

5th February 1985

TO:- ANNIE BRADSHAW - EOK

FROM:- WARREN BURTON - HOT SEAT EOL

Hi Annie (the Coach Captaine)

I guess this little jaunt only serves to confirm your commitment to driving trucks.

I gather you had still hoped to catch the 2nd week of that skiing holiday which obviously was completely hashed up by pig-headed A.A. officials in Delhi. I especially take note of your comments in your letter of 26/12/84 - re your request to return home to New Zealand for a holiday. With our deployment needs in mind, may I make a few suggestions for you to consider.

1. Between 1st March and 5th April we have 5 trucks departing from Katmandu, one of which is yours and obviously I'd like to see you behind the wheel.

SVC will do 1st March as there are 26 E.M.'s booked - one of the trucks on 15th will do the complete GOE departure so obviously has to be sound and in top notch condition.

2. To be quite honest, we feel you are best equipped to do the GOE - however, that does not mean all the way or if it was, then not all the way alone. But if you are in need of the break you suggest, then obviously between now and 15th March is not sufficient time to do any more than lose yourself in Nepal or India for a while. However, between now and the end of March would give you a reasonable break in N.Z. still leaving you available for 5th April Kat/Lon.
3. As you probably know, Charlie is back here for a while and will probably return to Kathmandu to do one of the 15th March departures. We will still need to replace Nick Wheeler (who incidentally returned to London last week).

So what to do, Mam-Sahb?

My suggestion is that you consider at least the GOE through to Nairobi, if not London - by which time you will have accumulated quite a number of accrued days for a long break in N.Z.. If not, then certainly consider a break now and return for 5th April ex Kathmandu. We could maybe assist in getting AD75 tickets on the Bangkok-Sydney-Bangkok sectors of flights to and from N.Z.

Problem is I need to know your views on all this very soon so I can at least sort out some deployment.

Cheers -

Senti

4th March 1985

TO:- Annie Bradshaw and Nic Robinson - EOK

FROM:- Dawn Aitchison - EOL

Dear Annie and Nic,

This is just a quick note to enclose with the stationery saying that if you require anything further such as Accounts Books, please let me know on telex before Friday so that I can send out with John Clark on Saturday. Warren thought neither of you probably needed them but shout if you do.

Your passenger lists will also be coming out with John on Saturday - am desperately trying to work out who's going with who on the 2 Kathmandu - London trips, Nic but all I will tell you is that there's a majority of females on both trucks!!!!

On the GOE, however, there's an even proportion of male to female (if not more male) so lucky old you, Annie.

Of the 20 who are leaving Kathmandu on the GOE 16 are going all the way to London but 4 are leaving the trip in the Middle East (Amman probably) and joining a Cradles of Civilisation trip from Cairo - London in Amman run by Brian Feltovich (Bamby is his nickname). This is due to the fact that these 4 wanted Kathmandu - London Trans Asia only and as there were no places available on these trips, we offered them the above as the GOE wasn't full. Warren will no doubt explain in more detail.

Of the 4 spare places from Amman, 2 people are joining the trip in Cairo to do the All Africa plus a trainee (Warren will no doubt tell you more!!!!) and we are trying to sell the other All Africa place at the moment. Am sure we will, so you should have a full group for the Africa section of the trip also. Will send revised passenger lists to Cairo for you and also a replenishment for any stationery supplies you might need and of course, parts for the truck. (if necessary).

One of the GOE people is actually leaving the trip in Nairobi so you will lose one person there all names etc. of people doing various sectors will be explained fully in notes which I will send out with the passengers lists.

Enclosed with Warren is the Africa handbook, route notes on the Nile and several maps. I hope that a couple of hours (or more) with Suti will make you more confident of tackling Africa. I'm sure you'll make a very good job of it, Annie and I hope the group are good fun.

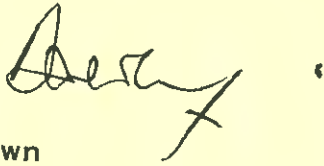
Also have bought you a supply of 'Ladies' things' - I hope Lilets are O.K. and I've guessed the right consistency!!! If you have any spare, am sure Dot and Christine could accommodate the excess.

All foe now - please read inserts with pre-dep booklets carefully - all

E.M.'s should have received all this information with their pre-departure information but please ensure they are all aware of the contents of the various sheets at the pre-departure meeting.

All for now and will write at the end of the week.

Cheers -



Dawn

P.S. Funds also will come out with John Clark provided he doesn't get "attached" while in Bangkok!.

Accident Report. Annette Bradshaw, Q43MPP, 25 April 1985

We left Lahore at 12.20pm on April 18th. The run out of Lahore was straightforward. We'd just passed through a small town when I pulled out to overtake a truck. The tractor ahead was a long way off. I couldn't estimate how far, it certainly wasn't close.

When I'd drawn even with the truck I was passing, the tractor started to drift into the middle of the road. However, he was still at such a long distance that I wasn't really worried. I started to ~~slow~~ sound the horn continuously but he didn't move. I also slowed down. At first I thought he was playing chicken but it soon became obvious he wasn't going to move from the middle.

