

Birds grounded in Canaries

Parachuting in style in the Canaries.
(From a car?)

Isn't it amazing where the little two-stroke Suzuki shows up? This versatile little car has made it possible for many more people to get "away from it all". And some of them are very pleasant looking people indeed. . .

When our photographer heard that somebody on Grand Canary, the largest of the Canary Islands, was using a Suzuki as a tow vehicle for paragliders, he just couldn't resist it. And just to make sure the 'pics' would be up to standard, he took Michelle and Marie-Ange with him. They're certainly up to our standard!

Paragliding is very simple — you don a parachute harness, the parachute is opened and a car or boat (more usually, a boat) pulls you along. You become airborne quickly, and then float along behind the vehicle until such time as they slow down, when you gently drift back to the ground. . . . But try explaining that to two ladies who are not about to risk a broken leg, and an interrupted modeling career!

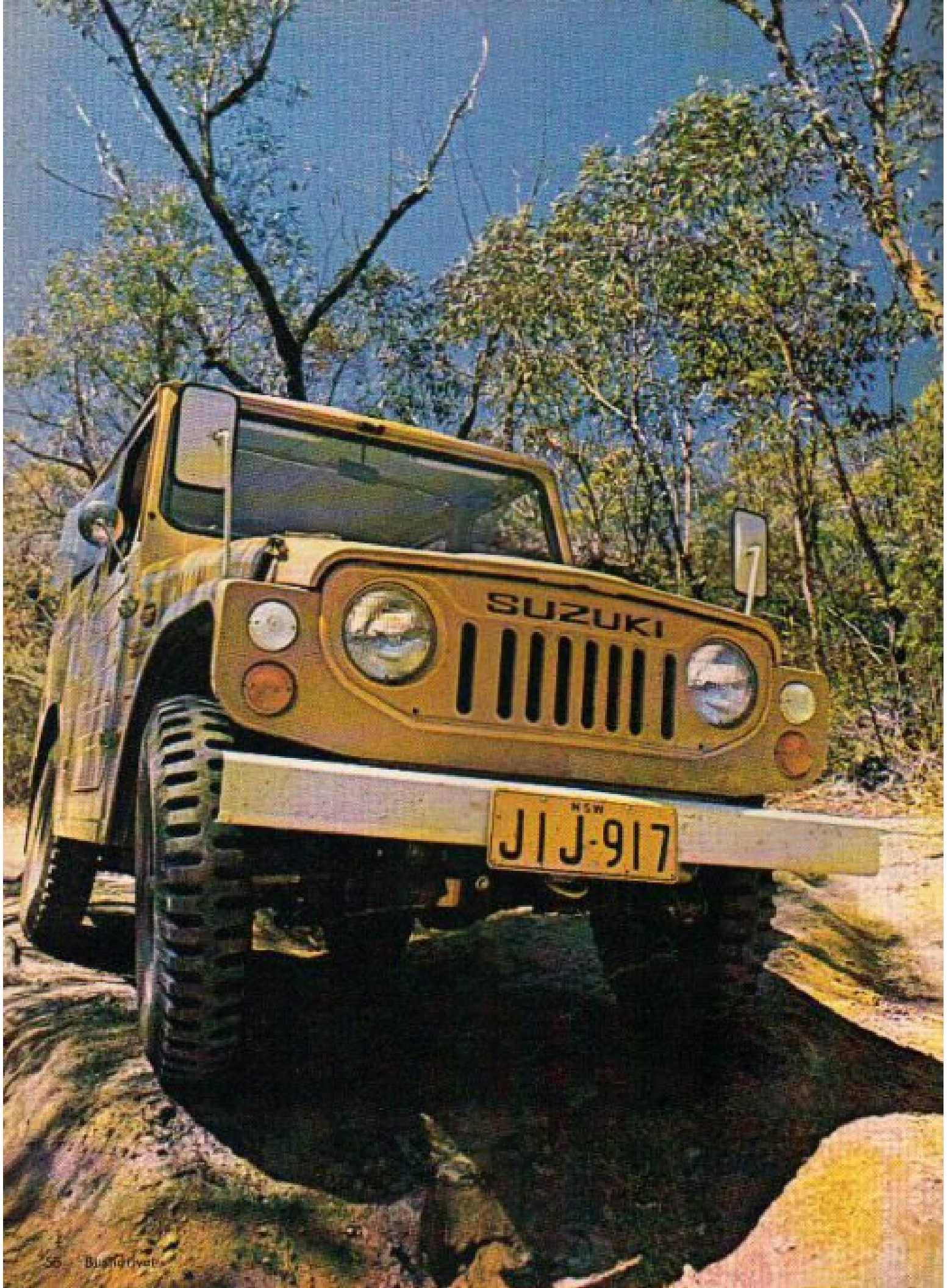
What made it worse was the fact that the photographer was not about to demonstrate the safety of the procedure . . . being a definite chicken himself!

