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news letter



Alfa Romeo

OWNERS CLUB
KENYA

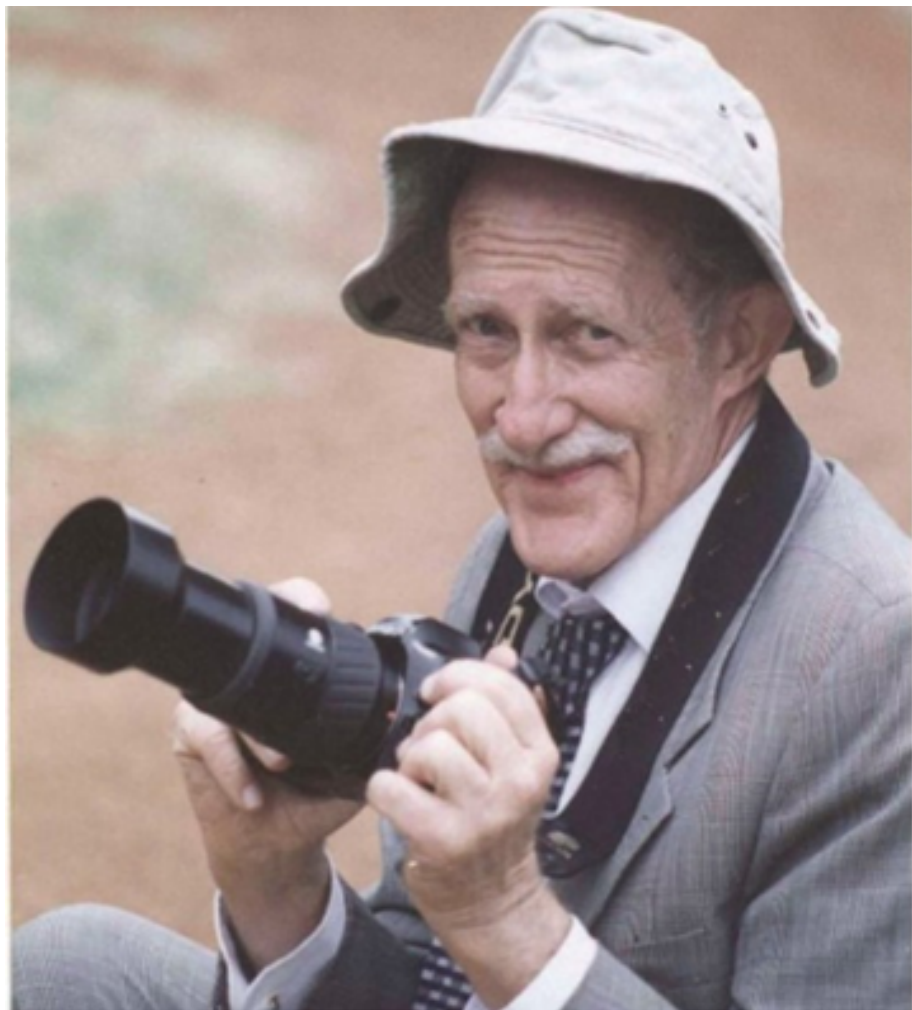
Since 1970, the club has organized social and motoring events for Alfa Romeo owners. The club also circulates a regular newsletter and provides workshop and maintenance advice.

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SPECIAL EDITION TRIBUTE TO BOB DEWAR



Thursday March 13th 2025 will go down as the saddest day in the history of the Alfa Romeo Owners Club Kenya. For it was at dawn on this day that the indefatigable Bob Dewar breathed his last at the Aga Khan University Hospital in Nairobi. And with that, a legacy in motoring spanning over six (6) decades was written in the annals of history.

Bob Dewar was born in Kenya in May 1934 to English parents and was brought up in Nairobi. He was educated at Kilimani Primary School and Nairobi Primary School before joining the Prince of Wales (now Nairobi School) where he did his secondary and high school education. After an exemplary performance in his A-Levels in 1954, Bob proceeded to the prestigious Oxford University in the United Kingdom where he attained a degree in Law.

