

There's No Sand But Buggies Big

If you happen to see a little old lady riding down a Wheeling street in a chartreuse dune buggy don't be surprised.

In fact, one little old lady even assembled a buggy herself.

Dune buggies are as easy to assemble as a model railroad setup, according to Rick Murphy, part owner of "Sandpounders," a Wheeling firm that sells dune buggy kits. "Two people could do it in a weekend if they wanted to," Murphy said.

Dune buggies, cars that were originally designed to run on sand, are used mostly as fun cars or a second family car in this area, Murphy said.

When used on the street, dune buggies can drive long distances and accelerate up to 70 miles per hour just like any other car, he added.

Because of a lack of sand and beaches in this area, Murphy said, the dune buggy is not a profitable car to buy for beach use in the Northwest suburbs. However, there are organized off-road racing competitions near Rockford and meets sponsored by car clubs.

THE DUNE BUGGY market in this area is extensive, even without beaches Murphy said. "They're good for the homeowner who runs out of things to do at home and feels he should do something creative," he added.

"Dune buggies are becoming more popular because people are becoming oriented as to what a dune buggy is and

what it can do," the Sandpounders owner said.

Murphy explained that a person who wants to build a dune buggy must first own a Volkswagen. "They bring the Volkswagen into our shop and we show them how to take it apart," he said. The builder then buys the dune buggy kit and attaches the parts to the Volkswagen chassis, Murphy said.

A Volkswagen is used, he said, because they can be easily shortened and changed.

SANDPOUNDERS, 516 N. Milwaukee Ave., stocks kits with which to construct a dune buggy. One kit includes only the hood, body and dashboard. Another kit includes the first kit's equipment plus the windshield, headlights and basic hardware. The Super Kit which sells for about \$800, contains the complete body, preassembled and wired and ready to set on the Volkswagen chassis.

"A dune buggy is one of the most practical things you can buy," Murphy said. He explained that maintenance is very low, the metallic color is part of the body and cannot be easily scratched or chipped and because of their light weight they very seldom need new tires.

The 2½-year-old Sandpounders sells about three kits a week to persons in this area. Murphy said he believes "it'll come around" to being a multi-million dollar industry like it is in the West.

