Commissioner's Message

As you read this, Margaret and I will be heading south in our caravan, enjoying retirement. We leave the Territory after seven years. Years which could not be considered uneventful. It has been a rebuilding process for the tri-service, both in terms of staffing numbers and facilities. The new Pilatus aircraft, the vehicle replacement program, police and fire station development and the $6 million forensic science centre are all examples of the growth we have experienced as an organisation.

Commissioner Bates with Assistant Commissioners Bruce Wernham, John Daulby and Doug Smith

It is pleasing that the Police Force is currently above establishment. In seven years, I have seen 16 constable squads graduate, 11 auxiliary squads and a significant increase in the number of Aboriginal Community Police Officers.

The work of the ACPOs cannot be overstated. The program has had a dramatic change in direction, I think for the good, and that needs to be pursued. I am proud of the success of the Police Ethnic Advisory Group. The number of letters I have received from people who are genuinely grateful for their assistance is exceptional.

I have been fortunate to receive excellent support from my various Ministers. I have worked with Daryl Manzie, Shane Stone, Mike Reed and now Syd Stirling. Whatever side of the fence they're on, they have been supportive and allowed me to pursue issues important to the tri service.

As 2001 comes to a close, so too does the International Year of the Volunteer. It is important to recognise yet again the wonderful efforts of our volunteers, for which we are all appreciative.

ACPO John Daly presents Commissioner Brian Bates a farewell gift from the ACPOs

The Fire and Rescue Service has come a long way in the past seven years too. It is arguably the best equipped fire service in the whole country. The Alice Springs Fire Station is state-of-the-art. Overall, it is a quality service and gives the new Fire Chief a strong base upon which to build.

I want to emphasise the work undertaken by our welfare support people. They are tremendously important to an organisation that faces tragedy in its many forms on a daily basis. They have provided immeasurable support for members and their families in difficult times.

We have experienced the Katherine floods, cyclones such as Thelma, the East Timorese refugees "Tent City". We certainly have had our share, including the highs and lows experienced by the Agency, and I believe we've handled it all exceptionally well, if not sadly on some occasions. At the end of the day, I believe it's not often we are found wanting and if we are, we quickly learn and move on. We don't dwell on our mistakes, but we learn from them. I am extremely proud of the work we have achieved together in the past seven years.

Margaret and I will take with us lasting memories of the Northern Territory. I believe the opportunity I have been given to serve and protect the Territory community is a privilege and one that I will never forget.

Margaret and I wish all members and staff and families of the Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services a very safe and happy Christmas. And if you see a Landcruiser and caravan GHF13 on the highway, don't forget to wave.

BRIAN C BATES

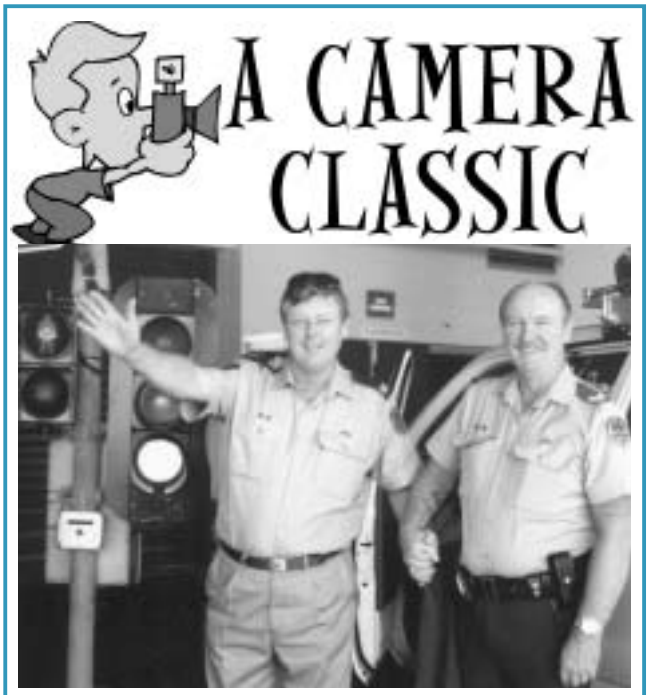
From the Editor's desk...

Rarely do I receive a phone call at 5am that isn't a call to action, but the call I received on Sunday 15 July was the biggest yet. By 6am, my boss Denise Hurley and I were in the office with Commander Bob Fields, and our Southern Region Media Liaison Rebecca Cass was rapidly winding up her weekend away at Yulara and preparing to drive back to Alice Springs. At midday I boarded a light aircraft with Commander Max Pope and some TRG guys, destination Tennant Creek. Twenty-four hours, and a night in Ngukurr, later we were in Tennant – only to have missed the action. Tuesday Commander Pope and I went to Alice where about 100 local, national and foreign journalists, photographers and cameramen had converged to get the scoop on the disappearance of Peter Falconio (not to mention the hundreds who phoned us every day). And there I remained for four months (with the occasional visit to Barrow Creek, Tennant Creek, and a couple of other stations).

Anyway, that's my excuse, and I'm sticking to it.

So here's that Drum I kept promising everyone would be out soon. I hope it's worth the wait.

Christine Atkinson
Editor



It seems crime prevention wasn't the only thing on people's minds at the NTsafe Expo in June. Love was in the air at the AIU display, where Senior Constables Dave 'Dusty' Mason and Dave Gilmour were snapped hand in hand greeting visitors by Sgt Richard Martin.

