

# Wooden car may be boon for Third World

United Press International

NAIROBI — A car made of timber and epoxy resin, cautiously termite-proof, just may be the better mousetrap that British engineer and part-time dreamer Tony Howarth set out to design.

The Africar is wood sculpted into a durable, fairly attractive conventional-looking auto body. Howarth claims it gets 40 miles to the gallon and insists it is no passing fad.

He believes his "sort of strange-looking wooden vehicle" is the answer to the monstrous cost of motoring in the developing world.

"I set out to build a better mousetrap: a better mousetrap capable of handling bad roads, mud and sand," he said. "There is nothing clever about it. It is a vehicle designed for manufacture in the Third World.

"I don't like to call it a wooden car. It is not back-stepping. In fact it makes a Mercedes-Benz, or Porsche, or Volvo look like last century's product," the bearded designer said.

The Africar is not only a car but an ideal. Howarth, 46, will only part with the technology providing the car is built in the Third World. After a decade in Africa he knows some of the roots of the continent's problems.

By the time the Africar's wooden frame and kitchen-cupboard-like interior are ready for production in 1986, Howarth estimates he will be in debt \$5 million for design and development — mostly to his "friendly neighborhood bank."

There are three Africar designs. Howarth said he expects the one based on the Land Rover to cost

about \$2,000 to produce. In Kenya, a real Land Rover sells for close to \$80,000, including nearly 200 percent import duty and taxes.

Along with its tiny price tag, the Africar can be produced now with 50 percent local input in the developing world, Howarth claims. As an added bonus, minor damage can be repaired with a saw and glue.

Designed with high clearance for rough ground and an extra-wide wheelbase, the Africar now uses a Citroen engine although Howarth has nearly completed his own design for both gasoline and diesel engines.

Howarth claims that the cars with wooden chassis, steering racks and interiors have tested far beyond expectation.

Bright orange prototypes of the

three versions — a six-wheel, 17-passenger car capable of being transformed into an ambulance, a four-wheel six-passenger Land Rover type and a two-passenger pickup truck — completed a 18,750-mile test drive from northern Sweden to Nairobi along some of the worst tracks that Africa calls roads. The five-month drive ended July 23 in Nairobi.

"There wasn't a road — be it mud, ice, snow, sand — that could beat us," said Howarth.

"The biggest problems were suicidal reindeer in Sweden and camels in the Sahara," said co-driver Carolyn Hicks, 39, a film editor from Hawaii and a co-director of the Africar Project.

Despite its wooden frame, "crash tests" have proved the car durable

and, in some instances at slower speeds, more damage-resistant than metal.

But it is its potential as a boon to the Third World that excites Howarth and company.

"This car would not have been possible to make economically five years ago," he said. But now a computer-controlled lathe and turner can grind out all the necessary components for 5,000 Africars per year.

The basic components of the car are cut into 200 patterns from 320 pieces of west African marine wood worth about \$65. Resin to stick the car together costs about \$30.

The engine and gear box can be built in a Third World country on existing machines costing about \$500,000 each, Howarth says. For a total investment of about \$5 million,

a developing country could produce 5,000 cars that would normally cost about \$40 million to import, he said.

"We are looking to put the future into Africa — reverse the trend," he said. "It is a vehicle designed for manufacture in Africa and the Third World."

He expects the first production of Africars to be rolling out of Fiji in the Pacific within two years. The Africar would then be exported to Australia and New Zealand.

Howarth says he is close to clinching franchise deals in Uganda, Zimbabwe and Nigeria. More than 90 business concerns in 30 countries have expressed serious interest in building the Africar.

"I even received a telephone call from the president of Colombia asking about it," Howarth said.

## Dentists told to protect against AIDS

United Press International

SAN FRANCISCO — Dentists were told Sunday to use precautionary "barrier" techniques — wearing safety glasses, masks, gowns and gloves — when treating patients suspected of suffering from the disease AIDS.

"These precautions are in line with the management of many infectious diseases and are specific guidelines for suspected or known viral hepatitis patients," Sol Silverman of the University of California at San Francisco School of Dentistry told a scientific session of the California Dental Association.

Silverman said all instruments and materials used while treating someone believed to have AIDS should be appropriately sterilized or discarded.

AIDS — an acronym for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome — is a deadly disease that breaks down the body's immune system, leaving it vulnerable to viruses. It attacks mainly homosexual males and can be spread by sexual contact.

Silverman, a professor and chairman of oral medicine at UCSF, said dentists might also be able to diagnose patients with AIDS by detecting oral lesions caused by cancers like Kaposi's sarcoma and squamous carcinoma, both related to the occurrence of AIDS.

The affliction has struck an estimated 4,000 people nationwide, 95 percent of whom are homosexual men. In San Francisco, 500 cases have been reported and the number is rising.

"Although no evidence to date

suggests transmission by casual contact, patient assessment should be made with care because many AIDS patients are asymptomatic; high-risk individuals are numerous and a precise definition of AIDS remains somewhat equivocal," said Silverman.

Another dentist told the session Saturday that a growing problem of teeth grinding — known as bruxism — is likely psychological or stress-related. There is also a strong indication that it can be hereditary, said John Rugh, an associate professor of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio.

"Only about 10 percent of the public recognize they have this problem," he said. "However, examinations in the dental office show signs

of teeth grinding in 40-50 percent of our patients."

He said tooth grinding can cause teeth wear, tightness and pain in the face and temple, split or fractured teeth, clicking in the chewing joint and soreness of the jaw. It is sometimes treated by fitting patients with a night guard of plastic worn over either the upper or lower arch, but this still doesn't prevent grinding, said Rugh.

Drug therapy and a biofeedback techniques can be used for treatment, but they only provide a temporary solution, he said.

"The ideal way, but the hardest, for controlling bruxism is to remove the stress factors that cause it," Rugh said. "Often this means a change in lifestyle — finding a new job or resolving marital disputes.

## Individual states act on foreign med grads

United Press International

Here is an explanation of actions taken to regulate licensing of foreign medical graduates in selected states:

• The Arkansas Medical Board has licensed a number of doctors who graduated from Caribbean or Mexican colleges, but none from the suspect schools, said Little Rock Attorney Robert Mraing. He has since left the state. Four other foreign graduates still are resident doctors, and two have full-fledged licenses to practice.

The board has drawn up a new rule that requires graduates of foreign medical schools to complete a medical training program equivalent

to the one at the University of Kansas Medical School.

• Licenses of eight resident doctors in Missouri who attended CETEC or CIFAS were terminated earlier this summer by the Missouri Board of Registration of the Healing Arts.

• In Texas, medical authorities reversed themselves on the issue. The State Board of Medical Examiners voted in July not to issue licenses to graduates of any Caribbean or Mexican school, pending an investigation.

Then the Texas board, on legal advice, lifted the blanket moratorium.

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