Remembering Territory families

After the War

There was a general feeling of desolation and decay. Frank Wise, appointed Administrator of the Northern Territory described his first impressions:

It was a hot tiring day of August 1st, 1951 – we arrived at a bad time of year, Darwin at that time always very drab and brown; we were met by the Heads of the Services and the Government Secretary, the senior administrative officer.

My wife had not previously been in tropical Australia and did not know what to expect. She had read much of the writings of authors and journalists of North Australia but the drab appearance of Darwin on a hot afternoon in August was a physical and mental shock to her I am sure. She was very composed and brave with the young family to care for and noted all the unpleasant matters without complaint.

The drive from Darwin Airport gave a vista of untidy roadsides; brown dusty clumps of grass roots and trees; skeletons of bombed buildings at the Air Force section near the airport; a wrecked plane or two at the roadside near the entrance to the town; badly bombed buildings including broken walls which were former banks and offices and hundreds of empty petrol drums and galvanized iron tanks in prominent places...

[Northern Territory Archives Service NTRS 226, TS 141 and NTRS 219, TP 363, Frank Wise]