What's in it for you...

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THE DRUM
The Drum is the official publication of the Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services. *The Drum* will now be produced biannually and distributed to all staff. A staff newsletter, *The Drumstick*, will also be produced monthly.

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Kris Lee, NTPFES

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Front cover
Alice Springs NTES volunteer Michael Wiles does his best Spiderman impression, taken by Karl Herzog.

Centrefold
Fire and Rescue Recruit Squad 1/2001 graduation in November, photos by Christine Atkinson.

Back cover
A police diver demonstrates his skills at the NTsafe Expo 2001 in June, photo by Christine Atkinson.

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THE CHANGING OF THE GUARD

By Christine Atkinson

Mr Paul White has been appointed the new Commissioner of Northern Territory Police and Chief Executive officer of Fire and Emergency Services.

L to R: Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services, Syd Stirling MLA; new NT Police Commissioner Paul White; Chief Minister Clare Martin and outgoing Commissioner Brian Bates

Mr White has had a diverse career in South Australia Police, most recently as Assistant Commissioner. His areas have included specialist investigation, intelligence and general duties, as well as professional development.

Throughout his 33-year career, Mr White has been seconded to the Australian Bureau of Criminal Intelligence, undertaken an exchange to Kent County Constabulary in the United Kingdom, and was the International Team Leader for the United Nations review of police training in Kyrgyzstan.

He has also been a board member on numerous state, national and international committees including the National CrimTrac DNA Steering Committee, the Australasian Crime Commissioner's Forum, the National Crime Authority Consultative Group, and was the Treasurer and Board Member for Crime Stoppers SA.

FAREWELL TOUR

Commissioner Bates and Mrs Bates toured the Territory in late October and early November to farewell the members and families of the Police, Fire and Emergency Services. The whirlwind tour took in all the major centres and most remote police stations.

CAPSICUM SPRAY TRAINING

By Christine Atkinson

With the trial period over, all police members are being trained in the correct use of oleoresin capsicum, or OC, spray.

The training is run as a one-day intensive course with both the theory and history of capsicum spray and comprehensive after care instructions for people who have been sprayed.

Southern Region Training Officer Brevet Sergeant Norm Skennar said the major concern is the welfare and care of sprayed people. Members are also given the option of being sprayed themselves so they can fully understand what happens when OC spray is used.

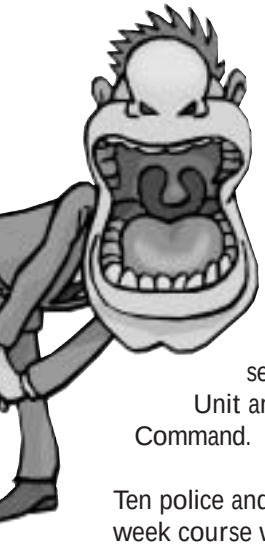
"The response from members has been that they are extremely happy with having been fully exposed to spray during training," Norm said.

"That includes everyone from Senior Sergeants down. They're all keen to fully participate including receiving full exposure. It makes the carry and use of the spray safer for members and the public."

General Duties members in Alice Springs have all been trained in use of the spray, and Norm, who completed the OC spray trainers course at the Smith and Wesson Academy, will now focus on training members at bush stations throughout the Southern Region. He also runs courses for the use of glock pistols and defensive tactics training.

Wedding bells in Bali

Leigh Bowers and Murray Cahill tied the knot in Bali in July. They had 24 guests, mostly from work. Leigh spent part of her honeymoon in Alice Springs without her new husband – she was working on the Barrow Creek investigation.



TALK YOUR WAY OUT OF THIS ONE

By Christine Atkinson

Central Australian police and Corrections staff completed the negotiator course in June. It was the seventh course run by the Police Negotiators Unit and the third for Central and Southern Command.

Ten police and five Corrections staff completed the two-week course which ended with a two-day exercise including the cordon and containment group.

Course coordinators Detective Sergeant Jeanette Kerr, Detective Senior Constable Juanita Harris, and Senior Constables Martyn Briggs and Kirsten McCarthy acted as moderators and hostages. The exercise also used the media unit and interpreters to make the students aware of further problems they may face, such as negotiating through a third party.

"The course encompasses a large component of mental health topics as well as using interpreters in high risk incidents, face to face and phone negotiations, and communications techniques and negotiation skills and strategies," Det Sgt Kerr said.

It's the second time the course has incorporated Corrections staff. It included negotiations for high risk incidents such as suicide threats, barricaded people, siege situations, armed people and high risk search warrants and arrests.

CORDON AND CONTAINMENT

By Christine Atkinson

Southern Region general duties members took part in a cordon and containment course run by the TRG in June.

As the first people on the scene, general duties police often face the task of controlling dangerous situations until the TRG containment team arrives. The nine members learnt how to isolate and contain offenders in high risk situations, such as sieges.

Course trainer Senior Constable Geoff Hughes said the group was also taught how to gather as much information as possible to assist the incident management.

"Everyone should know how to do it. The reality is that with the very vast distances of the Northern Territory and the diversity of the conditions we operate under, the TRG can't always be expected to get there quickly. Management should start when the incident starts," he said.

The course was run in conjunction with the Southern Region negotiators course.