At first I veered slightly to the left but he followed. I found this totally disturbing to say the least and made the decision to go right and let him go through the middle. I had to make a decision. I had no choice but to take avoiding action. So I went right, but for some unexplainable reason he drove right towards us. It was as though we were a magnet. I can only deduce afterwards that perhaps he fell asleep and turning into us at the last minute was a reflex action.

After the accident I surveyed the truck and the damage looked bad, but on closer inspection it wasn't too severe. The tractor was demolished. We attended to the tractor driver who obviously had a broken right leg. The fact that he didn't flinch at the pain made me suspect he was maybe stoned. He was quite alert throughout the ordeal and when his female relatives arrived, wailing, he was able to wave his arm to say he was ok. It didn't make them stop. A passer-by gave one of the guys a ride into Lahore so we got a bus to transport everyone back to the International Hotel. The trailer was towed back by a tractor.

Another passer-by was the central person in negotiating between the local police and me. The only reason we weren't impounded was the fact that we agreed to compromise. This means both parties would not register a case against each other, but settle out of court. Obviously with the time factor, I thought this was the best thing to do.

The locals were quick to the situation. We found out later that they'd immediately bought off all the locals to say it was my fault. An ex-pat, Mrs Taylor, stopped at the accident and her Pakistani driver found out this information. The amount of money wanted by the locals started at 70,000 rupees (\$4,800) Obviously this was ridiculous considering the tractor driver was in the wrong.

I explained that I couldn't possibly agree to any amount without consulting my company in London. But I agreed to a settlement because it meant everyone could go. They decided they wanted 20,000 rupees (\$1,300) and announced they'd be around on Saturday to collect the money. A compromise sheet in Urdu (enclosed) was drawn up. According to the translator that helped me, it said no one was to blame for the accident and both parties agreed that they would not register a case. Nor was any amount of money mentioned.

On Friday I took Ashraf out to look at the truck. He was positive everything could be repaired in a minimum of 4 days, max. 6 days.

The saga of getting the truck back into Lahore is very long and very involved. In short this is what happened.

Mrs Taylor knew some very influential people in the traffic department. We visited them, showed them the compromise and consistently we were told not to pay an

anything. The police insisted we go and collect the truck and nothing would prevent us. Twice I went to collect Jasper with police and each time the Munga Mundi police, who were run by the locals absolutely, let it leak that we were on our way or had arrived and the locals would turn up at the very last minute. They threatened to burn the truck and stone us if we moved it. The police were too scared to do anything and would always leave, mostly before us.

We went as high as the Deputy Inspector General of Police. They contacted the Senior Superintendent of Police who eventually gave us his word (apparently worth something) that by 6pm we would have our truck in Lahore. It was the fourth day of running from office to office to truck and back to office. This guarantee came after we visited him for a 2nd time and he said, how much will you pay them. I said 6,000 rupees. He replied, right, you will pay no more. In retrospect I wished I'd said 3,000 rupees, or even less. The amount I said was never questioned. There were numerous phone calls to the SSP's office from "influential" people that we'd visited, knew our situation, and were only too willing to help. The police said they could not send truck loads of police to collect the truck unless we registered a case. This is a complication I decided to do without. I don't know if I was right or wrong in this decision. Anyway the tractor people also agreed to the sum and hands were shook and there was a definite relief in the air. It was agreed to pay the money at International Hotel.

For some reason when we arrived the tractor people refused to sign the receipts and started talking about 20,000 rupees. I made it quite clear I wasn't going to pay another rupee. The tractor people left. We were back to square one. We returned to the SSP's office who'd given us his word the truck would be back at 6pm. He was obviously embarrassed and gave orders to his 2IC to sort it out.

In the end his office rang Manga Mundi Police and Manga Mundi said they wanted us to pay out there. Needless to say that was out of the question. We finally agreed to pay the money to Lahore Police. Two of my people, Diana and Michael, stayed with the 6,000 rupees. We agreed that when the truck was in Lahore I would contact the police and the money would change hands and receipts would be signed. To my utter disbelief, it happened. We arrived at Ashraf's work shop at 8.30pm safe and sound. Nic Robinson towed me in. The receipts were signed and the tractor owner even shook my hand. He didn't do too badly out of it.

The whole ordeal was harrowing and potentially quite dangerous. The interaction between police and mobs, the corruption, bribery and influence of various people quite amazing. The compromise was illegal according to the police but in reality an absolutely binding acceptable document to me and all. We can only look back and say we were lucky that no one was killed and there were no riots.

I'm afraid towards the end, my composure was slipping and the present D.I.G., of Traffic, Mr Faezal Mahmood, ex-International fast bowler, author of philosophy and a very fair, sensible diplomat said to me, Cry and you cry alone, smile and the world smiles with you. At that time, I couldn't see exactly what I had to smile about but he did have a point I suppose. Maybe in 10 years time I'll smile about it.

Anyway nothing more has been heard of the tractor people. I don't think I should have paid anything but sometimes it's the quickest way.

