



In 1939, Berlin would not exactly have been the first choice of City on either your travel itinerary or your real-estate portfolio. Somehow, dodging bombs and bullets has the uncanny effect of making people run away. However, John Sherman, founder of Volks Conversions, had little choice. Born in Budapest Hungary, John was completing his schooling in Berlin during the war, at a place called Regensburg and he has vivid memories of running for bomb shelters or any other haven during the Berlin blitz by the allies. So it's little surprise to learn that as soon as peace was declared, John, his mother and father, brother and sister left Europe via Italy and in 1949 they migrated to Australia from Naples when John was 10 years old.

During the war years, very few in Germany saw much of the Beetle, as its production lines were high jacked to feed the war machine. So John's first choice of car was a 1956 Beetle, probably had little to do with any influence from wartime Germany. In fact it was the famous REDEX trials in Australia that drew his attention to the Volkswagen, with the little Beetle often beating larger capacity cars. However, the REDEX beetles and John's own car, both suffered from rear wheel tuck-in, with the REDEX drivers often meeting disastrous ends. For John it was more an issue of pride, rather than safety, which annoyed him most about this Beetle flaw, as his brother in a Ford Prefect would always almost beat him around corners.

John studied the Prefect and found the car came standard with a 'Camber Compensator'. Knowing it was something the Beetle's handling would benefit from, he enlisted the help of Donaldson's Spring Works in Brisbane and made one for his Beetle. It worked and not only could he now beat his brother, but he also managed to sell a couple to his mates. These were the early beginnings of John's passion with making the Volkswagen car even better.

The car....



And yes, a young John!



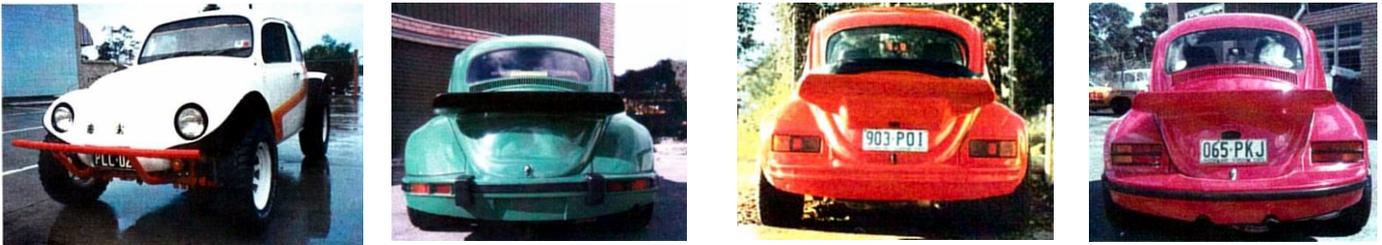
Not content with the improved handling, in 1960 John obtained a genuine Okrasa Twin Port setup for his 1200cc Beetle, which consisted of the Twin Port Heads, Porsche Carbies and Forged Crankshaft. Although this kits cost John almost two thirds the price of a new Beetle he could now beat the Renaults, Fiats and Minis, until of course, the Cooper S came along. John still has this formidable performance package and intends to use it again one day in the right vehicle.

His skill in tinkering with VW's then turned to Buggies in 1966, John began building Beach Buggies, mostly for family and friends. They were loosely based on the American Styled Baja Bug Kit, except John developed and manufactured a whole new fibreglass nose cone which spread the headlights apart 2ft centre to centre, allowing the Buggies to



meet the roadworthiness requirements of Queensland Transport. Then, in 1968, John designed Front Disc Brake conversions for early Beetles, mainly in response to the increased horse power that people were putting into the rear of their Beetles and Buggies. He eventually designed rear disc brakes as well and he incorporated callipers from Fiats and Renaults, which already had disc brakes fitted as standard. Little by little, John was extending his range of aftermarket improvements.

However, just as things were moving along nicely, John became distracted by the rotary engine and began tinkering with a new 1970 Mazda Capella RX2 sedan, which he raced at circuit and drag events. The car was "Unreal" (quoted John) as it slaughtered everything else on the track at the time and in its standard guise. This led John to think about installing the RX2 engine into a Beetle. This necessitated an adaptor plate for the VW gearbox without altering the body and engine panels and consequently led John to begin to apply his knowledge to the other adaptors.



Between 1970 and 1973, John drove cabs to make ends meet, while during his spare time, he developed and improved his adaptors. Then in 1973, John began his business Volks Conversions at Southport on the Gold Coast, eventually moving to Labrador where the business is today. Now John could devote 100% of his efforts to making and selling adaptors and disc brake conversion kits.

John's discs are made from his own castings, NOT redrilled discs from other cars. John has refined his production today so that each disc conversion sold fits like it was made for the car. John is also the designer of the Carrera Kits, which he began making in 1976. These bolt on fibreglass kits were quite popular during the eighties and there are still some fine examples around today. John would like to point out that it is incorrect to identify his kits by the rectangular taillights alone. John grafted quite a few different taillights into the rear fenders, including those from Torana and Hella and then later putting them directly into the bumpers.

Since 1980, John's most popular conversion by far is the Subaru motor into Beetles and Kombis. Time spent getting the adaptor plates correct for each conversion means trouble free installation and precise fit with Volks Conversions offering over 120 different engine adaptor kits. He also has rear disc brake conversions for Trikes, an increasingly popular recreational vehicle. Not that John is now sitting on his laurels, he is still playing, hoping to one day stretch a Kombi T3 Twin cab Ute and have it driving four wheels constantly at the rear twin axles, powered by a Subaru SVX 3.3 quad cam motor and an auto gearbox. Knowing John, keep a look out for such a beastie in the not too distant future. Its sure to be a perfect Volks Conversion.