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

By Christine Atkinson

Want to schmooze with world leaders and movie stars? Can think of nothing more exciting than standing in front of someone who may be an assassination target? Dream of falling in love with a sexy star, à la *The Bodyguard*?

Then Close Personal Protection is for you.

The Territory Response Group runs CPP training for NT Police. CPP has seen Territory police guarding such movers and shakers as visiting diplomats and holidaying heads of state.

The TRG recently ran a CPP training course in Alice Springs for general duties and CIB members, ranging from Senior Sergeants to Constables.

Southern Region Training Coordinator Brevet Sergeant Norm Skennar said the TRG have provided Southern Region members with greater training opportunities.

"The TRG have been extra helpful, going out of their way sending instructors down to keep our members trained," he said.

LOOK OUT WORLD, HERE COMES BJ

By Rebecca Cass

Sergeant BJ Davison had seen the advertisement for the Churchill Fellowships in the Police Gazette a number of times over the years. He thought it sounded interesting, but never got around to applying for one. This year, he decided to stop talking about it and developed and submitted a project idea to the Churchill Trust.

His idea of comparing Northern Territory Police practices in remote and indigenous communities with practices in North America appealed to the Trust and they granted him a fellowship. He is one of only three Territorians to win the award this year.

"I'm over the moon," says BJ. "It still hasn't hit me really. I just can't believe it."

The Churchill Trust offers Australians financial support to undertake "an overseas investigative project of a kind that is not fully available in Australia." The beauty of the Trust, says BJ, is that anyone with an idea is eligible.

"They don't target any particular vocation. There just needs to be a definite benefit from going overseas."

With the NT Police for seven and a half years and based in Avon Downs for the last two, BJ is looking forward to not only promoting the work of Northern Territory Police but also to challenging the force to stay at its peak.

"Territory police are known as specialists when it comes to indigenous policing, but we shouldn't rest on our laurels," he said. "I'll be looking at everything we do and seeing how they do it. Basically I'll be keeping my eyes and ears open to make sure we are doing things best practice."

Unlike many other applicants, BJ did not have access to the Internet at Avon Downs to assist in researching his project and so he relied on e-mail. His first contact was with the President of the Combined Law Enforcement Association of Texas.

"I gave him my e-mail address and told him what I wanted to achieve and asked him to put me in touch with appropriate people. It sort of snowballed from there. With every person I got e-mails for more people."

Offers to assist BJ in his project rolled in, as did an offer of a job with police in Albuquerque, New Mexico!

His 10-week trip to North America will cover New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, Washington State and remote communities in Canada. He will travel some time between January and August 2002, depending on the arrival of his second child, which he and his wife are currently planning.

It will be a busy period, both while he is away and when he returns to report on what he has learned. While some may be fazed by the workload ahead, BJ is taking it in his stride.

"There's plenty of time to sleep when you're dead!"

IGHWTFR (IN GOOD HANDS WITH TASKFORCE REGULUS)

They might be the brains of the operation, but investigators on Taskforce Regulus have not been without embarrassing moments.

Early in the investigation a report of a suspicious vehicle was received from Western Australia. WAPOL traffic police in the north west eagerly pursued the vehicle but were unable to locate it.

One member eager to continue the search for the vehicle took the WAPOL report, read it and decided that the registration of the vehicle must be "LTBKF". Unbeknownst to her this was an acronym meaning "LOOKOUT TO BE KEPT FOR". Not surprisingly, all state checks failed to locate the mystery vehicle.

Almost as good as the young constable who was told to cut and paste certain passages of a computer generated document. After printing the document she went looking for the scissors and glue. True story.

RECRUITS JOIN THE FORCE

In his final NT graduation ceremony, Commissioner Brian Bates welcomed the 23 new police officers from Squad 70 of 2001.

Commissioner Bates presented the Commissioner's Trophy for overall best performance in all aspects of the 25-week recruit course, including academic, practical and physical training.

This year's recipient is Constable Evan Kelly, who has moved to the Northern Territory from the Queensland town of Yungaburra. The 26-year old former plumber, drainer and gasfitter is married with one child. He is currently completing a Diploma of Justice. Constable Kelly will be stationed in Katherine.

His Honour the Administrator, Mr John Anictomatis AO, presented the Rod Evans Memorial Trophy to Constable Steven Salvia for the best academic performance. Constable Salvia, 39, is married with two children. Originally from Darwin, Constable Salvia has travelled throughout Australia for the past 19 years with the Australian Army. He will be stationed in Darwin.

The Glen Huitson Trophy for the most consistent application in all areas of training was presented to Constable Kelly-Anne Malloy by Police Association President Vince Kelly. Constable Malloy is 26 and is a former Police Auxiliary. She will be based in Tennant Creek.

Constable Peter Henwood received the Physical Training Trophy from Deputy Commissioner John Valentin. Constable Henwood will be stationed in Darwin. The 41-year old is a former South Australian Police officer.

Of the 23 graduates, four will be based at Darwin Station, three at Palmerston, Casuarina and Katherine, two at Tennant Creek and eight in Alice Springs.

FIRIES DEMONSTRATE NEW SKILLS

By Christine Atkinson

Nine recruit fire fighters graduated in November after completing a 15-week induction course. They will join their fire colleagues at the Darwin, Casuarina, Palmerston and Alice Springs stations having come from Darwin, Alice Springs, Newcastle and Townsville.

