Peter Styles
Deputy Chief Minister of the Northern Territory

Documentary to share Borella story – but who is Charlie?

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The remarkable story of Albert Borella has been immortalised through a new documentary produced locally in the Territory but the filming has not yet uncovered Borella’s mysterious Aboriginal comrade known only as Charlie.

*Albert Borella VC, An Incredible Journey* follows the amazing trek of the Territory’s only Victoria Cross recipient from Tennant Creek to Darwin, then onto Townsville by ship to enlist in the Army for World War I.

Deputy Chief Minister Peter Styles said the film has been produced by local company Military Myths Defeated, supported significantly by the Northern Territory Government with additional funding from the Australian Government.

"Albert Borella’s story is an important part of the Territory’s military history and the documentary not only preserves this, but will share the inspiring tale with a new, wider audience," Mr Styles said.

“The Borella story epitomises the ANZAC spirit. He journeyed 1,000 kilometres across the Northern Territory from Tennant Creek to Darwin and then onto Townsville, just to do his bit,” Mr Styles said.

“He fought for his country at Gallipoli and the Western Front and finally in a fierce infantry action for which he was awarded the Victoria Cross, the highest honour for valour in combat.”

Member for Solomon, Natasha Griggs, said the documentary focuses on the 2015 re-enactment of the Borella Ride, during which Richard Borella retraced the journey taken by his famous grandfather to enlist in the first year of the Great War.

“At the conclusion of the Borella Ride, Richard and the Military Myths Defeated crew travelled to France to visit Villers-Bretonneux, the site near where Albert’s heroism came to the fore in the Victoria Cross action,” Mrs Griggs said.

“But Albert Borella’s amazing story began even before he enlisted in the AIF. He walked, travelled by horseback and even caught a train across the rugged Territory terrain so he could serve his country.

“It truly is a story of enormous bravery and endeavour, and this documentary is a comprehensive account of the Borella commemoration.”
Ride historian and documentary Creative Designer Tom Lewis said the documentary has been painstakingly put together over the past year.

“This is a comprehensive account of Albert Borella’s military journey but the process has itself uncovered more unanswered questions,” Dr Lewis said.

“We have known about a sketch, by Albert himself, of his mysterious Aboriginal companion ‘Charlie’ who is believed to have travelled at some stage with Borella.

“Almost nothing from Borella’s pre-war and service years has survived but for this sketch of his mate Charlie, so it must have been of some importance to Albert. Perhaps someone out there knows more about Charlie.

“We are extremely pleased with the final product and we thank the Territory and Federal governments for their support as well as all those who helped us along the way.”

Albert’s 80-year old son Rowan Borella, who took part in the Borella Ride in 2015, attended the documentary’s private preview screening at Parliament House last night, and said seeing his father’s story played out through film is a moving experience.

“Our family is extremely proud that Dad’s story remains a treasured tale for the Territory and that it is still being shared so many years later.”

The documentary will be aired on a free to air channel in the coming weeks, and DVD and online copies will be later available.

More details can be found at http://www.militarymythsdefeated.com.au.

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Charlie sketch