The contacts the group has made have been quite amazing and they have been wonderful throughout the whole ordeal. One guy in the front who saw the whole incident has offered to write a small report so I've said yes and Michael Edwards and Diana Culey who helped throughout the negotiations said they would like to write to you so no doubt they will. Their help was really great and it's amazing what a difference it makes in Pakistan if you know a lot about cricket. Diana met Iman Khan, some famous cricketer who I've never heard of. But apparently he's famous. Anyway, they were

impressed. ~~about~~ I think they almost agreed it.
25/4/85

24th May 1985

TO:- ANNETTE BRADSHAW - GOE ex Kathmandu 15th March '85

FROM:- DAWN AITCHISON - EOL

Hi Annie,

Welcome to Cairo and to the African phase of your GOE. I'm sure you'll have a good time.

A few points:-

1. You have three girls (missionaries alias) joining you in Cairo.

JO-ANNE GRACE - New Zealand
GAY BREEUWER - New Zealand
LYNDIE FREESTONE - Australian

So still no escape from the Australasian blood

GRACE and BREEUWER are doing the All Africa and will therefore be with you for the remainder of the trip.

FREESTONE has bought a sector Cairo - Nairobi (she did this in Melbourne Sundowners) and realises that she will not be able to see the game parks, Kili etc. She is flying out of Nairobi (to return to England to be a bridesmaid) on 3rd August with Aeroflot. We are organising the ticket here and will get the ticket down to Cairo as soon as possible. Timings will be tight but we'll see how things go

As you know, DIANA CULEY is also leaving the trip in Nairobi so you'll be down to 17.

2. ACCOMMODATION - Encounter Overland will pay for accommodation for the above three as from the night of 24th May until departure, and for all your other EM's as part of the arrangements for GOE folk.

The next hotel accommodation to be paid for from company funds will be in Cairo.

3. PARTS - all your parts requests should arrive in Cairo one way or another. BREEUWER and FREESTONE are flying from Athens - Cairo with a tent bag full of parts. IF they had to pay excess baggage, can you please repay them in Cairo.

All other parts with Jo-Anne flying from London today - she is also bringing parts for STEVE SATOW and these are to be left at:-

c/o Mohammed,
SOUTH SINAI TRAVEL,
24 HUSSEIN HEGAZI STREET,
GARDEN CITY APARTMENT 15,
CAIRO

cont'd.

Tel. 21192
Tlx. 22996 SST UN

Mohammed and South Sinai are the organisation who run H.O.'s Egypt sector so they know us quite well and are extremely helpful. Probably a more reliable place to leave parts than the Fontana. You should meet Steve on route somewhere in South Egypt but you never know so safer to leave parts in Cairo. If you do meet up with him, he will be able to give you lots of useful information about the Sudan and the route in general.

4. FUNDS - Enclosed are USD 4450 in cash which should last you until Nairobi, when you will be refunded.
5. PAPERWORK - enclosed are revised passenger lists, more En Route Reports, and various other bits and pieces. Again, anything you require further on can be sent to NAIROBI.
6. MALARIA PILLS - as Sooty advised in Kathmandu, as from Cairo you should be taking 2 Nivaquin per week together with 1 Fanzidar. Suggest 1 Fanzidar on say Sunday and then 2 Nivaquin on Wednesday. Fanzidar to be taken until Bangui northbound, then return to a standard dose of 2 Nivaquin per week.
7. ROUTE - I gather that Warren has gone over the route with you in Kathmandu and enclosed are some more notes on the Nile. As mentioned, Steve Satow will be able to fill in any gaps.

Please see attached photocopy of Steve Mortimer's Report on how to obtain a permit to travel via the Red Sea.

8. CARNETS - your new AIT carnets for Rwanda and Burundi will be sent down to Nairobi for you. The FIA ones will suffice until then.
9. VISAS -

SUDAN - your Sudan permit is enclosed and you are to collect USD 23 per person for this visa/permit. You should present the permit at the border.

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Everyone requires a visa and you should get these in Cairo at the French Embassy - please try and get double entry as you will go through twice.

ZAIRE

Everyone needs these and you should get them in Khartoum - again try and get double entry visas.

UGANDA

Everyone needs these and you will get them on the border.

KENYA - only Australian need and these can be obtained on the border.

TANZANIA -

All need Visitors' Permits - obtain these from the Tanzanian High Commission in Nairobi.

RWANDA

All need - obtain in Nairobi in 48 hours.

(ZAIRE)

If unable to get Double entry visas in Khartoum, obtain them in Nairobi.

(CAR)

If unable to get double entry visas in Cairo, then obtain in Nairobi.

CAMEROUN

Obtain in Banqui - everyone needs these.

TCHAD

Obtain these in Nairobi - everyone needs. (From the French).

NIGER

Will advise en route. In throws of going new route to get these.

ALGERIA

Aussies, New Zealanders and Canadians need to obtain in Agadez. Apparently taking two weeks at present but things must get better.

MOROCCO

No-one needs.

SPAIN

Aussies and New Zealanders need. Obtain in Tetouan, Morocco.

Think that's all to do with visas but we will, of course, update you en route.

10. NAIROBI - can obtain new passports here and get vaccinations done if required. Please let us know if anyone has new passport details.