So we regret that we can't bring you a picture of either of our lovely ladies floating through the air — you'll have to be content with earthbound ones. Do I hear complaints? Next time, find your own paragliders!

Michelle and Marie-Ange seem to be rather preoccupied with the parachute — but I'm sure neither of them had any complaints about the little car. It certainly is a fun car — whether you're pulling along paragliders in the Canaries (or not pulling them along, if they're chicken) or buzzing around in the great Australian outback.

The problem with the outback, of course, is that you would have a little trouble finding co-drivers quite like our two Canarians in these pictures. Never mind. Why not visit the Grand Canary yourself sometime — and try your hand?!







STUDY & PICS: BARRY TUCKER

Suzy's three-pot screamer

The LJ50 series Suzukies are not exactly new to the off road scene in this country, but BARRY TUCKER only recently got the chance to test-drive one. He jumped in, drove off . . . and got a little carried away . . .

SUZUKI'S tiny three-pot screamer, the LJ50 series, could become a classic among off road vehicles. I recently spent a week road testing the LJ50V (hard top) and after getting off to a jerky start became somewhat enchanted with the vehicle's performance, on and off the road.

My first 10 minutes in the Suzuki LJ50 introduced me to a new style of motoring. I quickly learnt not to try to drive it like more expensive machinery. To my mind the LJ50 is feminine gender. Treat her like a lady and she'll respond like one. Treat her like a bitch, and . . . I ran into minor problems in those first 10 minutes, encountering right angle turns, traffic lights and fast moving traffic in quick succession.

The problems were a hair-trigger clutch, direct steering, little go in third and almost none in top, a screaming dervish of an engine which over-revved madly between changes, and a gearbox that was too low geared to be of much use around town — or so I thought initially. I began telling myself it was going to be a hell of a week and started looking for a philosophy that would help me cope. I quickly decided that the vehicle couldn't change its habits so I would have to change mine.

No sooner did I start taking things slow and easy with Suzy, like a cautious approach to a new girl, than all the nice things started happening. She stopped trying to lurch away with her touchy clutch, stopped howling between gear changes and we quickly settled down together. By the end of the week Suzy and I were running rings around city

traffic, due mainly to the LJ50's magnificent manoeuvring ability and the small spaces it can creep into.

The common complaints about the LJ50 are its lack of guts on the highway and its narrow track, which tends to make it fall off the sides of mountains. But the LJ50 was designed for use as a light town and country pickup, not as a macho grand touring machine or a rock climber's companion. The recently introduced LJ80 series — with only minor suspension changes, a 4in wider track and a new four cylinder four stroke engine — was designed to answer the criticisms of those who have taken the LJ50 and put it to a use for which it was not originally intended.

I thought the LJ50V really shone in its adopted role as an off road performer and, considering my usual around-town transport is a BMW 2002, I couldn't really fault the little van's performance on the city streets. My approach to getting satisfaction from the two stroke was to try to be realistic about its potential. It's not a Landcruiser, a Range Rover or a Jeep and yet it went everywhere I wanted it to go without any fuss. The vehicle that will do everything hasn't been built yet, and if it had it wouldn't be available for just over \$4,000.

