

# MAGAZINE

Marion Smith is tired. She has flown more than 8,000 miles to get to Kenya. She has patiently waited for her baggage to be delivered to her.

She has watched with resignation, the customs officials go through her bags, filled the necessary forms for the Customs and Immigration departments and finally got a trolley to trundle her baggage out of the baggage area.

Drawing from her experience back home, she has picked on a harmless-looking taxi driver and with her bags stowed in the rickety vehicle's boot, has left the airport for one of the city's hotels.

The first impression Marion Smith gets at the airport will go a long way towards her appreciation of what the country has to offer. If she does not receive exemplary service and proper facilities are not available, this will go towards forming a wrong impression and spoil her expectations.

Wherever she goes, and is accorded proper service, she will brush this aside. "It must be a fluke" she will think as she remembers the problems she had undergone on her arrival.

The services and facilities available at the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport were planned to handle a capacity of 1.5 million passengers per year. As of last year, the airport had handled more than 1.6 million.

Recently, during the UN Decade for Women Conference, thousands of passengers were handled. The pressure thus exerted on the available facilities and services was enormous. That the airport staff did and continue to do everything possible to alleviate the problems encountered by the visitors under such circumstances is commendable. But there is still room for improvement.

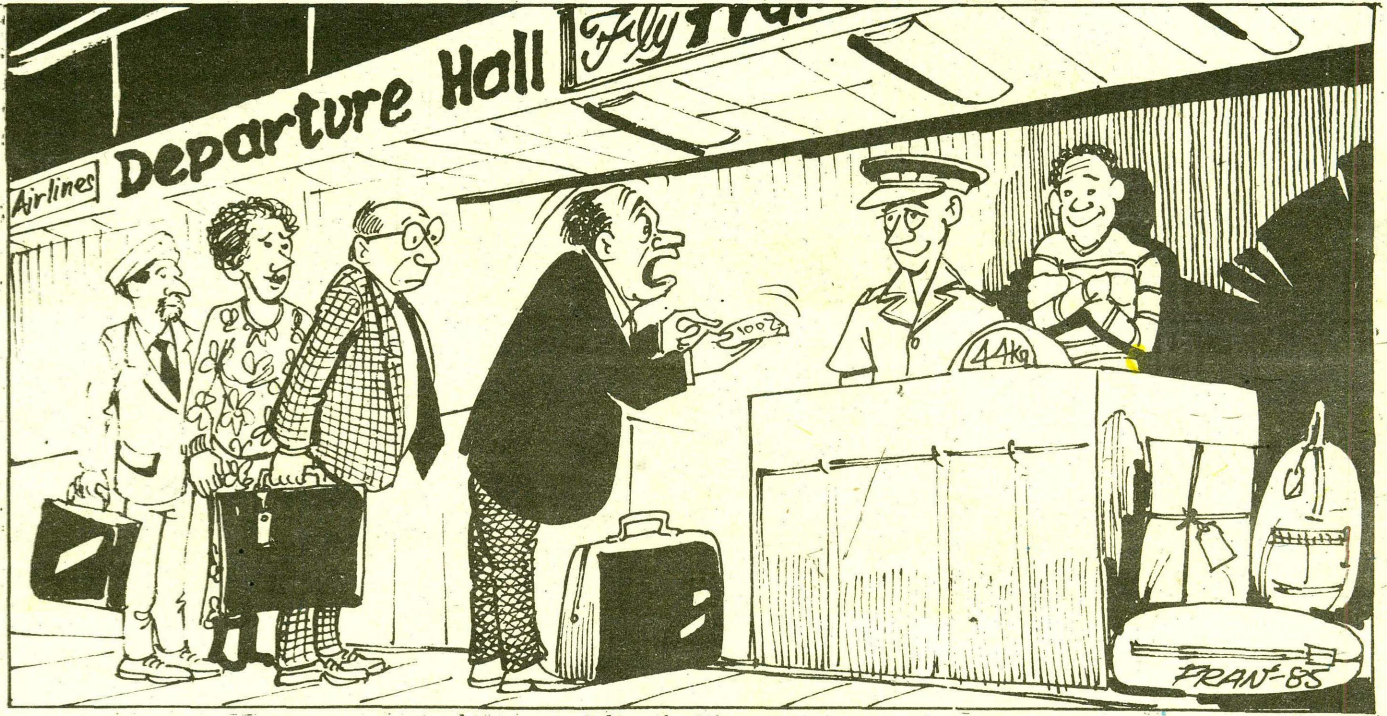
One area needing improvement is in the provision for writing space. Passengers are now forced to lean their forms against the walls and use every available space in the congested clearance area to fill them as required. The forms, which should be available to all airlines, are sometimes only provided to passengers after they disembark.