Also please ensure everyone's insurance cover is valid until the end of the trip.

11. JOHN MARTENS - his camera lens is enclosed. Encounter Overland has

RWANDA
(Zaire)
C.A.R.
TCHAD
TANZANIA

paid £40.78 for Duty and VAT so can you please collect from John. I am holding the certificate from the Post Office here and when he returns to London, he should be able to claim back the VAT.

Have received his letter about film and sleeping bag left in Kathmandu and have asked Kathmandu to return it all. However, has not arrived yet - will try and get to Nairobi.

12. GORILLAS - these are not included in this trip. However, most trips are able to visit Gorillas in either Rwanda or Zaire depending how heavy bookings are from other tourist organisations. This is NOT INCLUDED in the trip cost.
13. KILIMANJARO - full cost paid for by EM's and please see attached letter from us which you should discuss with your group re the huge costs which are to be levied by the Tanzanians as of the 1st July. This is a very recent instruction - sorry we could not have warned everyone of it sooner.
14. CURRENCY EXCHANGE - as you are aware, everyone has to pay approx. USD 200 in Algeria for exchange reasons and no exemptions exist.
15. VISAS - as per memo enclosed, all visa costs are to be borne by the EM's.
16. JO-ANNE GRACE - IF she has to pay excess baggage charges at Heathrow, please re-imburse her from trip funds.

Think that's about all, Annie. Sure I've forgotten something but can always talk to you in Cairo.

Have a great trip and we'll be thinking of you and the group. Hope the lads enjoy the missionaries please telex from Cairo to confirm meeting with 3 girls, visa progress and your estimated departure date.

BANK HOLIDAY here on Monday 27th so Tuesday would be better.

Cheers -

Dawn
Dawn

P.S. Please return emergency details
insurance details for the 3 new girls.

ENCOUNTER OVERLAND LTD

267 Old Brompton Road, London. SW5

Tel (01) 370 6951-2
Cable Encoland London
Telex 916654

**REFERENCE : PROPOSED MASSIVE INCREASES TO COSTS OF
GAME PARKS AND KILIMANJARO IN TANZANIA:**

We have very recently had advice from reliable sources in Tanzania that the authorities there intend to increase these costs by anything up to 1200% i.e. present costs per head per day (without camping and transport) are U.S.\$3.50/U.S.\$4.00 - the proposal states anything up to U.S.\$40 per day.

Whilst we are hopeful a revision on this proposal will show less of a rise, we are sure it will be considerable. Therefore we must advise you now that your Kilimanjaro Climb could cost up to U.S.\$280 - \$300 for 5 days (including National Park Huts, etc)

Likewise, we, Encounter Overland Ltd., have not costed such high costs into our programme. Therefore, until we do so, we may have no alternative but to offer visits to Game Parks in other neighbouring countries e.g. Rwanda, Kenya, Zambia, etc.

We do hope to have definite instructions from the Tanzanians within the next few weeks and we will inform your Leader/Driver en route of the outcome.

We sincerely hope this will not effect your expedition any more than necessary and we look forward to having your aboard.

Yours sincerely

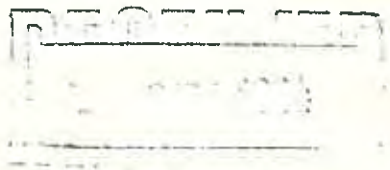
PP **WARREN K. BURTON**
Encounter Overland Limited

WKB:hrk

Best wishes to all for Xmas & New Year.

As ✓ Regards STEVE

Bookmark?



EN ROUTE REPORT

REPORT NO. ..3..... PLACE ..KHARTOUM..

NAME ..STEVEN...MORTIMER..... VEHICLE NO. ..JNM600Y.....

DATE ...7 DEC 84..... VEHICLE TYPE ..BEDFORD...M...TYPE..

NEXT CENTRE ..NAIROBI..... TRIPT./AFRKA ..Via Nile..LONDON/J.BURGH

LAST REPORT SENT FROM ..CAIRO..... ON ...7 NOV 84.....

Communication(s) since my last Report No. from E.O. Place.....Date.....

Consisting of: Letter Telex Phone call Cable ASWAN 25-12-84

Communication(s) since my last Report No. ..2.. to E.O. Place ..KHARTOUM.. Date ..7.12.84

Consisting of: Letter Telex Phone call Cable

Planned route & EDA at next centre

Next Centre ..NAIROBI Estimated date of Arrival ..20-1-85

Route to be taken ..EL OBEID, BARRANCUA, NYALA - BIRAR, NDELE, MBBE,

..SIBIT, BANGASSOU, KUSADGAN, BUNIA, JERTIA, NAIROBI.

Forecast of likely problems ..IF no diesel in CAR^{compride} will have to go

..to BANGUI Hope not to.

Summary of Events and Route since last Report (we need knowledge of significant events from you - not the grapevine). STICK TO IMPORTANT FACTS.