After a predictably slow run down the Hume Highway, the winding Wombeyan Caves Road began to give me my first realistic impressions of the LJ50's abilities. I had already noticed the van's tendency to bounce, even on patched up bitumen. NSW distributors Ateco Suzuki point out that the LJ50V is registered as a motor lorry and goods vehicle. Its suspension is designed to carry a maximum load of 200 kg (440 lbs) and naturally it's less bouncy with some of that payload in the back. The test car was carrying only one person and less than 20 kg of food,

camping equipment and photographic gear.

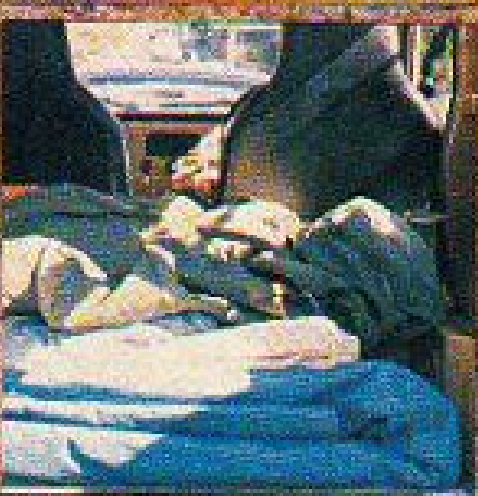
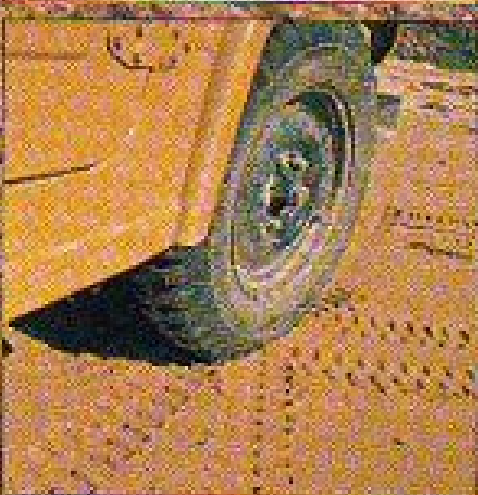
A lot of road shock was transmitted through the steering wheel and was sometimes severe enough to wrench it out of my grip. I fought the natural inclination to yank the wheel back in line and the LJ50 always corrected itself quickly — a safer procedure than whipping the wheel from side to side on a loose surface.