With diverse backgrounds such as mechanic, lifeguard, police officer and carpenter, the fire fighters bring a wealth of life experience to the Northern Territory Fire and Rescue Service.

The Silver Axe for exemplary achievement during the course in the areas of academic achievement, practical firefighting, leadership, communication skills, social interaction, personal development and teamwork was presented to Firefighter Mark Ratsch (pictured right with CFO Iain Rae). He will now be stationed in Alice Springs.

Firefighter Bradley Fong received the Fitness Award for the best overall demonstration of endurance, strength, flexibility, self motivation and teamwork throughout the course. He will be stationed in Darwin.

At the ceremony, the graduands displayed their new firefighting skills, extinguishing a blazing gas bottle. The ceremony ended with an exciting fireworks display.

Of the nine recruits, five will go to Darwin Station, three to Palmerston and one to Alice Springs.

FIRIES RAISE MONEY FOR NEW YORK COLLEAGUES

By Christine Atkinson

The Alice Springs Fire and Rescue Service raised more than $10 000 for their New York brothers and sisters following the attacks on the World Trade Centre and Pentagon in September.

The firies passed the hat at busy pubs and clubs, and staked out the Todd Mall and Henley on Todd regatta to raise money.

A fire station open day, featuring displays from Firefighters and NTES volunteers, tipped the donations over $10 000. Visitors included many American families from the nearby Pine Gap facility.

The money and a signed book were sent to the New York Fire Department to be given to the families of firefighters killed and injured in the attacks.

Commendations

Commissioner Brian Bates awarded his final Commissioner's Commendations in November. Superintendent George Owen received a commendation for arresting a man who had stabbed a woman and providing first aid to the victim until help arrived. Aboriginal Community Police Officer John Daly was commended for rescuing a drowning man at Rapid Creek.

VOLLIES TALK IT OUT IN CANBERRA

By Rebecca Cass

Chris Beer and Sue Adams pulled on their parkas and headed south to be part of a two-day summit in Canberra in October. Four hundred and fifty Emergency Service volunteers from around the country attended the summit on 11 and 12 October.

A special highlight of the two days for the Territorians was Sue's thank you speech to Major General Peter Cosgrove at the end of the summit.

The summit gave vollies from around the country a chance to get together and nut out problems that affect everyone. The conference looked at the big picture of volunteering, and discussions focussed around recognition of the work vollies do, training, funding and legislation.

A chief outcome of the talks was the decision that vollies would continue to work without direct payment, but that the out-of-pocket expenses incurred by many would be looked at.

"Not may people realise that it actually costs vollies money to help out in the community," said Chris.

With about 500 000 volunteers across the country, vollies save the nation $3 billion in wages each year.

As captains of their Bush Fire Brigades, Chris and Sue both know the importance of acknowledging the time donated by volunteers.

"Don't abuse your vollies, or you're going to lose them," said Chris. "They're an important asset."

Sue has been with the Humpty Doo Bush Fire Brigade for seven years and its captain for two.

Chris has been the captain of the Virginia Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade for two years. Their units have donated more than 800 hours each this year.

"It's really a level of insanity," said Sue. "What normal person gives up their time and expects nothing back?"

"It's really nice when people pat you on the back and say thanks very much," adds Chris.

Chris and Sue will be meeting with the NT Fire and Rescue Service Executive to talk about the summit outcomes.

SAFE AS HOUSES

By Christine Atkinson

Kids all over the country can rest assured someone's looking out for them after the fifth biennial National Safety House conference.

Hosted in Alice Springs with visitors from all over the country, the conference covered topics related to Safety House and crime prevention including NT*safe*, School Based Policing, Neighbourhood Watch and the Territory's Juvenile Pre-court Diversion scheme.

With a focus on the International Year of the Volunteer, delegates were treated to an entertaining and informative presentation from Dr Judy Esmond about how to use volunteers effectively. The second guest speaker was former Family Court Magistrate Barbara Holborrow.

The conference was organised by Alice Springs Safety House coordinator Auxiliary Debbie Pieniacki, who received great praise from all involved.

Assistant Commissioner Doug Smith bailed up Indy car driver Michael Andretti to buy a ticket for the PCYC raffle. If he wins, the Ford Escape will be re-raffled.

A photo tribute to our Volunteers

2001
International Year of Volunteers

Northern Territory Fi
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TO SERVE ar

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PROTECT

GENDARMES EN VELO (OR, COPS ON BIKES!)

By Christine Atkinson

Picking up a souvenir from the Devil's Marbles, (L-R) Mal Hinton, Hugh Doyle, Steve Sims, Leanne Pittaway, and John "Alias" Smith

There was a definite case of mango madness in the Top End this year when Assistant Commissioner Doug Smith gathered a bunch of cycling fanatics together for a ride from the desert to the sea. The craziness was ostensibly to promote a raffle raising money for the Police and Citizens Youth Club, but there seemed to be a lot of bike talk going on.

In addition to AsCom Smith, the riders included the PCYC's Constable Leanne Pittaway, Alice Springs members Sergeant Steve Sims and Constable Hugh Doyle, Queensland Superintendent Mal Hinton and former Victorian police officer John "Alias" Smith. The riders would promote the raffle while demonstrating that police are not unfit.

