



MEDIA RELEASE

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Centenary Tribute DVD to Outback Mailman Tom Kruse

The centenary of the birth of Australia's most recognised outback mailman, dam sinker and carrier Tom Kruse MBE is this Thursday (28/08). Along with his eleven siblings, Tom was born in the front room of a modest family home at Waterloo, a hamlet in the mid north of South Australia on August 28th 1914. He died on June 30th 2011 and rests with his wife Valma at the nearby Carlsruhe cemetery.

On Sunday August 31st from 12 noon, the community at Waterloo will be paying tribute to their favourite son, Esmond Gerald (Tom) Kruse MBE. In addition to readings from the internationally successful children's book ***Tom the Outback Mailman***, written by Kristin Weidenbach and the unveiling of a commemorative Tom Kruse panel, the celebration will host the premiere screening of a new feature length television documentary ***The Mailmen Back of Beyond***, produced by Corrugated Air Productions.

The Mailmen Back of Beyond is a result of 28 years of research by producers Ian Doyle and Keith Webb. They gained unprecedented access to the significant photographic collections of the Kruse, Heyer, Ding, Crombie and Teague families. In addition to the stills collections (available online at www.tomkruse.com.au), the documentary airs for the first time elements of movie footage filmed by filmmaker and adventurer Colin Wagener. He is now 96 years old and lives in the Adelaide Hills. He filmed in colour a trip he took on the Marree to Birdsville mail run with driver Monty Scobie in 1953 and the Cooper Creek in flood in 1956 and 1963.

Tom Kruse was the key figure in the classic Australian docudrama ***The Back of Beyond***, directed by the Shell Film Unit's John Heyer and released in 1954. 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 the Grand Prix Assoluto – the best film in all categories at the Venice Film Festival in 1954, as well as many other international awards.

The Mailmen Back of Beyond reveals, in a letter written to Tom, that John Heyer believed that if he had been able to show the film to a paying audience (and then allowed to be nominated), it would have won an Oscar in 1954.

The documentary has also unearthed a letter written in 1954 from London by Australian artist Sidney Nolan to Tom in Marree. The contents of the letter have sparked a search by the Kruse family for 'enclosed' photographs and drawings promised by Sidney Nolan.

Sixty years after the release of ***The Back of Beyond***, the double DVD set ***The Tom Kruse Collection*** includes more than 3.5 hours of material about Tom Kruse, the rescue, restoration and re-enactment involving his 1936 Leyland Badger mail truck, the stories behind the making of ***The Back of Beyond*** and the past 100 years of history of the mailmen of the Birdsville Track.

"We are delighted members of the Kruse, Butler and Heyer families including Dr. Elizabeth Heyer, daughter of director John Heyer, will be at Waterloo for the celebrations. It will be a memorable afternoon and a significant tribute to Tom in his centenary year. The town is right behind the event," ***The Tom Kruse Collection*** Executive Producer Ian Doyle 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 Tom Kruse Collection includes ***The Mailmen Back of Beyond*** (Corrugated Air Productions 2014), ***Last Mail From Birdsville – the Story of Tom Kruse*** (Corrugated Air Productions 1999), ***The Postman*** (ABC TV Australian Story 1996) and ***The Outback Mailmen*** (ABC Countrywide 1986).

On Sunday (August 31st) there will be a community BBQ from 12 noon, followed by the unveiling of the Tom Kruse commemorative panel and book readings by author Kristin Weidenbach. The screening of ***The Mailmen Back of Beyond*** in the Waterloo Community Hall will start at 1.30 pm.

The Tom Kruse Collection is available from the Royal Flying Doctor Service (ph. 08 8238 3333 for \$39.95 including P&H). Proceeds from the sale of the double DVD ***The Tom Kruse Collection*** are in support of the RFDS. ABC Landline will broadcast part of ***The Mailmen Back of Beyond*** later this year.

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