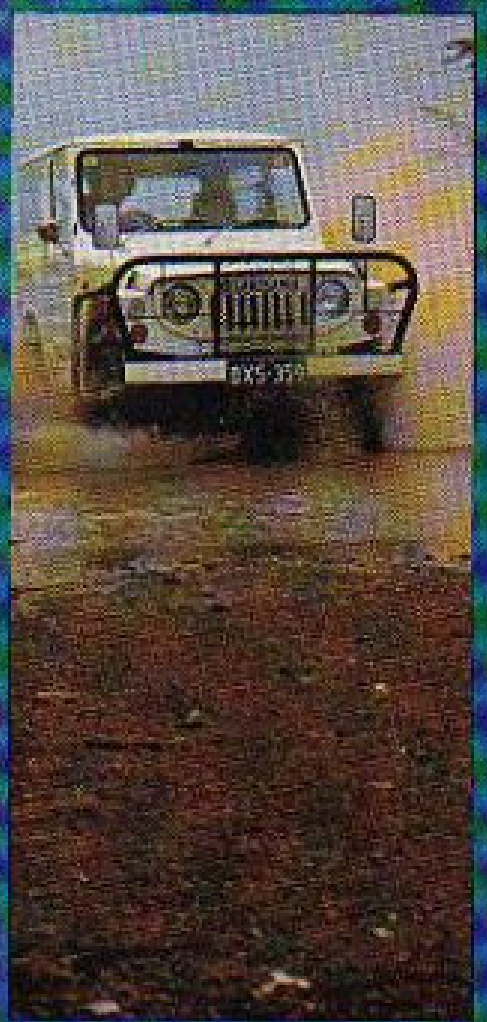
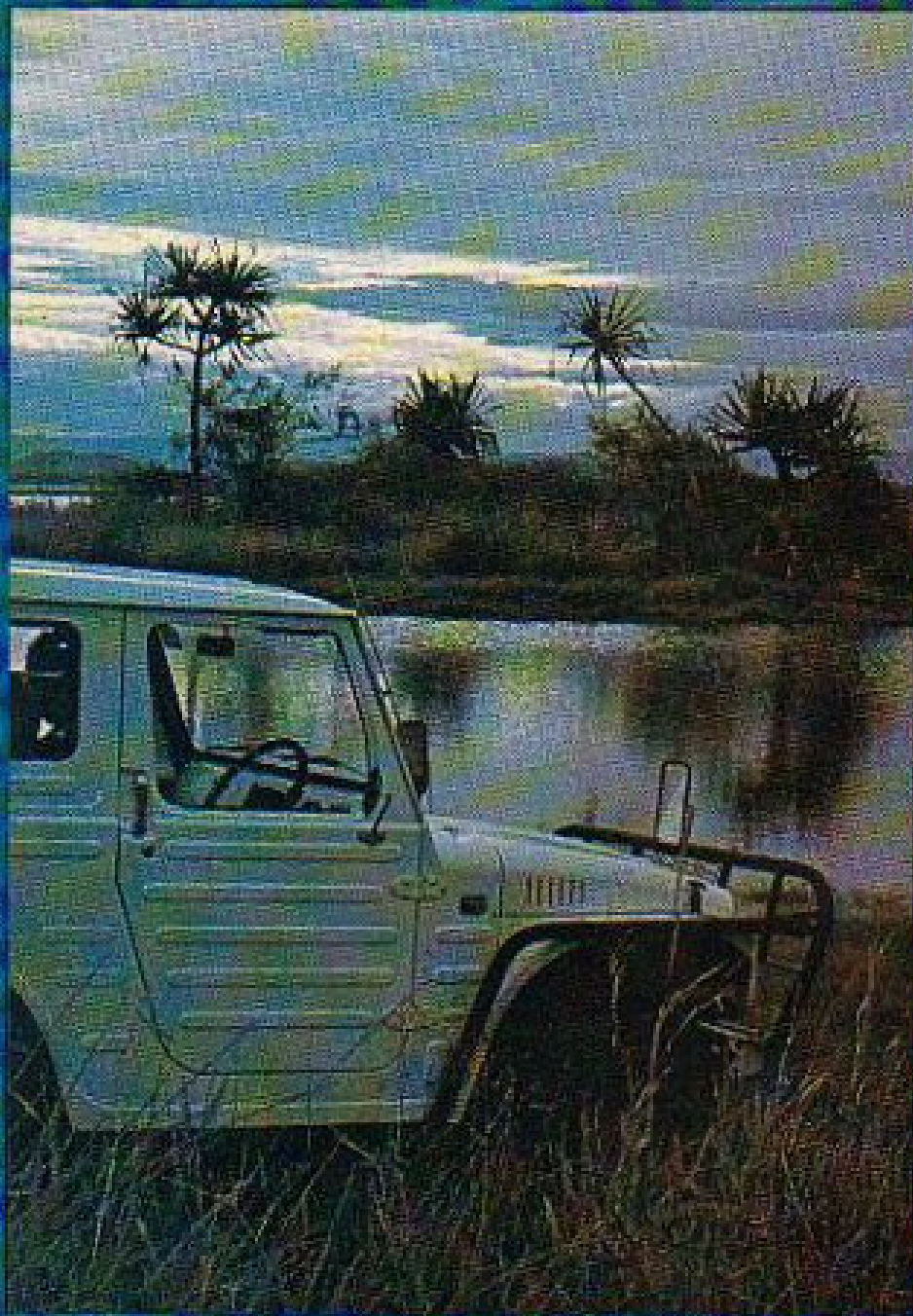
At no stage did I encounter the LJ50's dreaded reputation for lifting an inside rear wheel on sharp curves, although I sometimes pushed Suzy into situations where I expected it to happen. I firmly believe that where this does happen it should not be a criticism of the vehicle — it's more a case of the driver taking the LJ50 beyond its reasonably broad capabilities.