CAIRO - Luxor (6 days) - ASWAN. In Aswan I returned to

CAIRO by train to collect visas. Returned to Aswan where we

were eventually granted permission to travel to Sudan using

the Red Sea Route. We arrived Pt Sudan 29 Nov 84. To

KHARTOUM via CEDAREE & WAD MEDINA (2 day drive)

A lot of time could be saved by taking the train to Aswan

from Luxor and applying to Military Intelligence for permission to

go south to Sudan. Take all passports, 2x group lists, passports,

Egyptian registration certificates, visas, photocopy (continue over if necessary)

cont.....

of passports and 2 photos of each person Request the Red Sea route. It should be possible to go down to Aden one night & be back by the next

No diesel available in Pi Sudan or an arrival kharaj. Was eventually granted permission for 5 drums (I requested 8 just in case they cut me back. They initially cut me back to 3) Collected that yesterday

Visa for CAR collected today 10-12-84. We made application 4-12-84. Permission reqd from Bangor.

TO: ANNIE

DATE: 2nd August,

FROM: SUTI

Hi Annie

Oh dear me - what to do - Jasper and the Animals stuck in Sudan!!
(Hopefully not for too long, eh what!!)

Basically, **had** we known you were still in Khartoum until whenever you were, we would have seriously discussed the likelihood of your trip **not** heading west into what now seems an impossible route, at least for a few months yet.

Lance Thomas and Dave Robertson, the last northbound trip through that area about 5 weeks ago advised us of the extreme conditions. Unfortunately you did not meet them en route, consequently you were not aware of the seriousness of the conditions. Obviously they have worsened to such a degree that ^{we} have ~~no~~ alternative but to instruct you by whatever means, hopefully with Jasper, to get the group back to Khartoum.

We have no alternative but to now plan for the overflight of your group [&] (hopefully if you agree!!) ~~and~~ yourself to Nairobi to join another truck to continue as per schedule.

A huge disappointment I know but sometimes "God" or "Hewy" open up the heavens and piss all over us - in your case, a little too much!!

Encounter Overland will pay for the overflight - it will be organised in conjunction with Dave Johnson's Trans Africa via the Nile. We would not envisage an overflight until early September.

But, what to do now - as I am not there I cannot be any more informative than offering advice from others who have been through that area ie Steve Satow, Lance Thomas and of course, Dave, who has delivered this.

I believe after phone calls with John Martens that should the weather continue, even a return to Nyala by "road" will be impossible. Camels may well be the only alternative - obviously not our or your preference. But you are **there** and we are **here** and short of offering you our best wishes and all support, it is up to you all.

What I do request is that you keep us informed by whatever means you can - EO, as you know are responsible for your decisions.

Linda has been in for a chat. Unfortunately your letter didn't arrive so we are still somewhat in the dark, so to speak.

But let's get on with this problem, our thoughts are with you. We just hope things improve.

Cheers

Luv
Suti: (Ralph's)

MR. SUTI

TO: ANNIE IN KHARTOUM

DATE: 9th September, 1985

FROM: HEATHER IN LONDON

Your Overflight

Hi Annie


Well I should be jubilantly sending these to you but I am sitting here with steam coming out of my ears as I was faithfully promised that all the tickets would have ok status on them but I get them at the last minute and they are all Request..... Words fail me..... However, , I am **assured** that the flight is wide open and you will have no trouble getting them changed to OK by going to Sudan Air in Khartoum. I have insisted that our flight agents go and sit in Sudan Air tomorrow until they confirm that all these tickets are definitely confirmed so all you have to do is going into Sudan Air in Khartoum and get ok stickers in all of them.

Believe me have been working my little arse (well maybe it's not so little!!) on these tickets and I am ~~not~~ at all happy but I have no choice but to send them to you as there are only 2 courier services to Khartoum a week and if I don't send them today you won't get them in time..... I even tried the British Embassy Diplomatic Bag but the next one doesn't go till Thursday and they cannot guarantee that it will get there before Monday..... So you are definitely better off with some tickets in your hot little hands even if they are RQ.

Best of luck mate - let us know once you have been to visit Sudan Air. Letter awaits you at Poste Restante Nairobi concerning visas etc for the Nairobi to London phase of your trip.

Wonderful to have you and the Animals back on the map Annie - we were just a little bit worried about you.....

Take care



HEATHER.

TRAVELS

WITH ANNIE

IT WAS THE FLIES that warned me, the noise of their frenzied eating. I covered my mouth and nose with my hand, and as my camel rounded a corner I saw a man lying in the sand, naked apart from a loin cloth. At first I thought he was dead but as my camel plodded by he pushed his elbow through the cloud of flies and opened an eye.

I will never forget the look of desperation he gave me. Not far behind was my Sudanese camel-man. By sign language I indicated we should do something – but death was inevitable. The flies coupled with dehydration would complete his fate.

There were 15 of us in a Bedford truck heading from Kathmandu to London across Asia and the Middle East and completing a circle of Africa before heading north to London. Our Great Overland Encounter scheduled for 32-plus weeks was the first trip to be run in one vehicle with one driver – who happened to be me.

We were all Kiwis and Aussies punctuated with an American and Canadian. I'd worked for Encounter Overland for just over two years and looked on the opportunity of running this trip as an ultimate challenge.

