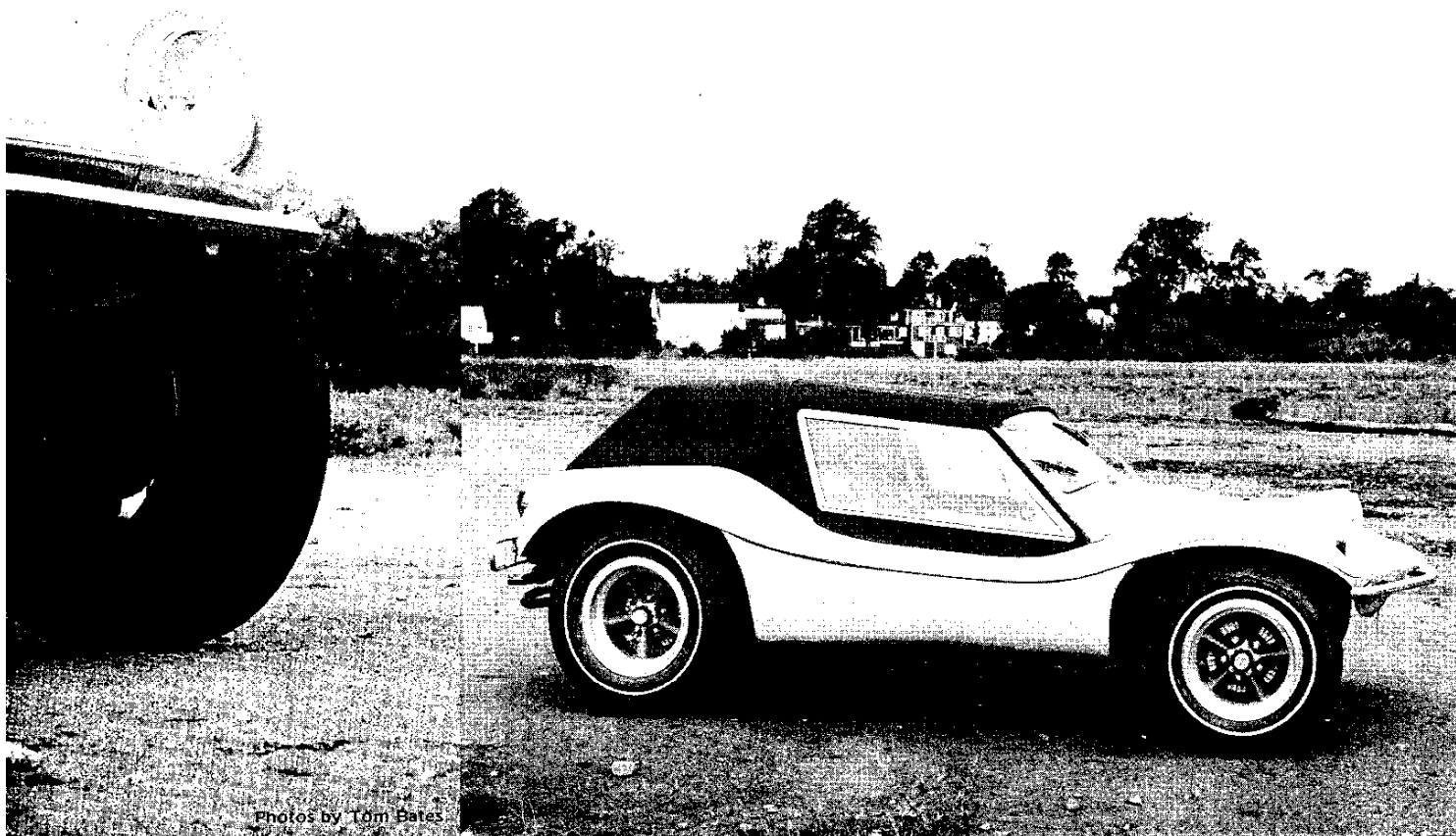
this year at a brand new track, Road Atlanta, near Gainesville, Ga. Next month, we'll let you know how Ray and his competitors did there.

But this month, we're looking at a very attractive dune buggy that comes out of Caldwell's Marblehead, Mass., shop—the Deserter G1, interesting in several ways....