The same applies to the LJ50's gearbox, which has been criticised for being imprecise. In just on 1000 kms of driving I missed only two gear changes, and I remember them both very clearly because the gear lever flew out of second, smack in the middle of curves on that winding Wombeyan road.

But Suzy sailed on through the curve on both occasions; I picked out second gear more carefully and we were quickly motoring on. These two near mishaps were a clear case of driver error — I approached both curves too fast on a rough road, making down-changes just that little bit more difficult, and consequently had too many revs up when I made the sloppy change into second.

The fact that Suzy and I survived both incidents says a lot for the way she has been put together and pooh-poohs the criticism that has been levelled at her narrow track. It also says something about the way the LJ50V should be driven.





On a steeply sloped hill near the caves area I decided to test the stories about Suzies falling over. Nearing the top of the hill I banked to the left and put about a 15 degree lean on the van before chickening out. Of course the LJ50s will fall over, any vehicle will if you push it far enough. I stuck to my basic approach of keeping within a sensible margin of what I considered to be the vehicle's ability.

At the end of this brief run I experienced a minor problem, one that Ateco Suzuki had warned me about - an occasional difficulty in moving the transfer lever from high range to 2WD. The trick that worked every time was to engage first, inch forward slowly and keep a steady pressure on the transfer lever. It soon snicked into place with a little push. Apart from that minor detail, which will cure itself with a little wear, the transfer lever operation was smooth. I also had trouble engaging reverse properly, but only when I tried to hurry the operation.

Most of the problems I had encountered so far were largely due to the error of still trying to drive the Suzuki like a heavier, more powerful and more expensive machine.

Two things I didn't like on the LJ50 were the position of the handbrake and the small capacity of the fuel tank (30 litres or 5.6 gallons).

The handbrake lever is located on the passenger side of the transmission hump - not a long way from the driver, depending on your reach, but far enough to make it difficult to work the brake and keep your eye on a bush track at the same time. It would be better located between the seats, on the transmission tunnel, allowing the driver to remain upright when using it. It's in



Very limited rear overhang was handy for backing out of tight spaces.

The slope doesn't look too steep but Suzy ran away in first gear low range due to poor engine braking ability.

Sharp end of rock is aimed at Suzy's fuel tank, but was easily cleared with some of the 240 mm of clearance to spare.

Standard bar treads had good grip on damp sand and grab smooth rock surfaces too.

Suzy's cargo area is too small for sleepers, but provides plenty of room for gear.

the same position on the LJ80. In spite of its location the handbrake - which operates on the tailshaft - always worked smoothly and effectively.

The only irritating noise in the test vehicle (you can hardly complain about a two stroke being noisy) came from a continual buzzing sound in the handbrake linkage. Otherwise the LJ50 was free of rattles and body squeaks.

According to my figures the LJ50V used 71.35 litres of petrol for the 728 km run from Sydney to Wombeyan Caves and home via Goulburn and Wollongong, with frequent stops for note-taking and photographs. I seemed to be stopping frequently to fill the fuel tank too, but those figures indicate a performance of 9.8 litres/100 km (or 29 mpg), which is not bad allowing for the fact that I was not driving the LJ50 as smoothly as I was later in the week, the frequent stops and starts and the use of 4WD. The figures give the 30 litre tank a range of 287 kms (180 miles).

Oil consumption was an amazingly low 1.5 litres.

The fuel tank is made of thin gauge metal and, apart from its location behind the right hand rear axle housing, is unprotected. Ateco Suzuki spokesman Chris Henry says a few Suzuki owners have reported ruptured tanks, but not enough to make this look like a serious problem.

The one-piece rear door was convenient but wouldn't stay open when the van was parked while leaning to the left. It's not always possible to find a flat piece of ground in the bush and sometimes I had to prop the rear door open with a heavy stick. But this makeshift arrangement doesn't always work and once while preparing lunch on the luggage tray I leaned on the rear end, the stick fell and the rear door with its heavy spare wheel slammed across my bum and the backs of my legs. Some kind of door stay is needed to make sure the door stays open when you want it to, and this problem has been reported to the manufacturers.