The living-dead man being eaten by flies was a reminder of the harshness of Africa's food shortage. Although he was dying on a main nomad route, not one person had helped him. Food was scarce and you looked after your own people first.

Three days later I passed by him again. He had died and his bloated body was covered by even more flies, though someone had turned him around. I assumed it was so he would die facing Mecca.

AS WE ARRIVED in Sudan, so did the rains. They were welcome, for the country had suffered a seven-year dry spell and starvation was widespread. However, a rainy season in Sudan means that all traffic, apart from camels and donkeys, ceases for three to four months. We had left Khartoum knowing the rains had come with a vengeance and our chances of making it into Central Africa would be limited. As we drove south west through Southern Darfur, walking and clearing muddy bogs, scouting routes through rising rivers became a daily routine.

At Wadi Bulbul we came across a convoy of Super Hippo trucks. You could smell the sorghum rotting inside their sacks. The grain



JOHN McDERMOTT

Courage, ingenuity, humanity and a spirit of adventure sum up Annie Bradshaw's extraordinary character.

It has just been announced that she will be a location manager for the New Zealand-inspired first complete circumnavigation of the Arctic Circle.

These travel notes are from a recent expedition across the Middle East and Africa.

by Annie Bradshaw

had been sent from the US and was destined for the more isolated regions we were heading for, but rain had prevented their progress.

We communicated with the drivers through sign-language and books, and decided to join forces to try to cross the wadi. The Super Hippos had been waiting for over a week.

The wadi was about half a kilometre across, so we cleared obstructions as best we could and prepared ourselves with sandmats. A Sudanese driver drove his Super Hippo as far as he could, until it sank into the sand. It was then our job to dig and sandmat it to the other side.

It's amazing what can be achieved when people work together. Between about 40 of us we managed to get the truck to the other side. We then drove the next truck as far into the wadi as it would go and towed it out with the truck waiting on the far side.

After three days, our convoy of seven trucks got across Wadi Bulbul. But for the Super Hippos the effort was in vain. Aid co-ordinators arrived in a Landrover and tractor, and they were told to abandon any attempts at further progress.

The American co-ordinator told me he had been in Bulbul only two weeks earlier and would not have recognised the place, as the rains had allowed the dormant vegetation to emerge in full bloom. According to their reports, all Sudanese trucks had stopped running for the wet season, and although they shook their heads in a solemn way and told us we would not make our destination, we decided to press on towards Central Africa. I could not call the trip off on hearsay – the facts were something we would have to discover for ourselves.

EARLIER ON we had suffered a set-back in Pakistan which had delayed our trip by almost a fortnight. To be two weeks late in a rainy season can be critical.

In Pakistan there is a constant flow of traffic on both sides of the road. It consists of everything from bicycles and rickshaws to trucks. If you don't overtake under these circumstances, you can find yourself crossing Asia at five kilometres an hour.

It's also common for Pakistanis to play "chicken" – especially with tourists. This is a game of staying in the centre of the road for as long as you dare, as another truck comes towards you.



Slow progress across a muddy bog.

I had been overtaking a truck, facing an on-coming tractor. I wasn't worried, even when the tractor pulled into the middle of the road and, as I expected, drifted back onto its side of the road. Then just as I was drawing level, the driver suddenly pulled back into the middle of the road and we met virtually head-on.

The tractor snapped in two and the truck's front axle was torn from the U-bolts and forced back, tearing the sump off and scraping the big-end bearings as it went. We finally came to rest under a tree on the wrong side of the road.

We were still upright but I was considerably closer to the ground than I wanted to be and the engine oil, which had been used for only 35 kilometres, formed a pool beneath us.

No one on the truck was injured but the tractor driver, who had obviously been smoking something a little stronger than tobacco, had a broken leg. The smile on his face told us he was in no pain.

A crowd gathered, made up mostly of women who wailed at the top of their voices. It was difficult to hear yourself speak. The more I tried to tell them the Pakistani driver was okay, the louder they wailed. They weren't even in tune.

It took four days of intense negotiations to retrieve our truck. Because we were foreigners (which equals wealth) the Pakistani tractor owners wanted \$US4,500 for damage to their vehicle, even though it wasn't our fault.

The police said we shouldn't pay, but every time we went to collect the truck the locals knew we were coming and threatened to burn it if we didn't come up with the money. I asked for police protection, but they gave me only one or two armed men who were terrified of the locals and who assured me that the truck would indeed be burnt if the money wasn't paid.

I told the police I needed a truck-load of armed men but they would not do this unless I registered a case. If I did register a case they told me it would probably take a year before it was heard and the damaged truck had to be produced as evidence. Obviously this was out of the question.

An arbitrator finally suggested I pay them and be done with it. I nominated \$US400.

An arbitrator finally suggested I pay them and be done with it. I nominated \$US400. The arbitrator simply said, "And that is all you will pay?" I believe if I'd said four dollars I would have paid just that.

Four days later, a mechanic fixed the truck with nothing more than hammer and heat, and to top it off presented me with a certificate which made me an Honorary Life Member of the Pakistan Transport and Workers Union. I bet I'm the only Western woman to hold the honour.



Putting the truck through a test of temperament.