Those visitors who are not cared for by the airline staff that brought them to the country, depend on the bilingual signs that are plastered all over the airport but they are only in English or Kiswahili which is difficult for those visitors who do not speak any of the two languages. The forms are also in those two languages.

Recently, a Japanese visitor who could not understand the languages was forced to wait until an airline staff member was located to do the necessary interpretation work.

Descending to the customs hall from the apron, the

**Corrupt officials, broken facilities and comment on the loose**



"Look man, this is all I have between me and starvation. If you insist on 'chai' why don't I buy you a cup at the cafeteria."

## Airports: Where we fail

**The Government of Kenya has put a lot of effort in improving communication in the country. One area in which a lot has been done is in the expansion of national airports. But however beautiful these are, a lot need to be improved so that the airports can reach their full potential and also help in reducing the many complaints voiced by tourists. A seminar, was held in September by the Ministry of Tourism to look into this issue. CATHERINE GICHERU looks into some of the major problems that need to be rectified.**

passengers are then required to wait as their baggage is checked and cleared by customs officials.

The baggage, removed from the hold of the plane, is brought to the baggage hall by towing trucks. But it is not strange to find that a visitor will wait for an hour or more for his baggage to be delivered to him for identification and clearance check by the customs officials.

Kenya, which boasts of having two international airports, is one of the slowest when it comes to delivering baggage to the visitors who pass through them. In many airports of the world, a passenger is expected to wait for only 20 minutes.

The baggage is placed on conveyor belts for passenger identification and collection. At the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport — popularly known as JKIA — only two of the conveyor belts are working. The third one has not been operating for several

years. At the Moi International Airport, the broken-down conveyor belt has meant that six porters are used to manually hand the hundreds of tonnes of baggage being brought in and taken out by visitors.

The rate of damage to luggage is exceedingly high.

The long tendering process that has to be followed before the necessary spare-parts are provided for the repair of these essential facilities is to blame.

At the customs and immigration counters officials have to work speedily to ensure visitors are not kept waiting for long. Re-allocation of duties to ensure that enough officers are at hand to deal with the hundreds of passengers who arrive in the airport peak hours was suggested

by participants at a seminar on "How best to handle visitors at our airports".

The frank attitude of the participants to the seminar which was organised by the Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife, brought to light many problems.

So frank were the discussions that a chief licensing officer in the ministry revealed accusations by visitors regarding the airport personnel. These complaints ranged from corruption of customs and immigration officials to harassment by airport police.

Mr D.N. Njau said some of the police officers — or those "gentlemen" who pose as policemen — while going through normal security checks, plant illegal items in the luggage and on "discovery" demand payment in cash from the visitor to avoid prosecution.

Some of the "officers" demand money instead of carrying out the expected security checks they are meant to do.

Stricter supervision and re-education seminars for such officers were recommended. For Kenya to have a different police force to deal with tourists and visitors to the country would be very expensive and "confusing", the director of Tourism, Mr David Musila said.

At the end of it all Marion Smith has sat back with a sigh of

relief. The driver of the decrepit vehicle which is taking her to the city centre has only demanded Sh200. It was either that or start haggling with the disorderly mob of eager taxi drivers who descended on her and other visitors as soon as they got out of the customs area.

Although there are clearly designated parking bays for several taxi firms, it is not uncommon to find those opportunistic drivers who are not ashamed of hiking their prices as they like. There are no clear signs that state a ride to the city centre is Sh160. An unwary passenger is easily ripped off of Sh40 or even Sh100 more than he is expected to pay.

Information as to how much a taxi drive is to the city centre and also about the public transport means available should be provided.

JKIA has facilities that can be used by transit passengers, but at Mombasa, no transit lounge for such passengers is available. So in searing temperatures of 32 degrees Centigrade and high humidity, passengers wait patiently and uncomfortably.

A transit lounge should be constructed at this airport. It is the second largest airport in the country, and during the weekends, handles a great number of passengers. This seems

to be the only solution as the construction of an air-conditioned unit to be used on a temporary basis is too expensive.

"An airport hotel adjacent to JKIA would be a welcome facility", Mr F.X. Asonga, director of Aerodromes said. This would enable those transit passengers who do not wish to travel to the city centre for accommodation to relax within the airport.

More than a month since she arrived, Marion Smith has returned to JKIA — her point of entry to this beautiful country.

