



Greg pulls up in a new Chevy Silverado, comes to a stop, pops open the door of his truck and gives me a hearty handshake. I close the door behind me and off we go to one of Fireman's assembly areas. Greg hires a couple of guys to assemble his bikes, and while some guys work out of a small storage area, others put the bikes together at their homes.

While this may seem to be a very low-tech solution, the advantage is that it allows his "employees" to develop a special bond and allows the work to remain fun.

"When you buy a bike from us," said Toby Russell, "you get a lot of friends too, whether you want them or not!"

Greg Mundy started Fireman's Texas Cruizers in 1998 partly due to the relative scarcity of older 1980s BMX cruisers on the market, and for an excuse to hang out with his buddies and down a couple of brews. Greg and his friends had participated in the now-annual 100-mile cruiser pilgrimage to the Spoetzel Brewery (maker of Shiner Bock) in Shiner Texas, but as the ride's popularity grew, so did Greg's desire to produce modern BMX cruisers.

For the uninitiated, cruisers are BMX bikes with 24" or 26" wheels (rather than the standard 20"). Greg explains: "A BMX cruiser is modeled after '80s era BMX racing bikes. It has similar geometry to a beach cruiser but it has a more aggressive feel, with BMX-style bars and more durable parts."

Greg originally wanted to meld two different bikes together, the classic SE Racing OM Flyer and the Mongoose Kos Cruiser, and see what would happen. "These were classic examples of '80s era 26" BMX bikes which were fairly rare and not that easy to come by, especially before eBay," said Greg.

"The OM was a shorter, more aggressive bike, while the Kos was taller and more for cruising. The original Fireman's frames were designed to be right in between the two, but moved more towards the OM when we redesigned them in 1999. Also, we shortened the rear end, which was not typical of the OM and Kos."



While Greg raced some Cruiser class BMX races in the '90s, he said that it wasn't anything official and was just for fun. "I like cruisers due to the comfortable feel and cool, simplistic look and functionality of the bikes."

Greg contacted a local welder in east Austin who produced a working prototype. Although the frame was good enough for testing purposes, the overall construction was deemed to be too crude to be considered a finished product.

In order to keep up with demand, Greg contacted a welder in Florida who produced the next two production runs of frames. Unhappy with the original Florida-made frames, Greg decided to contact SE Racing directly to see if they would be willing to help out. The answer was yes, and for a brief period of time, the Fireman's bikes were being built at the SE factory. When SE was sold to Advanced Sports, Inc., longtime SE welder, Sal Correa, decided to strike out on his own and Sal has been welding Greg's frames ever since.

"Sal's a great guy, a real straight shooter. I'm really happy to be working with him," said Greg. "He also repairs frames and can do custom jobs."

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Sal welded a new version of the frame with some subtle refinements thrown in, which pushed the design closer to the OM Flyer than the Kos Cruiser. Greg was happy and was ready to roll with his new company.

Currently, Fireman's offers three sizes of bikes that all have a similar look, geometry and design. "We offer three sizes, 24", 26" and 29". This sizing refers to the wheel sizes and we do not offer different height frames as they do with mountain bikes—one size fits all," says Mundy.

I start taking pictures around the work area and Greg announces that he needs to run some errands and will be right back. The sun begins to sink and the wind starts to pick up. Toby lets me ride his personal 29" cruiser around the parking area, and as I do so, I am immediately struck by the solid feel of his rig and begin to think how much of a blast it is to ride with its low-rise mountain bike bars and slicks.

Somehow I flash back to Steve Bauer's notorious Eddy Merckx "chopper" that he used in the 1993 Paris-Roubaix during his final days riding as a pro. Maybe it was the combination of the long chainstays and the ultra-slack seat tube, but whatever it was, it was a blast to ride.

Greg shows up with the back of his truck loaded with Christmas paraphernalia and a cooler filled with beer. Greg pops open a bottle for himself and tosses one to Toby, then suggests we all go for a ride before it gets too