Hugh Doyle tackles a hill

"The ride was also to dispel a view in some parts of the media that police fitted a particular stereotype – one of being a bit overweight and maybe a bit unfit," AsCom Smith said. "Most of the riders were on the other side of 40 which should clearly indicate that not all police in the Territory fit that image."

The group left Alice Springs on the morning of Monday 10 September with a view to arriving in Tennant Creek that evening. The first two days were cold, with rain on the second, but as the cyclists travelled further north, things were definitely hotting up.

Covering between 140 and 360km each day in temperatures exceeding 30 degrees, the cyclists rode 1800 kilometres in six days, detouring through Jabiru. Averaging between 45 and 90km an hour on roads hotter than 60 degrees saw tyres burst at the end of each leg through Kakadu National Park.

Raising great support for the raffle, the ride was hailed a success, despite a few accidents. The group thanks Frost Ford for the donation of an Escape 4WD as the grand prize, Qantas and the Marriott Surfers Paradise Hotel for the second prize of airfares and accommodation, and the Penny Farthing Bike Shop for the third prize donation of an Apollo dual suspension bike and helmet.

Taking a breather, Alias Smith, Steve Sims, Daryl from Frost Ford, and Doug Smith

The endorphins kick in for Steve, Leanne and Hugh

THE ALICE SPRINGS CHIVALRY SQUAD

By Constable Trent Abbott

On Thursday 14 June, the Alice Springs Bush Patrol Office was called on to rescue a couple of vehicles that were bogged in the Finke track near Titjikala.

The Santa Teresa vehicle took the lead, driven by ACPO Phillip Alice with ACPO Danny Curtis in the passenger seat. Offering their support in the second vehicle were Constables Trent Abbott and Darren Tottle and ACPOs Michael James and Robert Conway.

About two kilometres from the stranded party the second car pulled over, some might say sensibly, to lock the car's hubs in. Noticing the halt in the procession, ACPO Alice got on the radio to ask why the second car has stopped and the reason was passed on. Came Alice's reply, "We don't need our hubs locked in."

Hubs safely locked in, the following vehicle got back on the road and came around a bend to the left to an interesting sight. The first thing they noticed was the Santa Teresa vehicle bogged up to its axles off the right hand side of the road. With their rescuers in sight, the stranded party waited approximately 50 metres away, probably wondering who was going to rescue the rescuers.

Attempts were made to retrieve the Santa Teresa Police vehicle but were unsuccessful and reinforcements were called in from the neighbouring community of Titjikala. One tractor was sent out but it too got bogged and so another was sent. This was one, fortunately, was successful in pulling out ACPO Alice, the Santa Teresa vehicle and the stranded cars with which the chain of events had started.

The patrol made ready to return to Alice Springs with one of the stranded women but it quickly became clear that she had no wish to get her feet wet – a tricky situation as the police vehicle was on the other side of the road. She requested the police vehicle drive over to where she had got bogged, but the softness of the ground meant that this was not possible.

It seemed that the rescue mission was at an impasse when out of the blue ACPO Robert Conway stepped up and stated he would carry the damsel in distress to dry ground. She immediately jumped on Conway's back and was carried off into the sunset and to safety.

All involved were returned to dry ground and all vehicles were safely retrieved. As to the matter of the Santa Teresa vehicle… ACPO Phillip Alice states it was Danny Curtis' navigation skills that got them bogged and vice versa. In relation to ACPO Conway, the rescue mission proves there are highly dedicated members in the NT Police and that chivalry is not dead!

The police dragon boat team, COPZ, raced in the mens and womens 10s and mixed 20s against arch rivals PAWA. COPZ won the mixed 20s. Anyone who wants to see the trophy can drop into Supt Greg Dowd's office.

BUT I DON'T WANT TO BE A COWBOY...

By Christine Atkinson

That's what thousands of Territory kids are telling their parents after attending the NT*safe* Expo in June. More than 10 000 people flooded through the gates even before the Expo started.

Exhibitors from private businesses, government departments and non-profit organisations showed their wares and offered their services to help prevent crime and make the Territory safer.

While hundreds of children rode in a police car, hundreds more climbed a wall with the TRG, took a train ride, bounced on a giant castle and rode horses. The RAAF dogs showed off their skills and there were sumptuous delights and exotic entertainment for the whole family.

The entertainment culminated in the grand finale – featuring an explosion, a cat-napping, and eventually saw several people medivacced from the scene.

Sponsored by the Department of Transport and Works, TIO, Channel Eight, the Northern Territory News, ABC Darwin, and Top End Sounds, the Expo was a resounding success.

The winners of the Best Exhibit were the NTES volunteers who put on a fantastic road accident rescue demonstration and taught people how to use the jaws of life. Fierce competition came from AIU and Road Safety Policy with their crashed car and electronic billboards reminding people of the road toll.

The day was such a success a repeat is on the cards in the next couple of years.

NTsafe™ EXPO 2001

COP SWAPS CROOKS FOR CORKS

By Rebecca Cass

Superintendent Terry Ey, the longest serving commissioned officer in the Northern Territory Police, swapped crooks for corks when he retired in October.

After 27 years of service, Superintendent Ey returned to the family vineyards in Coonawarra, South Australia, to work his own vineyard, known as the "Darwin Block".