The breather tube on the CCI oil reserve tank on the test vehicle dripped oil onto the top of the fender beneath the bonnet, making a gooey mess inside the engine compartment. Chris Henry assured me this was not a common problem with the LJ50 and suggested oil must have run into the breather tube when the vehicle was tilted to the left. Whatever the cause, if you prefer a clean engine compartment you can redirect the tube towards the rear centre of the engine bay and feed it down a bracket on the firewall.

The breather tube, the lack of a rear door stay and the handbrake position were the only things I didn't like about the LJ50 which, considering its price

tag, I regard as an otherwise beautifully designed and engineered vehicle. I was happy to accept the fact that the two stroke, 24.6 KW engine was not particularly powerful and top speed was necessarily low. Suzy cruised at 75 km/h and I thought trying to reach and hold a top speed of 100 km/h or more was not only nerve-wracking but slightly ridiculous.

Overall I was impressed with the tiny three-pot performer as an all-purpose, all-terrain vehicle. The finish was good for the price and the originally intended use of the vehicle, with full length head lining, plastic door trim and thin rubber floor mats. The enamel paintwork showed a few chip marks, especially in the luggage compartment, but resisted scratches from branches and bushes.

The front door windows move up and down quickly and easily with only two and a quarter turns of the winders - very handy when suddenly confronted with the dust trail of an oncoming vehicle. The big rear side windows open out from the back and are locked with an elbow joint which snaps firmly into place in the open and shut positions. The elbow joints include a good gripping device for the fingers and when the windows are popped open they stay open, unlike some of these systems which slam shut with the first gust of wind.

The makers claim the LJ50 will run through water reaching as high as the top of the 'guards and the electrics seem high enough and well enough insulated to allow this. I can't vouch for it because where I went I couldn't find any water more than a few inches deep. Ateco Suzuki go further and claim that with a snorkel on the carburettor the engine compartment can be flooded and the LJ50 will keep on going.

Dust sealing was excellent. The only place it came in was through the open windows. Some gravel was kicked in from the rear of the rubber sealing around the transfer lever. I didn't get the opportunity to drive the LJ50V in a decent rain storm, but I imagine the weather proofing is as good as the dust sealing.

The dual system hydraulic brakes were powerful enough for all my city and highway driving and showed no inclination to lock up under the heaviest pressure. Leading shoes are fitted to the front drums and leading and trailing shoes to the rear. The two stroke LJ50 is not noted for its engine braking ability, which is much improved on the LJ80. Chris Henry took me down a wet and steep fire trail in his LJ80V and the vehicle crawled along in first gear low range without any foot brake pressure. The LJ50V required heavy foot brake pressure on the same slope.

(Please turn to page 86)

GOODIES



Light mistake

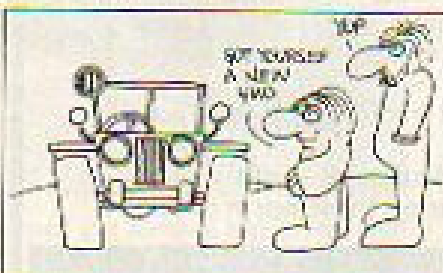
We were off beam with our reference to OSCAR driving lights on page 63 of issue number three and we'd like to put the record straight.

The lamp we described as the Oscar Plus was in fact a 7 in. quartz halogen headlight replacement unit, which is priced at \$55 a pair.

The real Oscar Plus, photo on this page, is priced at \$45.

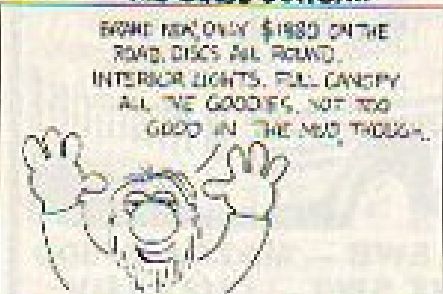
We apologise to John Holdsworth Automotive Lighting Co, of St. Leonards, Sydney, and to all other Oscar stockists for screwing this one up, and to anyone who tried to buy a 100 watt Oscar rally globe for \$4.50.

