



Tom Kruse MBE 1999



Tom Kruse 1953

MEDIA RELEASE

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Tom Kruse returns to Birdsville to unveil bust

The third of four bronze busts of 94 year old Birdsville Track mailman E.G. (Tom) Kruse MBE will be unveiled at 11.00 am on Friday (September 5th) at the Birdsville Community Hall before the start of the 2008 Birdsville Races. The permanent home of the bust will be the soon to be completed and renovated Wirrarri Visitor Information Centre in Birdsville.

Former Diamantina Shire Council Mayor and *The Back of Beyond* cast member David Brook OAM and Robert Butler, son of Tom's *The Back of Beyond* driving partner Henry Butler will join Tom Kruse to unveil the Birdsville bust.

The four bronze busts of legendary outback mailman Tom Kruse MBE have been produced by highly regarded Robe based sculptor Ms Patricia Moseley.

Birdsville, Marree, the National Motor Museum (NMM) at Birdwood and Waterloo, Tom's hometown are the locations for the four life-sized bronze busts. The NMM bust was unveiled by His Excellency Governor General Michael Jeffrey on March 30th, the Marree bust on June 7th and the date of the Waterloo bust unveiling will be in early December.

The NMM is the permanent home of the 1936 Leyland Badger which featured in the classic 1954 Australian docudrama *The Back of Beyond*.

The Badger Restoration Group, headed by Neil Weidenbach and Corrugated Air Productions, headed by Executive Producer Ian Doyle, raised the funds needed to complete the Tom Kruse Bust Project.

"Our original target was three busts and \$15,000.00. Significantly more was raised and as a result, we've produced the fourth bust for Tom's hometown of Waterloo in the mid north," bust Appeal Co-coordinator Ian Doyle said.

The project attracted significant support from a number of organisations including the CMV Foundation, the RFDS, the Diamantina Shire Council, the Birdsville Hotel, Pilatus Australia and numerous private donors.

"The group believes this is an important project which recognises the significant contribution made by Tom and all the Birdsville Track mailmen to outback Australia," Ian Doyle said.

Tom Kruse celebrated his 94th birthday on August 28th. His mail run re-enactment in his fully restored 1936 Leyland Badger was the subject of an evocative, colourful and emotional documentary *Last Mail from Birdsville - the Story of Tom Kruse* produced by Corrugated Air Productions in 1999. It's now available on a double DVD from the Royal Flying Doctor Service (ph 1800 813 318) as part of *The Back of Beyond Collection*.

"Tom's travelling OK at the moment and the organising committee is keen to have him participate in unveiling the busts. We are delighted Robert Butler and David Brook OAM are also able to be part of the unveiling at Birdsville," Ian Doyle said.

The Back of Beyond introduced Tom Kruse, Henry Butler and the 1936 Leyland Badger mail truck to a generation of Australians. Most never forgot the extraordinary images of the men and the battered truck doing battle each fortnight with the sand and isolation along the 500 kilometre Birdsville Track - outback Australia's toughest mail run. Shot in black and white, *The Back of Beyond* remains one of the most critically acclaimed and awarded films ever made in Australia.

"Tom Kruse is a dogged, tough giant of a man who was awarded an MBE in 1955 for services to the people of the outback. We recognise far too few of our heroes. These bronze busts celebrate the life of one of this country's living legends," Ian Doyle said.

Tom and members of the Kruse family and sculptor Patricia Moseley are generously being flown to Birdsville in aircraft provided by Pilatus Australia and John Parnell. The unveiling will be followed by morning tea and a screening from *The Back of Beyond Collection* in the Birdsville Community Hall.

More information:

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Birdsville Track 1999

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