

# Skydiving News

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*Looking death in the face is a sobering experience. Not many live to /earn from it.*

## THE DAY THE WORLD ALMOST CAME TO AN END

Landrover, vehicle number KA11802U, was a fine vehicle until one day it decided to take a dive over a 50 foot bridge on the Mombasa Nairobi road. In a split second it appeared to have become 'RIP80 to YOU' - certainly to us, but it did resurrect itself. We never took to it after that. ♠

*Right: two views of Lazarus KAH802U after its successful resurrection.*

*We liked the beast. It almost killed us but it also saved our lives and for that reason we have a peculiar attachment to it.*

*Anyway, it has now served its purpose and as we've planned to move on to park our carcasses at some other parking lot after July '89, Lazarus is now redundant and must be sold off to highest bidder.*



KAH802U  
Recently R1P802U  
Now just plain  
Lazarus802

### Summer in the UK

The O'Tooles spent only 3 weeks at home in England and came rushing back to Kenya early, so as to enjoy the beautiful countryside. "We had plans to visit most of the safari parks and perhaps visit Lake Victoria and the Serengetti in Tanzania. Our friend Joan Cauldwell was visiting us from London in a couple of weeks and she would travel with us. Mary drove." Explained Dr. O'Toole. "I sat in the passenger seat studying maps and planning our next journey. I did not even have my seat belt on until one hour out of Nairobi. It was to be our first visit to Watamu Bay, near Malindi along the coast about 70 miles north of Mombasa. We very much looked forward to the this holiday, having returned from a visit to the UK early in order to explore Kenya. ♠

### ONE FINE DAY ON THE ROAD to

#### ..... Almost Death

**We managed to leave Nairobi by ten in the morning, missing the rush hour traffic. We knew the road fairly well, having travelled it several times on our way to the coast. Only the potholes had become bigger and the edges**

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Editor Miss Muthone Maziwa talks to the O'Tooles after their near brush with death on the road to Mombasa last week. Dr. O'Toole tells their story.

## When the Chips are Down

“As we went over the side everything suddenly went black. I could have died at that moment and I would not have known. I must have closed my eyes and they remained stuck in that position. I groped about for Mary. I felt her floating somewhere near me. "Are you alright?" I asked. "Yes, are you." "Yes". By now my eyes were open and I could see liquid raining down on us. It was sump oil from the engine and acid from the battery which was under the seats. Mary said "Let's get out quickly, it will explode." Memories of old movie scripts, no doubt! Mary switched off the engine. I remembered it was diesel and would not explode. A physics teacher up side down under a bridge has his moment of glory. “Diesel does not explode”, I assured her. I felt so relieved that both of us were still alive. Everything else melted into insignificance. We were both alive and grateful!”

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more frayed. The other drivers had not changed much - survival of the fittest, might was right and the bigger the vehicle the less notice it felt it had to take of other travelers. Mary drove very carefully. About 2 hours out of Nairobi, there was nothing she could do when a big truck drove her off the

tarmac. In such situations the trick is to keep driving in a straight line until one can stop but all of a sudden a bridge loomed up and she had to swerve back on quickly.

“Landrover went out of control. It took off across the bridge with a mind of its own. Somehow Mary managed to prevent it going over the deepest part (150 feet fall). Then it swerved to the other side. Again Mary steered it away from the abyss. There were no railings on the bridge as countless others had traveled this path before us and probably suffered same fate as us. Just as the vehicle was exiting the bridge it started to keel over, much of its momentum spent by then. The end pole, part of what used to be the iron railing, speared the front grille of the Landrover, killing any remaining momentum and the vehicle, gently and in slow motion, was levered over the side of the bridge, peeling off the remaining railing from the concrete as it went, and gently landing on its roof

50 feet below the bridge with us hanging upside-down from our seat belts. But were still alive, albeit very shaken. *(cont. on page 4 col. 1)*

**George, a young Maasai, who was tending cows nearby, protected Mrs. O’Toole till help arrived.**



*By now we should have reached our dream desert island near Mombasa. Instead we were stuck upside-down under a bridge - but lucky to be alive.*

### UNDER A BRIDGE & ON DISPLAY

We were aware that spectators were looking down on us from the bridge. We were upside-down. I tried all the doors but all were wedged in or bent. Helped Mary put on her shoes (she drives bare footed). ‘There is no hurry now Mary, take your time. We are both ok and the car will not explode. Get shod.’ I was able to kick out the windscreen, which was shattered anyway. As Mary stood outside amid the thorns and shrubs in the semi darkness, I handed her some of the things I could see scattered about me - passport, bum bags, spectacles, binoculars, etc. I squeezed out after Mary - just barely because the roof had squashed in a bit - and we made our way up the bank to the bridge. A van