At the passenger check-in, she is expected to have her bags checked once more. This is just to ensure that she does not take out any of the articles or items that she should not. It is also to ensure that nothing of value to the country is smuggled out.

Kenya must be one of the few countries in the world that insist on opening visitor's bags when he or she is leaving the country.

A tour operator, participating in the recent seminar recounted how an Asian girl was forced to have her baggage open and contents thrown about in a disorderly manner by customs officials. And when it was found that she had several copper wall hangings, she was rudely infor-

TURN TO PAGE 10

### INSIDE THE MAGAZINE

- What it takes to be a nursery school teacher — Page 10
- Books and What's New — Page 11
- A new venture in Masai Mara — Page 12
- Prince Charles and the poor — Page 13
- Whispers — Page 12
- Masharubu — Page 16

## Take it every Sunday

If you take Malarquin on a weekly basis you will never have to worry about malaria. Make it a Sunday habit and you will never have to worry about forgetting.

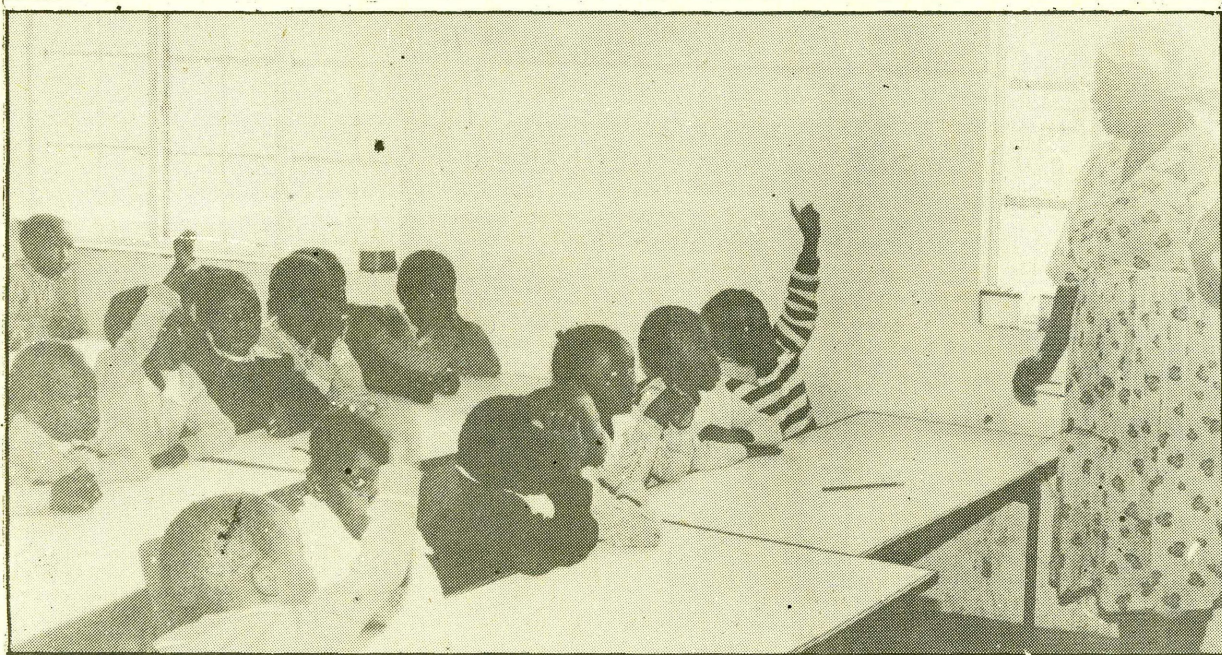


Malaria is a killer and every year millions of people die from it.

Starting now, Malarquin could be your Sunday solution to this killer disease.

**Malarquin. it prevents...it cures**

## FEATURES



A question from Mrs Wamagata sets the youngsters thinking.



Mrs Young extends a hand to a pupil in her pre-primary class during a lesson on greetings. In the background is Miss Ruprai, a trainee teacher doing her practice in the school.

**W**anted: An energetic, responsible woman/man to take charge of youngsters aged three to six. Must be a good sport — able to sing, dance, act, draw, paint, etc., apart from holding teaching qualifications. Lots of patience required. A demanding job calling for a dedication similar to that of someone fighting for a cause, you might say.

In a sense, the nursery school teacher's work is a cause. Like an artist, she starts out with a mass of raw material — in this case children from different backgrounds, with differing aptitudes for learning and different behaviour. She is then expected to mould the shy, weeping children into confident youngsters ready to cope with the long process of schooling in just three years, or even less.

