

**Colin Munro (ABC Radio) notes for the launch of
The Back of Beyond Collection DVDs
Marree July 24th 2004**

Ladies & Gentlemen

"330 miles across shifting sand hills, stony plains and a flat dry bed of ancient streams. A lane through the burning centre of Australia - the Birdsville Track.

Supplies and mail for lonely cattle stations ... and your only link with the outside world is Her Majesty's 'Royal Mail' Tom Kruse.

*They called it the 'Never Never Country' - the Back of Beyond ... it echoes now to a man and his truck - a carrier called Kruse" part of the script of **The Back of Beyond** written by John Heyer and Douglas Stewart.*

Thank you for the opportunity to officially launch ***The Back of Beyond* Collection - a tribute to Birdsville Track mailman Tom Kruse.**

He's an outback legend - a tough, dogged giant of a man - and this double DVD set tells Tom's story.

In one historically important collection, these DVDs celebrate the life and times of Australia's best-known outback mailman Tom Kruse MBE.

As you all know, very fortnight Tom battled isolation, heat, sand dunes and floods to deliver mail and supplies to the families along the Birdsville Track from here to Birdsville during the 1940s and 1950s. The DVD set has been produced to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the release of ***The Back of Beyond***. The collection includes:

The Back of Beyond – it was produced by the Shell Film Unit in 1954 and written and directed by John Heyer, this multi award winning classic Australian docudrama from Film Australia introduced the outback to a generation of Australian and overseas audiences. Few have forgotten the remarkable images and the story of the Birdsville Track mailman Tom Kruse.

Last Mail From Birdsville - the Story of Tom Kruse was produced by Corrugated Air Productions in 1999. This significant TV documentary follows the restoration of Tom's 1936 Leyland Badger mail truck that he drove in ***The Back of Beyond*** and his mail run re-enactment *The Mail Truck's Last Run* from Birdsville to Birdwood.

The Outback Mailmen (ABC TV Countrywide 1986) *The Jubilee Mail Run* during South Australia's 150th birthday celebrated Tom's contribution to outback transport and communications. With a group of enthusiasts, Tom returned to Pandie Pandie Station near Birdsville to rescue ***The Back of Beyond*** 1936 Leyland Badger in 1986. It also includes the Channel Country mail run by air.

The Postman (ABC TV Australian Story 1996) Following the rescue of the Leyland Badger from the desert, Tom and his mate Dave Burge go bush and revisit a number of abandoned trucks and scrap yards in search of parts to restore the Badger.

The Extra Features on the DVDs include

production stills and footage of the making of **The Back of Beyond** and **Last Mail From Birdsville**.

The Kruse Family Photo Album: A memorable series of snapshots of outback life from the 1930s to 1950s.

Extended interviews about **The Back of Beyond** and Tom Kruse

John Heyer's **Journey of a Nation** and

Individual scene selection

It includes over three hours of digitally re mastered material.

The Back of Beyond Collection – a Tribute to Birdsville Track Mailman Tom Kruse is distributed by the RFDS with proceeds of the sale of the DVD directly supporting the Royal Flying Doctor Service of Australia.

The producers of the **Last Mail from Birdsville** DVD are enormously grateful for the generous support of the CMV Foundation represented here this afternoon by Trustees Paul, David and Michael Crawford.

The DVD has been made in memory of their father James (Jim) Crawford AO, Managing Director and Chairman of the CMV Group from 1968 until his death in 1999.

Jim was a man who dedicated much of his life preserving the history and recognising of efforts and deeds of the people who live and work in Outback Australia – particularly in the long haulage transport industry.

Like Tom, Jim Crawford is a Member of the National Transport Hall of Fame in Alice Springs. Both Tom and Jim's awards were announced by Transport Hall of Fame President Liz Martin in 2000. Liz is also here this afternoon from Alice Springs.

As we heard earlier, it was Jim's father Sid who sold the Badger to Harry Ding in 1936.

Please join me in once again thanking the CMV Foundation and specifically the Crawford family for their life long interest in and commitment to the story of Tom Kruse and the Leyland Badger.

This important national project would not have been possible without the generous support of the CMV Foundation and the unwavering commitment to the idea by Trustees Paul, Michael and David Crawford ... the significant contribution made by Film Australia and in particular their Sales Manager Jacqui Stone ... the professional input provided by Image Control Pty Ltds production team led by Keith Webb ... the distribution support provided by the RFDS and the role played by Executive Producer Ian Doyle in bringing all the elements together.

The Royal Flying Doctor Service of Australia, Tom Kruse and ***The Back of Beyond*** are all Australian outback icons.

The RFDS started in 1928 and is a unique aero-medical organisation. Across Australia, the RFDS assists over 200,000 people annually, ensuring that no matter where you live or work, no one is ever more than two hours flight time from medical help, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

(Words about Rev Fred McKay)

I've had a preview of ***The Back of Beyond Collection***. It very successfully fulfils the 'brief' set out when this project was conceived in January this year when Ian and I had a chat on Summer All Over on ABC Radio. The idea immediately took off – a number of you are here today directly as a result of that conversation. The idea was so new when we spoke that Ian hadn't even raised it with Tom and Valma.

The Collection brings together the wonderful stories and remarkable images of the outback and one of its living legends Tom Kruse. The digital remastering of this double DVD set has ensured future generations of Australians will know this story for all time.

I'm certain you'll enjoy watching them this evening as we celebrate the 50th anniversary to the day of the first screening of ***The Back of Beyond*** here at Marree ... I'd recommend you don't leave Marree without a copy ... Tom I'm sure would be happy to sign it ... and with the Heyer, Butler and Dervish families so well represented - as well as a number of the cast in the same spot at the same time, don't let this opportunity pass – it will never again.

Well done to all those involved - it gives me great pleasure to officially launch ***The Back of Beyond Collection – a Tribute to Birdsville Track Mailman Tom Kruse***

Colin Munro
ABC Radio
SYDNEY