A few years ago, a young sports car enthusiast and racer, Alex Dearborn, began to manufacture a buggy called the Deserter. While the styling of this car wasn't too unique, being constructed

# DESERTER GT

You'll never find a long-bodied,  
gull-winged pavement racer  
in your Audubon book, but you  
might see one flitting about the  
slaloms or blipping down the boulevard



Photos by Tom Bates

along the same basic lines as the ubiquitous Meyers Manx, albeit with alterations to allow the Deserter to meet the more rigid requirements of Eastern vehicle codes, the car did sell well, for a couple of reasons: (1) it was produced in the East, close to its main market, and (2) Dearborn gained a reputation for himself and the car by successfully racing it against bigger, more powerful, and more exotic machinery ("Underdog Strikes Back," DB&HVWs, Mar. '69). The Deserter also ran the wheels off the opposition in autocross events—sort of

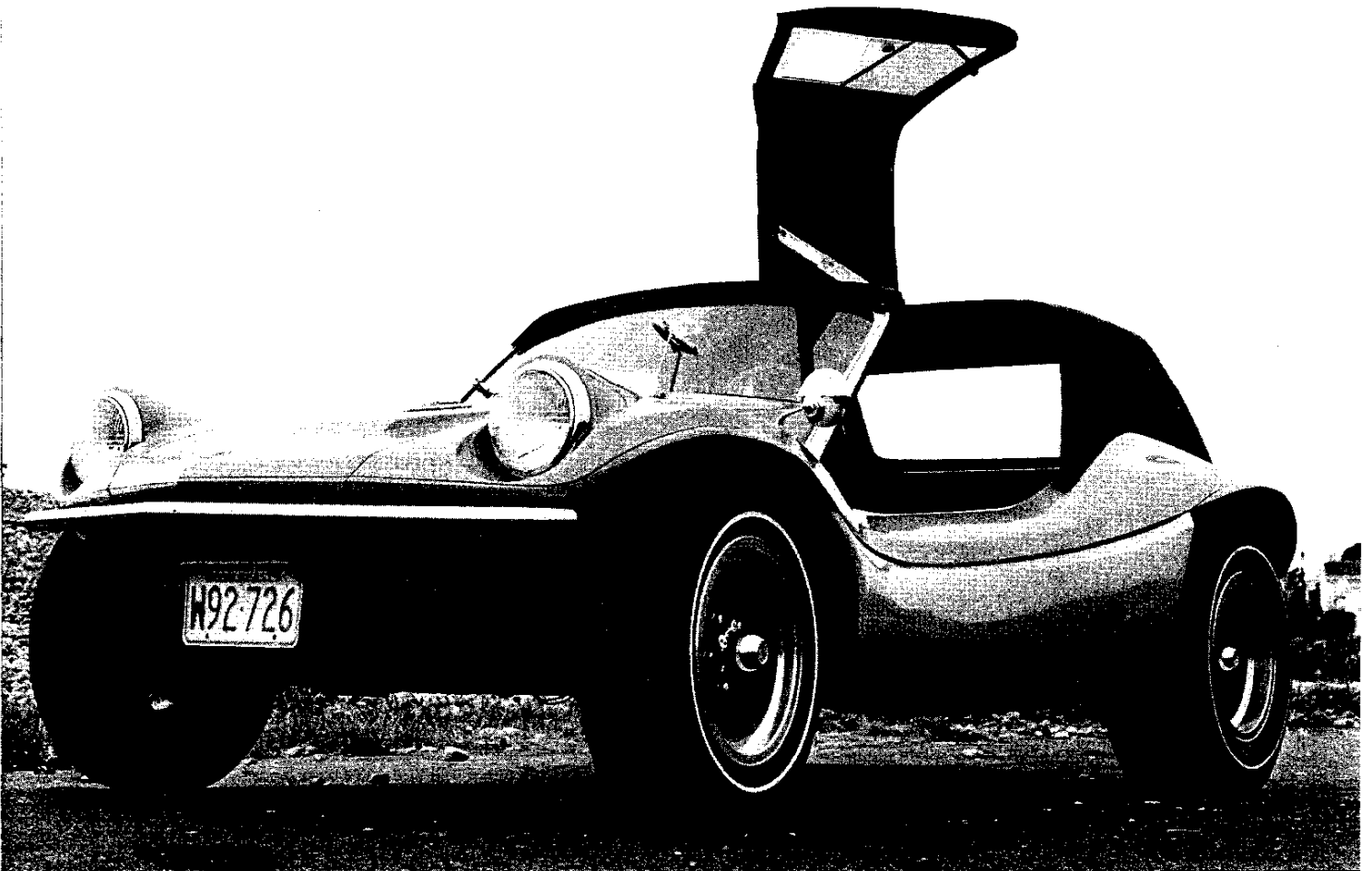
oversized slalom races. Dearborn's manufacturing facility was part of Auto-dynamics' property. At that time, he merely rented the space from Caldwell. Recently, however, he merged his Dearborn Automobile Company with Auto-dynamics, under the latter's name, and is Caldwell's marketing director.

