



ROYAL FLYING DOCTOR SERVICE
OF AUSTRALIA

MEDIA RELEASE

18th June 2004

The Back of Beyond celebrates 50 years

On July 24th 1954 at the Marree Town Hall, the multi award winning classic Australian film *The Back of Beyond* was screened for the first time in outback Australia. Fifty years later to the day, a double DVD of the four major film and television stories about legendary outback mailman EG (Tom) Kruse MBE will be launched to commemorate this historic screening.

“We are delighted Tom and Valma Kruse, other cast members and members from the Butler, Ding and Heyer families including Dr Elizabeth Heyer, daughter of *The Back of Beyond*'s Director John Heyer, the fully restored 1936 *Back of Beyond* Leyland Badger and ‘Henry’, the replica *Back of Beyond* Blitz truck (named after Tom's mail run travelling companion Henry Butler) will be in Marree for the celebratory weekend on July 24th. It will be a memorable celebration, a significant tribute to Tom in his 90th year and the town is right behind the event,” RFDS Public Affairs & Marketing Manager John Tobin said.

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 trucks doing battle each fortnight with the sand and isolation along the Birdsville Track - 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. Produced by the Shell Company Film Unit, directed by John Heyer and shot in black and white, *The Back of Beyond* remains one of the most critically acclaimed and awarded films ever produced in Australia. It won Best Film at the Venice Film Festival in 1954, as well as many other international awards. The impressive 1954 Venice Film Festival trophy, loaned by the Shell Company of Australia, will be on display in Marree on July 24th.

The 50-year Tom Kruse tribute double DVD *The Back of Beyond Collection* includes *The Back of Beyond* (Film Australia 1954), *The Outback Mailmen* (ABC Countrywide 1986), *The Postman* (ABC TV Australian Story 1996) and *Last Mail From Birdsville – the Story of Tom Kruse* (Corrugated Air Productions 1999).

The project involves Film Australia, ABC TV, the RFDS, the CMV Foundation and Corrugated Air Productions and is of national significance. 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 double anniversary DVD will celebrate the life of one of this country's living legends.

The main street in Marree will be closed from 12 noon on Saturday for the official opening at 4.00 pm, followed by a community BBQ in front of the Marree Hotel. The screenings at the Marree Community Hall will start at 6.30 pm. Funds raised from the BBQ and recovery breakfast, the film evening and the sale of the DVD are in support of the Marree Hospital and the RFDS.

More Information:

John Tobin - RFDS

Public Affairs & Marketing Manager

Ph 08 8238 3333

www.lastmailfrombirdsville.com