As the school year begins in January, over half a million children join primary schools all over the country. Many of them will have gone through some form of pre-schooling at the hands of nursery school teachers.

They will have been taught the three Rs — reading, writing and arithmetic. But the pre-school teacher does not stop there. She will have, hopefully, instilled in the young children social values such as politeness, honesty, kindness, punctuality and the art

# It's hard slogging being a nursery school teacher

Story and pictures by LUCY ORIANG

of sharing — values that will not only ease the primary school teacher's workload but also see them through school life as responsible, well-adjusted future leaders, as Kenyans like to call them.

The nursery school teacher's role cannot be underestimated, according to Mrs Dale Young, the headmistress of Mara Road Nursery School, a modern, upmarket institution housed in the former Public Service Club. Says she: "If learning in nursery school is made into a happy experience, the child's whole attitude to schooling will be one of enthusiasm."

What goes into creating a pleasant atmosphere at school? "Making them feel they have succeeded in whatever they're doing. You shouldn't try to force a child into learning things he is not ready for. When he fails he feels unhappy and when he is unhappy he stops learning."

Sister Emilia of the Consolata Sisters Mission on Ngong Road sees the nursery teacher's

influence extending beyond the classroom. "If you teach the child how to pray before meals, he will insist on praying at home too. Very often the parents will start doing it too, if only to please the child."

In a long, open room that also serves as a social hall, Mrs Margaret Karanja and Mrs Esther Wamagata minister to the needs of over 100 children. This is the Anderson Hall, Nursery School, run by the welfare department of the Kenyatta National Hospital.

The children are divided into three groups: the newcomers, the second years and the ones joining Standard One the following year. The three classes are separated by narrow spaces between the benches. The third teacher left recently, leaving the two women to cope with nearly 50 children each, a teacher: child ratio way above the 1:20-35 recommended in the pre-school guidelines for Kenya.

But, with 44 years' experience between them, these two veterans can cope. Mrs Karanja has been in the business for the past 26 years, the majority of them in this same hall. Mrs Wamagata joined the profession in 1967.

Barely a kilometre away, 50 other children are going through the paces at the Mara Road. The contrast is dramatic. There are four classes, with at most 14 children. There are brightly coloured pictures, paintings and drawings all over the walls. The children's work is displayed in the corridor.

Today, Mrs Joyce Karugu is in charge of newcomers in what is known as the reception class. The 12 children all have their names neatly affixed onto their sitting positions on three tables. A long counter holding all sorts of teaching aids runs round two walls of the room. Children's story books are stacked on a rack in the corner — "to get them used to the idea of reading and owning books".

When they come in for the first time, many of the children are rather subdued. English is the language of communication and many can't speak it yet. "But children are better learners than many adults think and by the third week they have picked up enough to make their feelings known."

Nursery teaching has taken on a new importance, particularly in

the past 10 years, she believes. "Take the days when we went to school. Learning meant having things written on the board. We learnt by heart, only pausing to question what we were reciting when we became grown up."

The slow learners will receive closer attention. The result is seemingly brighter children. Today's pre-primary class, she points out, can do what it took the children of Standard Two or

Three of the 1960s to do.

Before children are taught reading and counting, she believes, they must first learn kindness, compassion and other human values. "They can't understand how to love Jesus before they learn how to love fellow human beings."

Children at this age learn very quickly, she has found in 10 years of teaching pre-school children. Moreover, they trust whatever they are told by adults. What they are taught in school must agree with what they do at home, otherwise they end up being confused and either the parents or

the teacher loses that trust.

The key to discipline, she holds, is to explain to a child why he or she is asked to do anything. "If you tell them they must not talk too much when having lunch, you must explain to them that talking when they are eating can make them choke on the food."

The path to nursery school teaching is littered with many pitfalls, owing mainly to prejudices long established in people's minds. Nursery teaching has long been regarded as a career fit only for the not-so-bright, as many young enthusiasts have discovered. It is not one of the careers that appear in selection forms issued to school leavers and many young women wishing to join the profession find it difficult to know where to go. And they often meet parental opposition when they make their choice.

The general attitude to the profession is perhaps expressed more clearly by the low pay given to teachers worldwide, a factor that many feel has kept men out of the profession. Many women have even been known to feel ashamed of admitting they are nursery school teachers.

## And now a computerised shoe to help joggers

By MAUD S. BEELMAN

Plug your running shoes into your home computer? If you have computerised running shoes, your computer will tell how far, fast and long you've run and give you a graf on how to improve.