THIS ACCIDENT made me a little nervous, so when I went to Iran I took the advice of a fellow driver and headed through the southern part of the country. While we were looking at the map I pointed out that the road seemed to be a little close to Iraq, and as they were at war it might be dangerous. He assured me it wasn't and I believed him.

As it turned out, the road was indeed too close to Iraq and at about 6.00pm one evening we were arrested at gunpoint, and after spending a night at an army post we were escorted by five jeeps equipped with anti-aircraft guns back to a town called Sardenaj, where we were checked out by Interpol for being spies.

In a stressed moment I told a soldier to "Shut-up and go away". I hadn't realised he was a *general*, as he was dressed in the same desert uniform as other soldiers.

After hours of questions and checks the general told me to gather my group as he had something to say. Despite my repeated questions he kept me in suspense the whole time. When he eventually told us we could go he half-smiled and looked at me sideways and said, "I haven't forgotten you told me to shut-up and go away." I just smiled and thought, thank God I hadn't been more explicit.

Our visas expired the next day and they told us we had to back-track to the main road via Esfahan. Although I drove solidly from 3.00pm until 10.00am the following morning, we arrived late, but they seemed to know we were coming and let us into Turkey without any problems. However, the incident made us even later for the rainy season.



"I took the fuel system apart from tank to injectors."

THE RAIN continued to fill every dent in the earth's surface. Deep down inside I knew our chances of making it were very, very slim.

The border between Sudan and Central Africa was called Um Dafog and we had been told that during the rainy season it becomes encircled by a huge swamp preventing any access by vehicle. So in Rahed El Berdi I decided to send scouts to see if this was true. If the way was clear they would wait for us at Um Dafog, and if not they were to go on to Bangui, the capital of Central Africa and the nearest place ahead, with a communication to the outside world.

It was over 1000 kilometres away and the only transport was a camel. The administrator in Rahed told us there was a mission plane that flew once a week from Birao, just over the Central African border, and if our scouts were lucky they would be able to hitch a ride. This would halve the distance.

There was only one man on the truck who I thought could accomplish this formidable journey. There were no maps. He would have to rely entirely on his initiative and he had to have the will to carry on when every-

thing looked hopeless. His name was John Martens, an Australian chef and he agreed to undertake the challenge.

He chose a travelling companion, who would have to wait in Birao while John undertook the second part of the journey alone.

Smugglers heading south with empty loads were plentiful so they were quite happy to take two paying passengers as far as the border. I think everyone had a lump in their throats as we waved goodbye to our friends. No one really knew what lay ahead of them.

By the end of the day, the river which separated us from our road to the border had grown from an ankle-deep stream to a river we had to swim across. The administrator said the road was closed anyway, so he organised a guide to help us find a way to the border. We would truly be going overland.

Our guide was an old Sudanese man and we spent a lot of time waiting while he walked around finding the best route. It was a frustrating time for all of us as our relationship was based on trust. The language barrier allowed no explanations.

However, our frustrations were to deepen, for early on July 24 the truck decided to stop for no obvious reason. Although we didn't know it at the time we were to remain abandoned for the next 28 days. The guide decided he had a family to look after, and left us.

I took the fuel system apart from tank to injectors and replaced it with every spare part I had. Nothing was obviously wrong except for one thing: I'd flattened the batteries.

We could not push the truck — it simply sank and every other trick to start it failed. As I went to bed that night the seriousness of the problem stole a few hours of my sleep.

Bush telegraph is extremely efficient and it didn't take long for hungry people to arrive at our camp. There were a lot of aid vehicles in Sudan and these people didn't know we were merely travellers.

It's funny how people react under stress. Some of the group shared their food and others gorged themselves on second and third helpings, oblivious to the silent hunger or indeed our own circumstances. Eventually the famished people moved on.

I decided to leave the truck in search of a battery charger, so we flagged down a camel, loaded the two batteries and started walking to the fabled town of Um Dafog.

Camel men can walk tirelessly all day and exist on virtually no food. We couldn't. One night we stopped, as usual, near a nomad camp. Hunger had taken its grip and I brought out my very last six Sudanese pounds and indicated to the camel-man we needed something — anything to eat.

He returned five minutes later carrying a brown, mangy, ancient, male goat. It looked absolutely delicious. He slaughtered it where we sat with such skill it didn't bleat a murmur and we threaded its flesh onto sticks, cooked it around the fire and ate every single bit — inside and out.

Just before we reached Um Dafog we discovered that it was, indeed, surrounded by a swamp. Camels have smooth flat feet and are not equipped to walk through water. They had to be forced through the mud and fell on a number of occasions.

At the village my heart sank. There was nothing in Um Dafog except for a well and an empty souk. It didn't take long to discover that our scouts had gone on to Central Africa.

But we found a battery charger. It was unbelievable — especially when they showed us they even had petrol to run it. Two days later we had charged the batteries and regenerated our bodies by eating intestines and doughnuts.

Three days later, back again in camp I checked the engine. Satisfied that it should

go I tried once — nothing. I tried again — still nothing. An awful silence fell. I was so devastated I couldn't even cry. After a while, a card game started up and, with a stoicism that seems to come only from adversity, the group carried on as normal.