About two years ago, Alex developed a tubular chassis to carry either a VW, Porsche, or Corvair engine, mounted amidships. He skinned this creation with his Deserter body, and dubbed it the Deserter GS (for Grand Slalom). The

tubular space frame is on an 85-in. wheelbase—1 in. longer than the shortened VW pans used in his "regular" Deserters, but the GS mid-engined version was much lighter, more rigid, and offered better weight distribution, especially for Dearborn's first love—autocrossing.

Alex became interested when Brian Dries came out with his attractive Bounty Hunter buggy (DB&HVWs, June '69). The Burbank, Calif.-built 'Hunter had extremely flared rear fenders that could house the biggest competition

# DESERTER GT



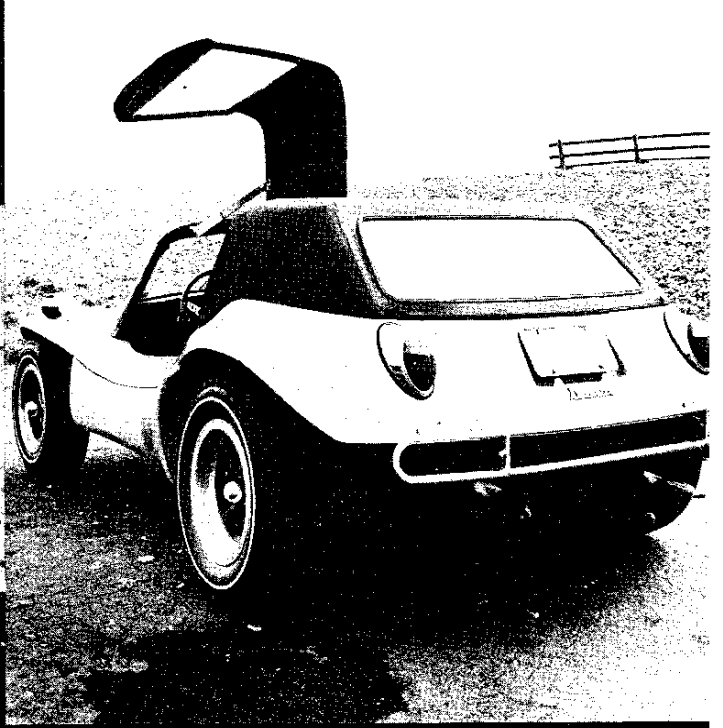
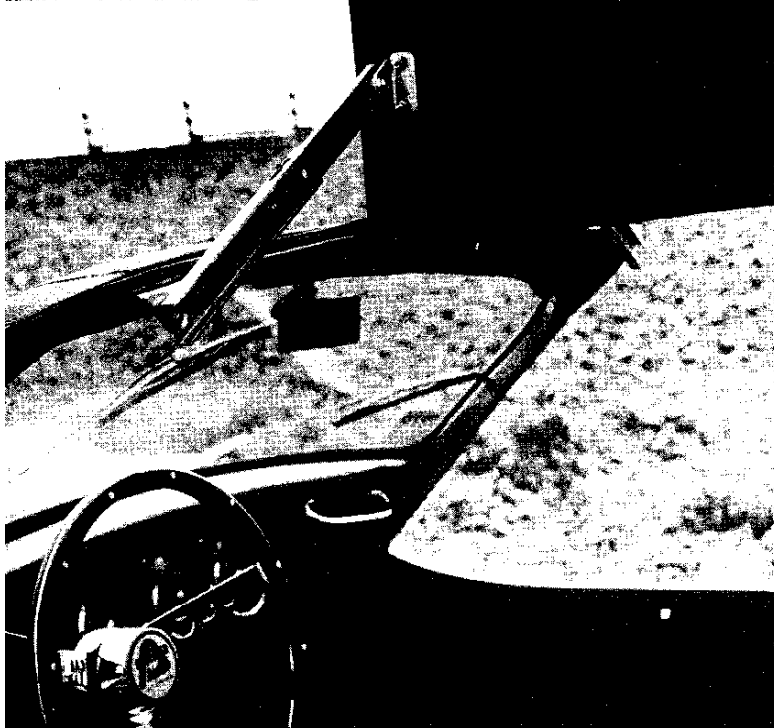
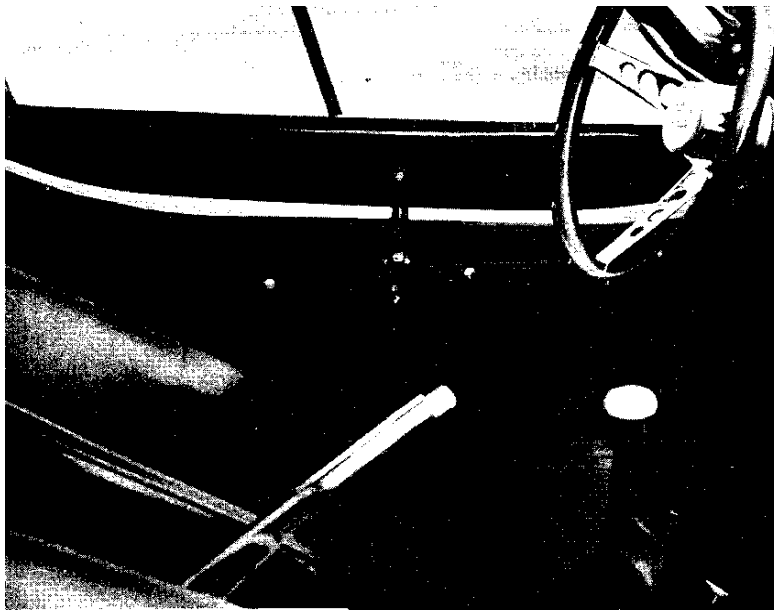
tires and wheels without being butchered up by add-on fiberglass, and the car had a low, mean, racy look to it. Right here is where Alex Dearborn set himself apart from many so-called buggy "manufacturers." Rather than simply buying one of Brian's buggy bodies, splashing a mold off it, and starting to produce counterfeit copies, Dearborn contacted the West Coast manufacturer and made arrangements to build the car, under license, for East Coast distribution. History had been made—for the first time, someone had had the integrity to make a fair deal with the original designer and

