

SWAMP BUGGIES.....

THEN AND NOW



**COLLIER COUNTY MUSEUM
OCTOBER 10-18, 1998**

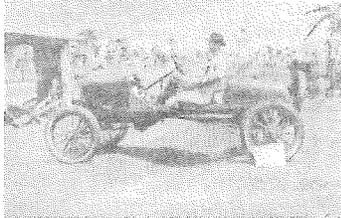


**Presented by the
Friends of the Collier County Museum
And
Swamp Buggy Inc.**

SWAMP BUGGY

Local historians credit a Naples resident, Ed Frank, as the inventor of the first swamp buggy. He developed his original vehicle in 1918-1919 for hunting in the Big Cypress Swamp using parts from a Model T Ford and a bucket seat from a World War I airplane.

As time went on, Frank perfected his design, adding an extra transmission and seven



forward speeds, dual rear wheels, tire chains and upside down axles to give more clearance for driving over tree stumps. His brother-in-law, George Espenlaub, came up with the idea of covering the buggies tires with another set of cut-out tires to increase the width of the wheels for greater traction.

Swamp buggies grew in popularity in Collier County after World War II, when huge airplane and tractor tires become readily available.

ON EXHIBIT

1. FLYING SAUCER

This buggy was built by Robert L. Walter in 1951/52 specifically for racing. R.L. Walker was the Swamp Buggy King in 1952 and 1953 and rode *FLYING SAUCER* with Sam Snell in the Swamp Buggy Parades of 1952, 1953 and 1954.

The *FLYING SAUCER* also appeared in the National Parade of the American Legion in Sarasota as well as the Edison Pageant of Light Parade in Fort Myers.

In 1974, singers Robert Goulet and Carol Lawrence rode the *FLYING SAUCER* in a Miami parade televised on the Mike Douglas Show.

2. POGO



POGO is named for the little opossum popularized in the comic strip drawn by Walt Kelly. It was built in 1953 by Captain Ernie Carroll and is owned today by two of his grandsons, Ray and Mark Carroll.

POGO is typical of the light, two-wheel drive buggies that were designed to carry two people and their hunting gear across the swamps and marl prairies of the Fakahatchee Strand before four-wheel drive vehicles were generally available.

This buggy has been in continuous operation since 1953 and still retains the same dimensions and appearance of the original buggy built 45 years ago.

3. GOBBLER

This woods buggy was built for hunting by J. Arthur Stewart in 1953. The Jeep transmission and running gear are mounted on a 1949 Ford station wagon frame and was originally fitted with airplane tires mounted on 17-inch rims.

GOBBLER was raced during the 1950s and was used by Stewart until his death in 1992.

4. DIXIE CAR POOL



This example of a woods buggy was built in 1955 by Bill Parker and rebuilt and given a name in 1991 by its current owner, Kim Griffin. Like most buggies, it contains pieces and parts from a variety of vehicles including a Ford Model A and 1946 Jeep.

DIXIE CAR POOL won second place in the Antique Buggy Race held in Everglades City on December 6, 1997.

5. MUDDY BUDDY



The *MUDDY BUDDY* was built in 1967 from a 1959 Metropolitan car and Jeep running gear. For years, it was filled with airplane tires and chains for travel over rough terrain.

The buggy is owned and operated by Burgin Rhodamer who drove it to a first place win in 1983 at the Old Timers Race at the Swamp Buggy grounds.

6. SECRET WEAPON

The *SECRET WEAPON* was built by Rick Johnson from a 1982 Jeep Scrambler.

The buggy is owned by Rick and Peggy Johnson and has been raced for the past year. *SECRET WEAPON* is the current Jeep Class Champion.

7. SHOWDOWN

SHOWDOWN was designed and built as a racing buggy by Albert and Jimmy Doria. The brothers have been involved in racing since the late 1980s and have helped developed the sport with their creativity and craftsmanship.

This two-wheel drive buggy is 26 feet in length and weighs approximately 4,000 pounds.

This monster of Naples' "mile -o-mud" boasts a 750 horsepower, 454 Chevrolet big block engine built by Rehr Morisson Motors in Dallas, Texas.

8. OUTLAW

The *OUTLAW* was built in 1994 by Lonnie Chesser. The 24-foot racing buggy weighs less than 4,000 pounds and has set new standards for buggy racing, reaching speeds of up to 95 miles per hour.

The Chesser family has been active in swamp buggy racing since 1969.

Eddie Chesser began driving the *OUTLAW* in 1992 and has won three consecutive Budweiser Cup World Championships.

9. AQUARIUS III

This racing buggy was custom designed and built by John and Michael Fillmore in 1995. The Fillmore family has been active in swamp buggy racing in Naples for the past 25 years.

AQUARIUS III is powered by an 860 horsepower, V8 Chevrolet big block engine and holds the current track record for the fastest buggy (51.96 seconds).

The *AQUARIUS III* racing team includes Michael, Glenn and Randy Fillmore, Skip Kent, Brett Jamison and Rick Dominic.

10. LADYBUG

LADYBUG was built in 1996 by a Naples husband and wife racing team, Steve and Tricia Turner, to compete in the Four Cylinder/Two Wheel Class. The racing buggy is 20 feet long and weighs 2,500 pounds. The name *LADYBUG* was inspired by Tricia's daughter whose nickname was "Katiebug."

The Turner family's association with swamp buggy racing dates back to Eddie Turner, who has been racing for the past 27 years.

LADYBUG is driven by Tricia Turner and has appeared in parades, exhibitions and grand openings. Tricia and her swamp buggy have received first place in Class Trophies, and the Little Feature Trophy. Her biggest driving accomplishment to date came during the May 1997 race when she beat the swamp buggy *SEMINOLE WIN*. Tricia currently has seven members of her family in the sport, either building or driving swamp buggies.

11. L MEAN YO

This racing buggy was built in 1998 by Lonnie Chesser, Pete Weeks, Darrell Taylor, Chad Ward, Brian Goodwin and Greg Cole. It was raced for the first time in March 1998.

L MEAN YO is powered by a 550 horsepower, 6-cylinder Ford engine and is currently owned and driven by Pete Weeks.

The buggy was to be originally named *L NINO YO*, but sounded so "mean" during its test drive that it was named *L MEAN YO* instead.

A BRIEF HISTORY

OF BUGGY RACING

Naples can lay claim as the birthplace of one of the most unusual sports in motor racing history – the swamp buggy race.

The first swamp buggies, mud buggies, hunting wagons and woods buggies were developed before World War II and were used for everything from Sunday afternoon family outings to hunting expeditions into the Big Cypress Swamp and the Everglades.

Early County settlers gathered each year, just prior to the opening of the hunting season in late October or early November, to fine tune, test and waterproof their buggies and to swap parts and building tips with their neighbors.

Around 1943, these gatherings evolved into informal races as owners challenged one another to a buggy race through the local mud course. Naples embraced the unusual new sport and on November 12, 1949 hosted the first official Swamp Buggy Day Parade and Celebration.

The sport grew in popularity during the mid-1950s and was featured on ABC's Wide World of Sports. Cash prizes also began to replace the turkeys and shotguns offered to winners in the past and today, drivers compete for thousands of dollars at every race, cheered on by thousands of appreciative fans as they challenge the world famous "Sippy hole."

Today, racing takes place at the Florida Sports Park (Route 951 at Rattlesnake-Hammock Road) every March, May and October. The next races are Oct. 23, 6 p.m., and noon on Oct. 24 and 25.

\$2 OFF COUPON

Present this coupon at the races
and get \$2.00 off the price of
a child's admission.

Good any day of the October 1998 races.