Superintendent Ey (pictured above with Commissioner Brian Bates) joined NT Police in 1974, graduating from the training college just two days before Cyclone Tracy. He has been the Divisional Officer in Jabiru, Tennant Creek, Katherine and Darwin and each region had some interesting moments.

On his first day of work at Jabiru in 1987, he was called to respond to a fatal crocodile attack on the East Alligator River.

"A fisherman had been washed in from the riverbank by the tide and a crocodile had bitten his head off. That's not something you forget in a hurry," said Superintendent Ey.

Another key memory he will take away is his experience as the "Cannonball" Police Commander.

In 1994, the first, and only, Cannonball Run in Australia ran from Darwin to Yulara and back again. Based on similar events in America, this high profile and often controversial event ended in tragedy when a Ferrari crashed into a checkpoint just outside Alice Springs, resulting in the death of four people.

"As the officer responsible for the police operation supporting the event, this was a most challenging experience, and probably the most memorable of my career," recalls Superintendent Ey.

Superintendent Ey and his wife Rosemary will renovate the original family homestead and plan to sell the Ey wines from the cellar door.

JOHN'S CHARMED LIFE

By Christine Atkinson

With a name like Lake Charm, Divisional Commander John Townsend may find his retirement destination becomes quite popular among his former colleagues once the word gets out.

John and his wife Sharon have bought a caravan park on the shores of Lake Charm on the Murray Valley Highway in Victoria.

Originally from Perth, John joined the NT Fire and Rescue Service after coming to the Territory for a two-week holiday in 1967. His 30-year career has seen John serve in Darwin, Palmerston, Casuarina and Alice Springs. He's spent some time in Fire Safety and took the second recruit squad to Perth.

As training officer he brought the recruit training back to Darwin and became an instructor, developing training for the recruits to bring them into line with the rest of the country. In his position as Divisional Commander of Training, John had a fairly large role in designing the Australian Fire Competencies.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Alan Stephens said John's hard work had brought the Fire Service into line with national qualifications.

"He laid the ground work for the organisation. It was a very important step," ACFO Stephens said. "We appreciated his work. John will be part of the folklore of the organisation as we go on down the years."

John said leaving the fire service and buying the caravan park was a hard decision, but one he and Sharon were ready to make.

"It's more of a lifestyle thing than a job. I thought after 30 years I should go and do something," he said.

Not that the Territory's seen the last of John. His three daughters were born in Darwin and he said he and Sharon will always have a connection.

"The Territory's been good. We've made lots of friends through the years, people we've worked with and played sport with, but we have to move on."

CHIEF PILOT GETS NEW WINGS

By Christine Atkinson

For the past 21 years, Senior Sergeant Ron Hart has spent his days swanning about such glamorous locations as Ngukurr, Wadeye and Pirlangimpi, not to mention late night stops in Alyangula, Mataranka and Elliott. For the next few years, Ron and his wife Joyce plan more "low-level flying" as they enjoy two years of long service leave before retirement.

Before joining NT Police in 1980, Ron was Chief Pilot with St John Ambulance in Western Australia. He became Chief Pilot of NT Police Airwing in 1989.

At Ron's retirement, Commissioner Brian Bates said, "We have a pretty envious record, not only with our Chief Pilot but with our pilots generally."

Commissioner Bates recognised the work of all the pilots operating "a very essential service under stressful circumstances."

Ron's major accomplishment in the last few years was his involvement in the tendering process for the new Pilatus PC12 which he flew from Switzerland to Australia last year.

"Ron was determined to get a new plane and put a tremendous effort into that. The police force should be grateful for his legacy to NT Police," said Deputy Commissioner John Valentin.

Ron is the last sworn pilot to leave Airwing. His colleague Roger Rudduck resigned several years ago before returning as a civilian pilot in Southern Region.

Superintendent Terry Ey paid tribute to Ron's spotless flight record and dedication. Despite being tracked straight from training into the Airwing, Ron earned his Senior Sergeant rank and Supt Ey said he had no doubt Ron could've served in any other Senior Sergeant position in NT Police.

"Ron's an excellent pilot," he said. "We didn't even crash once."

Accolades aside, the thing Ron says he'll most miss is spending time with bush members and their families, and flying with the specialist sections, Criminal Investigation Branch and Territory Response Group.

"The trips and experiences are too numerous to go into detail," Ron said. "It certainly has been a pleasure working for you all."

DOUG BOWLS THEM OVER

By Christine Atkinson

Station Officer Doug Akers bowls out a fire hose.

For someone who only started playing five years ago, Station Officer Doug Akers seems like a lawn bowls natural after winning the NT Single Sets Play Championships this year.

Doug travelled to Queensland in August to represent the Territory in the Australian Sets Play Championships. Although he wasn't a winner, he says the experience of playing some of the best bowlers in Australia was well worth the trip. The winner of the event now travels to the World Championships in the United Kingdom.

Though he normally plays division one pennants for his club in Nightcliff, his lawn bowls prowess has already taken Doug to the South African city of Durban where he won bronze at the World Firefighter Games in 1998. He has also just returned from playing in the ANZ Police and Emergency Services Games held on the Gold Coast. Plans are now underway to compete in the World Firefighter Games in Christchurch, New Zealand next year.

"It's a very challenging game, physically and mentally," Doug said. "I'd love to see more firies playing it, getting involved. I'm really glad I took it up."