There was nothing to do but try again. This time I went alone, though rain made it a slower trip.

Once again I arrived in Um Dafog, where the Sudanese were as sympathetic and friendly as usual.

Then, one afternoon, when I was returning from the well, someone shouted, "Hey, Bradshaw!"

I couldn't believe my senses. Wandering along the track with a stick and a loaded donkey were the scouts and another driver, called Dave Robertson. They were bearded, dirty and looked as though they'd come from a long way away — as indeed they had. It was a month, almost to the day, since they'd left. I promptly burst into tears.

They had stories to tell of strange people, little and no food, wrong paths and faithful donkeys. When Johnno had flown back to Birao he'd found the smugglers were loaded with bounty so wouldn't carry them unless they paid an outrageous sum of money.

"Difficult times ... often create a bond which lasts a lifetime."

Any other person would have agreed to pay the money, but not Johnno. He bought a donkey and decided to walk.

The Sudanese decided to lend us the battery charger and told us to leave it in the next town. This meant we wouldn't have to lose yet another week. I can't begin to describe the generosity of the Sudanese people. Although outwardly poor, they are surely the richest of all people on the inside.

We returned to the truck, which seemed to agree that it was time to go, for after a lot of whining and wheezing it burst into life. We celebrated by swapping our dwindling supplies of tea and sugar for a goat and some chickens and had a banquet.

IT WOULD have been fatalistic to wait for the dry season so we agreed that we should try to return to Khartoum.

Our return journey was successful only because we had a fortnight's dry spell. We still had to dig and push, and at one stage, although we were close enough to a village

to walk to it each night, it took us three days to get the truck there.

One person left the truck to make his way into Central Africa by camel. We never saw him again but heard later that he'd made it.

Three people suffered badly from tropical fevers and during the return journey were flown to Khartoum by an aid helicopter which we met by chance dropping food to villages.

A year later, while heading south, Dave Robertson died from cerebral malaria in Cameroon.

Most of the others are married now and some have even produced offspring.

When you share difficult times with people it can often create a bond which lasts a lifetime. I was a lucky person to have a lot of stoical, enterprising people with me — especially Johnno.

I remember an ancient, dirty calendar, three years out of date, hanging lop-sided on the wall of an Indian border-guard's office. It simply said, "Do not pray for an easy life, pray to be a stronger person." I thought it a useful message. ■

ANOTHER ADVENTURE

Annie Bradshaw (34) has been travelling all her life. Her adoptive parents, two brothers and sisters moved around the country every three or four years, as dad changed jobs. "We no sooner made friends and settled in than we'd have to uproot and move again. It was hard, but in a way it's good for you I think."

After finishing high school, Bradshaw did a journalism course in Wellington, then worked stints on the *Manawatu Evening Standard* and the *Rotorua Daily Post*.

But what she really wanted was to go overseas. "I'd always wanted to travel. I never, ever thought about anything else." She had a plan. "I thought I'd put 10 years aside to see the rest of the world. Because 10 years out of a lifetime isn't much. You educate yourself, say, from zero to 20 years old. Then 20 to 30 are the only years you really have as your own person. And even if you get married at say, 30, 35-plus, it's still over half your life married."

So at 21, Bradshaw and her boyfriend headed off to London. "Lived in London for three years. Bought a van, went round Europe and stuff like that. And then, when I was 25, we got engaged. That was sort of like a big turning point. I went away to Africa to think about whether or not I really wanted to get married."

She didn't. She fell in love with Africa and, as soon as she got back to London, applied for any job that could get her back there. Encounter Overland accepted her as a trainee leader/driver. She had a difficult time learning to become a competent diesel mechanic. "Essentially I lied about my driving and mechanical experience. I was the most useless, spastic trainee you could ever come across." But she survived, and ended up

working for the company for seven years, guiding groups through Africa, Asia and South America, gathering lots of good stories "to tell in the pub afterwards".

She came back to New Zealand about 18 months ago, because "it was a really transient way of life. You got to know people for three months and then they disappeared. You're always living out of the cab of your truck or a tent. There's no hot water, and you can't eat what you want to. It's just...just the luxuries."

She also decided to contact her birth mother. "It's really good. I'm quite close to her now. She's special. I could say I've got two mothers!" Returning home meant settling down. "You have to think about buying a house, getting a bit behind you. And I never earned enough to pay tax for the whole time I worked for EO. You don't do it for the money, that's for sure."

Despite all the best intentions, settling down will have to wait a while. There's another adventure. This month she starts her job as location manager for Graeme Dingle's Expedition Artikos — a complete circumnavigation of the Arctic Circle.

"We fly out in three weeks and I haven't even seen the radio. I'm running round saying, 'Can I listen to your radio? What are you supposed to say?' It's a nightmare!" A nightmare she's really looking forward to. "Travelling stirs something from within you that nothing else does. I thought I'd gotten over it. I thought nothing would ever make me go away again."

She'll be back in New Zealand towards the end of the year. After that? "I'm not going anywhere. Ever again." Though she does have very fond memories of Zaire...
Shelley Howells