builder of a buggy, instead of just stealing his work.

The resulting East Coast car is called the Deserter GT and, as Dearborn points out, still bears a resemblance to the Bounty Hunter. But a second look discloses that the car has four more inches in the wheelbase, and is 6 in. longer overall than the 'Hunter. Alex tells us that he had to change almost every dimension on the original car somewhat, to employ his own manufacturing techniques or to work with the longer wheelbase, which he believes is more desirable for handling qualities

needed in autocross competition.

The Deserter GT is on an 84-in. wheelbase, and uses the usual, shortened Volkswagen chassis. As can be seen from the accompanying photographs, the car offers full coverage for wheels and engine, keeping the vehicle registration people happy. Curved glass, from an easily found foreign car that Alex would rather not identify at this time, is used in the windshield, which is raked more sharply than on most buggies, and lends that low, mean look to the car. Full side panels help to give the car a completed look. A leather-grained, fi-



berglass, gull-winged hardtop is one of several optional items for the Deserter GT, and is one that we heartily recommend for those buggistas living in areas with inclement weather. The buggy we drove on a brisk Fall day was fitted with one, and it was quite snug inside with the doors and sliding windows closed. The top's doors are hinged at the center, and use trunk hardware for support struts—push the door up, and it clicks into a locked-up position. Lift it slightly and it unlocks, swinging smoothly down against the top edge of the fender line, where a retainer holds it tightly.

These doors are well-designed, and the lime yellow buggy that we drove gave us a surprise, as we discovered that the doors would stay in the “up” position while driving the buggy down the highway at speeds in excess of 70 mph, and could be lowered by the driver while still moving at those speeds. Dearborn also incorporated a detaching feature in each door's hinges, and they're secured by pins—to remove the door completely, merely slide it out of the hinge mechanism and pop loose the attached support strut.

As is the case with most of the

buggies being manufactured today, the Deserter is primarily a street machine. It does have off-road capability, but it's not likely to be used as a brush-popper, especially when the side panels are installed. But the Deserter GT is a smart-looking boulevard buggy, and with the right powerplant installed it can be quite competitive in slaloms, autocrosses, and road racing. Add the GS space frame, a good Porsche, big-inch VW, or Corvair windmill, and you'll have a pretty hot little machine that'll catch eyes, create conversation, and destroy egos. ●