DARWIN SKIER SNOWS SOUTHERNERS

By Richard Macdonald

When Richard Macdonald headed off to Falls Creek in Victoria to participate in the 2001 Australasian Firefighters Winter Games, no one, let alone himself, expected him to fly the Territory and Fire Service flags as well as he did.

Photos by Bianca Browse, Top Shots Photography

Richard on the slopes

During his stay in Falls Creek, and being the only competitor from the Territory, he was seconded to the Western Australian FESA (Fire and Emergency Services Authority) syndicate, and given a guernsey to ski for them in the team challenge event. After having done his 16-week recruit course there in 1984, he was classed by the WA team captain as a cousin.

Proving to be more than just a dark horse on the touch footy field and a demon on the squash court, Richard also showed he was no novice on the ski run. Having only had three weeks skiing experience over a decade ago, he skied exceptionally well and played a key role in helping FESA in the Team Championship trophy by winning silver medals in the individual downhill slalom and giant slalom. Competition was stiff in both events, with less than a second separating gold and silver and silver and bronze.

Richard attributes a lot of his success to Tommy Lawler and Greg Strettles for coaching him in 'course gate starting' and 'tuck and tumble techniques' – skills they gained as former exchange firies in Canada.

Richard strongly recommends the Winter Games to all aspiring skiers. Falls Creek was an ideal location, the Games were well organised, competition was friendly and the social atmosphere was great.

The 2002 Australasian Firefighter Winter Games will be held in August-September 2002 and are open to Fire Service, Police and Armed Forces personnel, as well as full-time ambulance officers. Information about the 2002 Australasian Games and the 2002 International Winter Games can be accessed as http://www.afwg.com.au/, or by contacting Bob Stewart, phone (02) 6299 5003, e-mail info@afwg.com.au.

The WA FESA Team

MARLUS MAKE THEIR MARK

By Brett Wenn

The NT hosted the Australian Police Rugby League Championships in October.

The Marlus in action.

The Northern Territory fielded two sides in the competition, one in each of the pools. The first team had three matches in their pool. The first game was a replay of the grand final from last year, with the NT playing New South Wales. The game was a physical encounter with numerous big hits and players leaving the field to gather running repairs. The NT scored first with a try to Stephen Raper. The conversion was unsuccessful and the score was four nil.

The sting of the try brought cause for NSW to awaken and produce a remarkable 50m try with some great passing. The score was then four all. A quick talk behind the posts produced a fire in the eye of the NT and from the kick off the boys never gave in. The NT started to play well and throw the ball out wide causing the NSW team to stretch. Once the NT switched on and their superior teamwork took over the game was swung to the NT with the boys eventually winning 24 to 10.

The second side played Victoria with an even contest. The NT was winning with minutes remaining when Victoria went over the line to score four points, taking them to 12 to 10 in front. The game was played at fever pitch and all players were exhausted at the end. The uniforms for the players were outstanding and proudly displayed the sponsors' logos.

The next match was a game against a combined side all-star team. The boys were a bit sceptical at first and had some injury concerns from the previous match. The match started and the NT where down 10 nil before they knew what had happened. A stern talking to by coach Ron Raper at half time had the boys hopping out of their skins after the first half. The NT scored first after half time and team morale lifted.

The game was then played to the NT style of hard up the middle and power over the top. The NT ran out winners 24 to 10. This was a huge boost for the players as they realised that they could indeed win the tournament. This then earned the NT automatic inclusion into the grand final.

The second team played Western Australia. This game was another nail bitter with the WA fellas having spent 60 hours on a bus to arrive at the championships. Fortunately for the NT they ran out eventual winners 14 to 12. WA had a chance to level the scores after the siren but missed the conversion, much to the delight of the NT side.

The competitive nature of the sides was coming out before the grand final with NSW throwing the first barbs towards the NT. The NT was in the lucky situation of having a side in each of the finals. The NT started strong and after hitting the NSW fellas hard they then got their turn in running with the ball. Five minutes into the game the NT was up eight nil, with two great tries from Stephen Raper and Steven Kelly. The NT side had their tails up and with the home crowd behind them they proved too good for NSW, winning 38 to 10.

The second side was not so lucky, losing the grand final to Tasmania 14 to 12 with a try with three seconds remaining. The NT was lucky enough to get eight players in the National side to play New Zealand in Queensland later this month.

The Northern Territory Marlus were crowned National Champions for the year 2001. This feat could not have been achieved without the ongoing support from our sponsors International All Sports, Lion Nathan, Neeta Glass, and Shenannigans.

The winning team

GOOD HUNTING AND TIGHT LINES, JASON

9/9/1968 – 22/4/2001
by Owen Blackwell

Jason Lindsay drowned at the Cooper Creek rockhole in Western Arnhemland on 22 April 2001. He was there fishing and picnicking with good friends from Oenpelli community, where he was the Officer in Charge.

In the eulogy I read at the memorial service in Darwin on 9 May, I talked a lot about Jason the boofhead. There were stories of his practical jokes (though I failed to mention the story of Shane Taylor, his toothbrush and Jason's dog's rear end – another time!) and of his lust for life.

Jason packed a lot of living into his 32 years. He had worked right across the Top End of the NT and had left his mark wherever he spent time. Jason had hunted, shot and caught most game the NT had to offer. He was also NT champion in the ISPC pistol shooting discipline.