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driver pulled up among all the others to gawk over the bridge. "Anybody else?". "No". "Mungu, but you are lucky." We both knew it. He seemed a nice guy. "I was never in an accident before. What does one do next?". "Report it to the

police. I'll give you a lift to the nearest town. But first appoint a guard or you'll have nothing left when you return." He called one Maasai herdsman who happened to be herding cattle at the foot of the bridge and arranged with him to guard the vehicle and Mary while I was away. I told Mary nothing but that the Maasai would protect her until I returned. As it turned out it was to be 2 hours before I got back. In the meantime Mary had copped on that several people had come to rob the vehicle and her too but that Maasai protected her. (cont. p 2)



*Mrs O'Toole, with friends, visiting a slum area near Nairobi airport. Having their credentials minutely examined and discussed by the locals.*



The O'Tooles camping at Lake Naivasha with the Suzuki, Lazarus's worthy successor. Mrs O'Toole striking camp. She practised and was soon able to put up a tent in 20 minutes. It was here they met the angry water buffalo.

Like many of the teachers at Peponi, the O'Tooles regularly go camping every weekend. That's why you see Mr. O'Toole rushing out of the staff-room early on Friday afternoons. One weekend a hippo grazed around their tent and kept them awake all night. Another time monkeys stole all their food, (running up a tree with it) and they had to come home early.

## HERE BE PIRHANA...

lying in wait

**THE easiest part of dealing with a road accident in Kenya is crawling out alive from the vehicle.**

**After that come the rubber necks, the robbers and, finally, the police. Each and all have a vested interest – not in your personal wellbeing, of course.**

*(Continued from page 2, col. 2)*

Mary had instinctively switched off the roaring engine just as we were showered upon from on high. Later we found the showers to be sump oil and acid from the battery stored under our seats. Tried all doors but could not open any so kicked out the windscreen. Fumbled about and found Mary's shoes, which she put on before crawling out amid the thorns. By now several passing vehicles had stopped on the narrow bridge to watch the spectacle. Nobody made a move to help. Some probably felt cheated of good 'pickings' as they saw us looking uninjured.♣

## HOW ARE YOU? GIVE ME SHILLING!

First greeting school children learn



*(continued from page 3, col. 2)*

After half an hour's driving we reached the police road block They were in no hurry to help. They had no petrol. Eventually two of them commandeered a passing motorist to take us to the scene of the accident. I also asked them to direct me to a tow truck.

They meticulously measured the bridge

"You were speeding, sir."

"No. We weren't speeding."

They enquired if the vehicle was a company car and how it was insured.

"If we don't give you a good report, or if we say you were speeding, the insurance will not pay you money."

"Not true. You write what you like but I'll get my money whether or which."

This was their first attempt at soliciting a bribe but it did not work.

The next attempt was to keep us at the scene all day and tempt me to give a bribe rather than hang around.

"Come back tomorrow sir, and we will fill in the forms "

Which is what we did in the end. A kind traveller gave us a lift to Nairobi 200 miles away. I had not realised it until the driver pointed it out to me - my clothes were falling off me. He made us open our bag, which already had a big hole in it. The acid from the battery had burnt everything.

"Just dump them" he said, "they'll all disintegrate in a matter of hours".

And so they all did, including what I was wearing. Strange that our skin had not burnt. After a hot shower and a

fitful sleep, we were up at six and set out for Mombasa again. By the time we reached Makindu and the wreck of Kah802U we counted 12 accidents.

Today we hoped we were careful not add to the statistics.♣



**The sea at Mombasa – what our teachers head for when school vacation arrives.**

## SCOOP.....

**Road accident on way to Mombassa - Peponi teacher almost killed.**

Muthoni Maziwa, editor of Skydiving News, interviews teacher.

FREE LESSONS EVERY THURSDAY EVENING AT PEPONI SCHOOL

TEACHING YOUR GRANNY HOW TO SUCK EGGS.

**Lazarus , KAH802U, is at present in car hospital. It is in need of a skin graft and a very serious face-lift. Mr. O'Toole is not sure when, if ever, Lazarus will be on the road again but in the meantime he has a Suzuki to bring him to school in the mornings and also to allow the family continue to camp at the weekends.**

**Next time the O'Tooles travel to Mombasa, they'll take particular care passing the bridge at Makindu. They were lucky it was not the rainy season or they might have drowned or been eaten by crocodiles and we'd then be seeking a new physics teacher.**