

Outback Legend Returns to Channel 7

The story of Australia's most famous outback mailman **Tom Kruse MBE** and will shown on Channel Seven's ***World Around Us*** on Sunday June 16th at 5.00 pm. ***Last Mail from Birdsville - the Story of Tom Kruse*** as part of Channel 7's salute to 2002 The Year of the Outback.

Outback mailman Tom Kruse was a film star before his *Top Gun* Hollywood namesake Tom Cruise was born. The 1954 Australian film classic ***The Back of Beyond*** introduced Tom Kruse and his 1936 Leyland Badger mail truck to a generation of Australians. Most never forgot the extraordinary images of the man and his battered truck doing battle each fortnight with the sand and isolation along the Birdsville Track. It was outback Australia's toughest mail run.

The 500-kilometre track runs from Marree in northern South Australia to Birdsville in southwest Queensland. Tom Kruse played himself, delivering mail, fuel and supplies to the isolated families along the world famous track. Shot in black and white, ***The Back of Beyond*** remains one of the most critically acclaimed and awarded films ever shot in Australia. It won Best Film at the Venice Film Festival in 1954 as well as many other international awards.

Tom Kruse celebrates his 87th birthday in August. His recent mail run re-enactment in his fully restored 1936 Leyland Badger, is the subject of this evocative, colourful and emotional documentary *Last Mail From Birdsville*. "I never believed I would ever drive the Badger again," Tom Kruse said.

Last Mail from Birdsville – the Story of Tom Kruse traces the recovery of the badly deteriorated Badger from the desert near Birdsville in 1986, its painstaking three-year restoration from 1996 and the final mail run re-enactment down the Birdsville Track in 1999. Behind the wheel again after almost 40 years, Tom carries over 7000 letters from well wishers around the world. More than 120 other vehicles join the convoy, following the last mail run re-enactment.

Last Mail From Birdsville includes images of never before screened footage of Tom Kruse and other outback mailmen during the 1940s. This historically significant and remarkable black and white footage was shot by mail contractor Harry Ding and made available from the Ding family archive.

"Tom Kruse is a dogged, tough giant of a man who was awarded an MBE by Queen Elizabeth in 1955 for services to the people of the outback. We recognise far too few of our heroes. This documentary celebrates the life of one of this country's living legends," Executive Producer Ian Doyle said. The new home for the Badger is the National Motor Museum at Birdwood in the Adelaide Hills.

An extended director's cut video of *Last Mail From Birdsville* is available from the Royal Flying Doctor Service on **1 800 813 318**. More details can be found at **www.lastmailfrombirdsville.com**

Last Mail from Birdsville - The Story of Tom Kruse is produced by Keith Webb, Roger Clarke and Ian Doyle of Corrugated Air Productions. The documentary was made with the assistance of Australia Post, Shell Australia, Fuelink, Optus MobileSat, Australian Satellite Services, Shane Grover Toyota, Peter Cochrane Transport and Peter Lehmann Wines.

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