Cyclone Tracy 40th Anniversary

23 November 2014

New-Look Exhibition at MAGNT

After 20 years, the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (MAGNT)’s much-loved Cyclone Tracy exhibition has been refreshed ahead of the 40 year commemoration.

The MAGNT has seen a huge rise in the number of Cyclone Tracy related donations, both objects and photographs ahead of the 40th commemoration. Much of the new material in the exhibition is based on these recently donated items.

Highlights of the refreshed exhibition include:

- **Spectacular, never-before displayed, eight metre railway signal tower that was bent during Cyclone Tracy**
  The tower once formed part of the signalling equipment used on the Palmerston to Pine Creek Railway. It was installed near Salonika Crossing in Stuart Park around 1885. The tower survived the destructive cyclones of 1897 and 1937, and also the Bombing of Darwin during World War Two. It was recovered by MAGNT in 1982. It is significant as an historic railway object and is a powerful reminder of the strength of cyclonic weather systems.

- **Touchscreen and interactive table that display new information and untold stories of Cyclone Tracy using new technology**
  These include searchable evacuation and death lists that will be publicly searchable in the exhibition for the first time, enabling families to search for relatives and loved-ones and track their journeys after Tracy, interactive ‘then and now photos’ that blend images from 40 years ago with new photos shot in the same locations today – an insight into history and the changing face of Darwin since Cyclone Tracy, and an animated tracking map of Cyclone Tracy utilising actual images taken by the Bureau of Meteorology of the developing and approaching cyclone.

- **A replica of the historic vessel Betty Joan, which was destroyed during Cyclone Tracy**
  The replica has been commissioned and exhibited by MAGNT especially for the 40th commemorative Anniversary. Almost one third of the 66 deaths that occurred during Cyclone Tracy were mariners in Darwin Harbour. The display features objects on loan from the Haritos family who once owned the vessel.
Tracy Tales – How the Darwin Business Community Survived the Great Cyclone

Tracy Tales – how the Darwin business community survived the great cyclone is a look at the cyclone through the eyes of Darwin’s business community.

The book interviews business survivors who relive the terror of the cyclone as well as the perseverance and dedication to rebuilding their businesses and community infrastructure.

Some of the businesses interviewed and featured in the new book include:

- **Peter Bracher - Paspaley Pearls**
  In 1974 the Paspaleys designed and constructed a purpose-built vessel to transport shell from WA to the Territory, investing everything they had in the sleek Paspaley Pearl. Arriving in Darwin Harbour on Christmas Eve aboard the vessel, Mr Bracher and the Paspaley family faced a storm that could not only sink their new ship, but their unique business as well.

- **John Hardy – Hardy Aviation**
  Known as one of the modern mainstays of the Territory aviation industry, John Hardy was working as a radiographer at the Darwin Hospital on Christmas Eve 1974. Caught in the worst hit area, Mr Hardy and his wife and five children fled the family home as it was blasted apart in the storm.

- **George Voukolos – Fishing and Outdoor World**
  The mega-popular fishing shop had a busy day on Christmas Eve 1974 but that was nothing as memorable as the following night. After surviving the tempest, George made a morning-after dash to try and reach his shop. He needed to secure his stock of fire arms, knowing looters were already on the streets.

- **Dwyn Delaney – Delany’s Country and Western Store**
  Dwyn Delaney recalls the Wild West atmosphere of Cyclone Tracy’s aftermath. Cargoes of beer and cigarettes were fair game down on the Darwin wharf, and there to keep the peace were martial law authorities, some of whom were gun-toting blow-ins that threw the young shopkeeper in jail.

- **Harry Maschke – Action Sheetmetal**
  The affable principal of this iconic Territory business fled his home which was collapsing around him in the cyclone. Then, suddenly the lights went out and what occurred next remains a mystery.
Dick Griffiths – Bradlaw Agencies  
The cyclone was a life-changing event for everyone who went through it. For Mr Griffiths it meant a loss of a business partner and the start of a new, life-long direction.

- Ernie Chin – Chin and Associates  
The real estate developer from one of Darwin’s oldest families made it through the night from hell, only to take to the road the next day. What he encountered on Darwin’s ravaged streets still haunts his dreams.

- Norman Coles and Carmen Simonato – Coles Supermarkets  
Ms Shimonto worked late that terrible night at Coles, dispensing hot food. After she left for home, the store was obliterated, prompting Coles’ managing director, Norman Coles to hop on a plane to see what he could do to help.

- Napoleon and Irene Pantazis – Parap Fine Foods  
The proprietors of the popular Darwin international gourmet foods shop were separated during the cyclone, sparking a dread of violent wet season storms that remains with them today.

- Owen Peake – Electricity Supply Undertaking  
Darwin’s electrical power crashed as lines were shredded in the wind and the poles connecting the suburbs collapsed. Organising an army of volunteers, Mr Peake set about restoring the power to the Territory capital.

- Todd McCourt – Norblast Industrial Solutions  
Mr McCourt was a 14 year old in 1974 and for him Cyclone Tracy was an unforgettable grand adventure. The son of a heavy equipment contractor, Mr McCourt would spend the following months at the controls of a crane, working to re-establish fallen power poles.

- Mark Finocchiaro – Fannie Bay Bakery  
Mr Finocchiaro was born in Sicily with flour under his fingernails, a trade he brought to Darwin, establishing the Fannie Bay and the Darwin Bakeries. In cyclone ravaged Darwin, quality food was in short supply, and the military in charge turned to Mr Finocchiaro for fresh bread.

- Mavi Milevoj – The Maddalozzo Group  
Ms Milevoj’s father Angelo Maddalozzo owned and operated the popular Mandorah Hotel and the three Mandorah ferries. As the pub was being lashed by the cyclone,
Angelo advised the crew of the Mandorah Queen ferry to moor the vessel. But they decided to seek shelter in Woods inlet and Angelo was never to see them again.

- **Hugh Bradley – Ward Keller**
  Mr Bradley, the retired Territory Chief Magistrate was a partner at Ward Keller in 1974. In Bali when the cyclone struck, Mr Bradley was desperate to get back to Darwin as soon as possible. But he and an associate were thwarted by the Commonwealth who restricted all incoming travel to Darwin, an edict Mr Bradley decided to be quite illegal.

- **Helmut and Joy Schimmel – Ironstone Nursery**
The cyclone tore every leaf from every tree in Darwin, a fact that affected no one more than the Schimmels, owner/operators of the award-winning Ironstone Nursery. Badly damaged on Christmas Eve and by Government policy afterwards, they were to bounce back to be instrumental in the regeneration of Darwin.