The Oscar H1 100 watt rally globe is priced at \$8.90, and the 50 watt rally globe is priced at \$4.50.

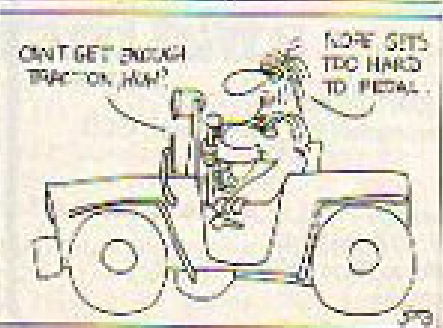


DRIVER DAN

The Dino Duffer...



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(Continued from page 58)

The position of all instruments and driving controls was good, with the exception of the handbrake; and I found the driving position the best I've ever experienced for my 1.7 metre frame, with room to spare around the pedals. Forward vision over the sloping bonnet was excellent and the negligible overhang at the rear made it easy to back into places where another vehicle would have difficulty.

When Bruce Flynn tested the LJ80 for BUSHDRIVER he found it performed better than the two stroke off road and had only a slight edge over it on the highway.

Apart from its off road abilities, good looks and versatility, I think the economics of LJ50 ownership will make the vehicle popular for many years to come. The LJ50 and the LJ80 are now competing with each other. In this odd situation there may be scope for bargaining with your friendly Suzuki dealer. But who can predict what will

happen after July this year when NSW and Victorian dealers will be no longer permitted to import the two stroke and dealers' stocks begin to dwindle.

There are now many hundreds of LJ50s, new and used, in dealers' yards and you could try talking one into letting you make a big saving - to spend on a radio, a roll bar, underbody protection or an auxiliary fuel tank.

If I could afford to run a second vehicle I'd be seriously considering the Suzuki LJ50 because as I said at the start I think it's on the way to becoming a motoring classic.

The suggested retail price of the LJ50 in NSW is \$3,875 including sales tax of \$387.15, plus registration fee of \$170, transfer fee \$6 and stamp duty \$78. The suggested retail of the soft top is \$3,527 including sales tax of \$352.18, plus registration \$170, transfer \$6 and stamp duty \$70. The delivery charge varies between dealers.

TECH SPECS



LJ50

MODEL

Suzuki LJ50

DIMENSIONS

Overall length: 3025 mm
width: 1295 mm
height: 1673 mm
Wheelbase: 1930 mm
Road Clearance: 240 mm
Tyres-

front & rear: 6.00-16,4PR

Tyre pressure-

front: 117 kPa (17 psi)
rear: 117 kPa (26 psi)

Track tread-

front: 1090 mm
rear: 1100 mm

Kerb weight: 730 kg
Seating capacity: 2 persons

PERFORMANCE

Maximum horsepower:
24.6 kWatt @ 5500 rpm
Maximum torque:
56.6 N.m

Climbing ability:

tan $\theta = 0.74$ (36.5°)

Braking distance:

14.0 at 50 km/h

Turning circle: 9.2 m

Maximum load: 200 kg

Towing capacity: 750 kg

ENGINE

Type: 2 cycle, 3 cylinder,
water cooled
Bore X Stroke:
61.0 mm x 61.5 mm

Displacement: 539 cc

Lubrication: Suzuki CCI

FUEL SYSTEM

Tank capacity: 30 litres
Carburettor: VCI 30-25
Air cleaner: Wet poly-urethane

LUBRICATION SYSTEM

Engine: Suzuki CCI
Oil tank capacity: 3-4 litres
Transmission case oil:
1000 millilitres
Transfer case oil:
900 millilitres
Axle shaft oil:
1300 millilitres
Steering gear oil:
180 millilitres

COOLING SYSTEM

Type: Water cooled, pressurised
Radiator: Corrugated fin tube, pressure type
Water pump: Centrifugal V-belt drive
Thermostat: Wax pellet element type
Coolant: 3.5 litres, including 0.6 litres reserve at 0.6 litres reserve at full level

IGNITION SYSTEM

Ignition: Battery
Ignition timing: 6° BTDC
1000 rpm and below
Spark plugs: NGK B-7HS

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