Peter Cavanagh, a Pennsylvania State University (US) biomechanics professor, developed a computerised shoe for Puma, the West German athletics footwear company which supports research at the school's biomechanics laboratory.

It was to be displayed at a manufacturer's exhibition, held in conjunction with the New York City marathon, and it is expected to be available at retail outlets by late March.

About \$200 will buy a Puma RS computer shoe package, which includes a pair of shoes with a 50-gramme watertight compartment on the outside of the right heel. The tiny space houses a memory chip, an electronic clock and pulse counter.

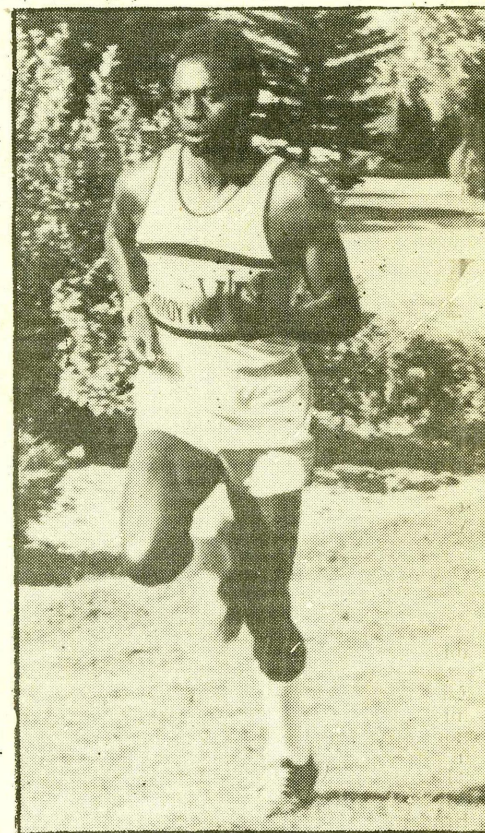
The package includes a floppy disc, with programmes for the apple IIIE and the Commodore 64 home computers, and a cable to plug the shoe into the computer.

Cavanagh, 38, an avid runner and computer hobbyist, came up with the idea three years ago while researching running mechanics.

The computer calculates its running data, using a mathematical equation based on "calibration" information runners provide at the start.

"They go to a (standard) track and they just run five or six different speeds, timing how long it's taken them to go around the track and simply counting the number of foot strikes to the ground," Cavanagh said.

After plugging that information into the computer, "It knows just what their relationship between speed and stride time," he said. "Once you've calibrated this shoe, your own running pattern is stored on your computer disc and every time you plug the shoe in it goes and references that pattern and then is able to estimate your running distance"



An athlete jogging. Now there are computer to help him. are computerised shoes to help athletes during workouts.

— AP

## Our airports

FROM PAGE 9

med that she should not take them out of the country as presents for her family.

Arbitrary and rude checking of passengers' baggage should be discouraged, the tour operator said.

One wonders why the airport authorities cannot introduce the internationally accepted system whereby those visitors with articles that need to be declared are ushered through one door marked red while those without pass through a section marked green.

The areas designated for customs checks are too cramped to deal with the number of passengers leaving. Very often, passengers have to jump over other people's luggage to answer queries raised by the officials.

It is also at this stage where many of the "policemen" get a chance to harass the visitors. With threats of prosecution hanging over their heads, distraught passengers will obviously pay any amount of money that is demanded of them by corrupt officials.

Allegations of having "excess" baggage and promises that such will be overlooked if one pays a certain tip, is also rampant at the airport. In the departure lounges the duty free shops, which are

supposed to be slightly cheaper than other shops in the city or at Mombasa, it is not strange to find that they are actually not "duty-free" as prices are higher.

Personal checking by security officers is not an easy thing for passengers to accept. During the recent UN Decade for Women Conference much show was made of the security door checks and other checking equipment. Their use at the airport would help diffuse the anxiety that passengers have to go through when undergoing personal checks.

On departure, visitors are expected to pay an airport tax of US \$10. This is time consuming and complicated for individual travellers like Marion.

For locals, in particular, this seems a pointless exercise as they have to get the foreign exchange from the Central Bank in the first place. It's a case of the left hand giving to the right.

There are 15 other currencies which may be accepted from passengers as payment of this tax.

As the second largest foreign exchange earner to our country, airport authorities and all related departments and sectors of the tourist industry should ensure that they provide maximum and efficient facilities and services.