While at Oxford, Bob realized that his calling was not in the legal career, but nevertheless completed his studies so as not to disappoint his parents who had sacrificed to ensure that he got the best education. Deep inside him, he was tickled by his childhood fascination with cars and motorsports.



Bob in his MGA at the Langata Quarry Hill Climb, March 1959

On completion of his studies at Oxford, Bob was employed by Caltex Oil in London as a graduate trainee in 1957. Later, when an opportunity arose for him to be transferred to either Vietnam or Kenya, the obvious choice for Bob was Kenya – and so it was that he returned to Nairobi to join Caltex in the late 50's. Here he acquired his first car, an MGA sports car, and was soon participating in hill climbs and track races in Nairobi and Nakuru. After a stint in the Administration Department where he was immersed in every aspect of the oil industry, he was to be tasked with explaining to motorists the reasons behind a sharp price increase which had sparked a furore – an act that was to give birth to his public relations career.

In 1968 the Caltex Nairobi office was reduced to a coordinating office and Bob opted to resign and put in an application to run PR for Caltex as an individual consultant, thus giving birth to Bob Dewar Publicity which he ran to the very end of his life.

One of Bob Dewar Publicity's early clients was the Alfa Romeo dealership in Kenya, Touring and Sports Cars Ltd, and being one who never let a good opportunity pass him, Bob convinced them that it would be in the best interest of the brand and the dealership to establish an owners club - and so it was that the Alfa Romeo Owners Club Kenya was born, officially registered with the Registrar of Societies on 20th February 1970 under Registration Number 5505.



Bob at the wheel of a Frazier-Nash Le Mans at a past Hill Climb

A year later when the club turned one and ideas were being sought on how to celebrate this milestone, Bob was in his element once again when he suggested the idea of a Concours d'Elegance – inspired by some of the notable concours events around the world such as Pebble Beach California. And again, so it was that Bob's vision had given birth to an event that has since gained reputation globally amongst other concours events – you only need to search Wikipedia to see that the Africa Concours d'Elegance is the only one listed in the whole of Africa, with pride of place amongst the best of the best Concours events around the world.

But Bob did not just stop at founding the Club and the Concours – it is one thing to create an idea and get it off the ground, but it is an entirely different thing to nurture and keep it going on and on... and so it was that Bob single handedly steered the growth of the Club and the Concours for the past 55 years. The Alfa Romeo Owners Club is today the oldest single marque car club in Kenya - and not just the oldest for the sake of it, but also the most active with social events held every single month of the year. And in all these 55 years up until our last club social event on February 23rd this year, Bob only missed the last two events held in January and February because he was hospitalized.

Bob's efforts and hard work in nurturing and steering the Club and the Concours gained international recognition and acclaim. It is no wonder therefore that the Africa Concours d'Elegance has over the years hosted participants from over a dozen countries around Africa, Europe, South America and Australia. Through Bob's efforts, the Concours attained Africa continental status in 2006 and has since then been an FIM-Africa sanctioned event. In December 2021, Bob was the recipient of the FIA Founding Members Club Heritage Cup - the first and only time that this prestigious trophy has ever come to Africa. All these exploits firmly put the country on the world map as a historic motorsport destination.



Bob is seen here receiving the FIA Founding Members Club Heritage Cup at the FIA annual awards ceremony in Paris on 16th December 2021

Bob only missed one edition of the Concours d'Elegance – in 2022 – when he was taken ill a few days to the event. but he conveyed a short message of goodwill to all competitors which was relayed across the venue on the public address system during the event, so technically we can still record him as having attended that event albeit remotely in this era of virtual engagements.

And up until September last year, Bob was still responsible for penning all the monthly Club newsletters and Concours bulletins. Last December he was on track to pen the last newsletter for the year – a Christmas and goodwill message to members – but ill health got in his way.