But there are also the stories of Jason's dedication to his chosen profession. Jason played hard but he also worked hard. The community at Oenpelli remembers how he worked tirelessly to try to stem the problems of petrol sniffing in the community. He was instrumental in setting up programs to help the community take control of the situation whilst ensuring that they also took responsibility for the problems.

I was working on Elcho Island when I was told that Jason was missing. I flew back to Gove the next day (Monday 23) and then to Oenpelli that afternoon. When I arrived there Richard Cheal and Joe Hart were there from Maningrida and Mark Malogorski was on deck as the incumbent 2IC at Oenpelli. Richard filled me in on the latest, being that Jason was still missing, TRG members were at the rockhole and there was too much water pressure for the divers to go in.

I don't know if Jason realised how many lives he had touched and how many people thought so highly of him. I hope so.

Plans were underway for large barrage bags to be filled at Oenpelli and then helicoptered to the rockhole to stem the flow of water. Jason had close friends in the TRG and unsurprisingly I learned that his closest were there to ensure he was found. The time between when he went missing and when he was found no doubt tore them to pieces.

The community at Oenpelli pulled together and by sun-up Tuesday, 30 of 33 bags each containing 350 – 400 kg of fill were laid out in a field ready to go. By the time the first helicopter arrived all bags were done. Joe Hart and Richard Cheal spent all day in the sun loading the bags onto hooks underneath the two helicopters that were used.

By 3.30pm the last bag was on it's way. We were all waiting anxiously and then at 5pm the bad news: Jason had been found in the falls. There was an impromptu wake at the station that night with members of the community involved in the operation, Jason's friends and, for a short time, some of the TRG members.

Geoff Barnhert was able to talk to Jason's friends who had been with him at the rockhole: Guy, Mandy and Paula, and who had made desperate attempts to locate him. His words took a weight off their shoulders and allowed them some peace at a very bad time. All of them have also told me of Bruce Grant's words to them and how appreciative of his thoughtfulness they are. Thanks Geoff and Bruce!

The next day was Anzac Day and Jason had organised a Dawn Service complete with the attendance of Norforce members. It was a solemn occasion with a larger than normal attendance. Considering the late hour, the wake went to it was an impressive turnout.

At 9.30am there was a fly-by of a single FA-18 Hornet from RAAF Tindal, which had been organised by Jason. The two-up then took over and, as with each year, 10% went to Legacy. Such was the feeling that over $1000 was raised. Pretty impressive for a town the size of Oenpelli.

Friends made sure he was buried with a set of buffalo horns, the jaw from his last pig and the empty shells that he used to take it, barra scales, tusks and pig teeth, dirt and river rocks from the country he hunted in and finally a bottle of rum.

On Thursday night, Scott Rose, Shane Taylor and Graham Richardson joined us at Oenpelli. Along with Jason's closest friends at the community, we gave him a traditional

farewell. I remember Roland The Headless Thompson Gunner by Warren Zevon gained new heights in musical history.

A memorial service organised by locals was held at Oenpelli. There was a fantastic turnout by both Aboriginal and non–Aboriginal people. We played Jason's favourite music - Roland featured again – and there were some heartfelt speeches given. At the end the local pilots disappeared and soon after a fly over by 10 planes was undertaken.

The following Thursday was Jason's funeral at Mullimbimby in northern NSW. Lyn Balchin was instrumental in organising the flight down for the 28 colleagues and friends from the NT. The number of us who travelled down to farewell a mate blew Jason's family away.

Jason was buried in uniform as was his parent's wish and also for his mates to be pallbearers. Shane Taylor, Scott Rose, Graham Richardson, Chris Bentham, Richard Cheal and myself took up that sad duty. Kris Evans was the cap bearer and Geoff Sullivan was in charge of the bearer party. As Jason was in life, he was in death.

Friends made sure he was buried with a set of buffalo horns, the jaw from his last pig and the empty shells that he used to take it, barra scales, tusks and pig teeth, dirt and river rocks from the country he hunted in and finally a bottle of rum.

Jason's family has been a great strength to his mates throughout this time. Their resolve to see us involved in his funeral allowed us a chance to say goodbye in style – the way he would have liked.

As I write this, I recall Jason's Mum, Kay telling of how hard it was for the TRG members at the scene. Both she and Ken made a point of meeting all the members involved and thanking them for finding their son.

Their inner strength throughout this ordeal and their wish to hear all the stories about Jason and to speak openly about him has been an insight into the moulding of Jason's character from the boy to the man that we all knew.

There are plans for a monument from the community at the Oenpelli police station and also to rename the Jabiru Police Club. Permission has also been obtained from traditional owners for a plaque to be placed at the Rockhole.

Jason remains larger than life in my memory. I will miss his laugh and the cry of Yahoo! as he took to the hunt or cracked his first can. I will also miss the bone crunching tackles he made as the mood took him.

I don't know if Jason realised how many lives he had touched and how many people thought so highly of him. I hope so. The last three weeks have shown to me that he was truly a respected and loved man.

The past few years have been hard for many of us in the service. I am reminded again of how fallible we are and how we should take nothing for granted. If I take anything from Jason's untimely death it is the thought that life is definitely for living to the fullest, each and every day, as he did.

Good hunting and tight lines Jason.

Cooper Creek Rockhole