So what was it about Bob that kept him going at it for all these years, even enduring obvious physical discomfort in recent months to attend club events? It was his tenacious spirit, a never say die attitude and a firm belief in leading from the front. Even from his hospital bed during the last two months, Bob never failed - in his murmuring voice and whispers to ask for updates on Club affairs and Concours preparations.



Bob making an address at a past Africa Concours d'Elegance at the Nairobi Racecourse in his capacity as Event Director

Beneath this legendary and towering profile, to us at the Alfa Romeo Owners Club he was simply “Bob” – the affable and ever smiling car buff who was never angry at anyone, and who was always ready to lead by example and offer help when needed.

Within the club, Bob created a family of Alfa Romeo enthusiasts – and nurtured a spirit of camaraderie amongst members. He was always keen to find out how members were doing in their work, businesses, and in their families.

The Alfa Romeo Owners Club and the Africa Concours d'Elegance have lost an incredible person, a founder member, a visionary leader, a true Alfisti and an outstanding motoring legend whose shoes will be impossible to fill – there will never be another Bob Dewar!

We will miss the jokes that preceded his every speech, and we will miss his wise counsel and incredible grasp and knowledge on matters vintage and classic cars. We will never forget his firm handshake, friendly smile and happy demeanour.

We will remember Bob for his strong convictions, determination and perseverance - and this is the way in which he shaped the Club and the Concours.

Go well Bob, we will greatly miss you, but we commit to keep your legacy alive by keeping the Alfa Romeo Owners Club Kenya and the Africa Concours d'Elegance going strong for another 55 years to come and beyond.

Rest in Eternal Peace Bob



Bob prepares to cut a birthday cake during a surprise party hosted by Alfa Romeo Owners Club to celebrate his 90th Birthday at the Muthaiga Country Club in May 2024

Editor's Note:

Many tributes have been received from far and wide. One such tribute received from Mr Nicholas Ng'ang'a, former Chairman of AA Kenya, Safari Rally and Safaricom amongst other distinguished positions he has held in his long career in both public and private sectors, is reproduced below:

Few people, if any, will be aware of the long association between Bob Dewar and I. I first met Bob in 1958 when as a young school leaver,, I sought for employment at Caltex (Africa) Ltd, at their town office on Sadler (now Koinange) Street in Nairobi. The Company was looking for a Receptionist/telephonist with some knowledge of typing. Having learned to type with one finger at school, I presented myself for interview. Bob, who also looked pretty young, made me read some newspaper texts and relate the stories to him. He then sent me to one of the lady secretaries for a typing test on which I performed dismally, being totally unfamiliar with the long bar of the Olivetti Lettera 22 typewriter. My test at the 2-external and 6-internal lines was equally unsuccessful. Back with Bob, he told me I didn't perform to my claimed qualifications but as I appeared like an intelligent fellow he would give me a try. The long and short of it is that I performed well enough for Bob to entrust me with sorting and shortlisting candidates for employment for him to interview. I worked for Bob for 5 months before enlisting for undergraduate studies at Makerere University. After this Bob gave me vacation employment every year for my whole university course.. I will always remember Bob for two events during that time. First was he decided that we rescue our messenger from the court at Makadara where he was charged for being "drunk a disorderly". Not only did Bob pay his fine but he also gave us all a ride back to the office in his open Morris MGBT Sors car in which we could hardly fit! The second memorabilia is when Bob decided to take me out for coffee at the then ""all white" Garden Hotel. He wanted to advise me on university life prior to my admission. The Goan head waiter was almost in a fit and didn't know where to place a young African in the dining room. Bob reassured him that it was ok and we had our coffee! I was to meet Bob later in life when he started the Alfa Romeo Club and the Concour de Elegance and I was on the Boards of the AA of Kenya, the Safari Rally and Car & General. My reminding him of our earlier relationship was always met with a humble and respectful smile. I was so happy to see and talk with him only a few months back when he came for lunch at the Muthaiga Country Club. I will always cherish my memories of Bob as a person of great vision, humility, professionalism, principles, human concern and pursuit of excellence. May his soul rest in peace.

~ Nicholas Ng'ang'a