

THE

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DRUM

The official publication of the Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services

Welcome to
our newest
graduate
recruits



Vollies enjoy the challenge
Studies in the sand
Master in the saddle
Come fly with me



DECEMBER 2002





Commissioner's Message

Christmas and year's end is a time for reflecting on important themes. It is a time to wish all members and their families a safe, peaceful and joyous Christmas and a happy new year. It is also a time for thinking about our achievements throughout the year and the challenges ahead.

We should reflect on year 2002 with a good deal of pride for the way in which the NTPFES delivered services to the community. Quality services were provided on countless occasions, most often going unnoticed because they were deemed 'business as usual and in the line of duty'.

I am sure that each and every one of us has a story to tell of an incident or event highlighting our commitment to community safety, but one which did not by itself stand apart from daily working life.

Rest assured that the most satisfying aspect on these occasions is the personal pride and satisfaction of knowing it was a job well done.

There are, of course, other matters that stand out and reinforce the quality of the people who make up the NTPFES. Take, for example, the chemical spill from a container ship in Darwin Harbour, the outcome of the Falconio investigation, the response to protest activity at Pine Gap, and the coordinated response to the tragic events in Bali on 12 October. In all of these cases, and in many others, we should be justifiably proud of our achievements and the professional approach to duty.

Most importantly, it is encouraging to report a downward trend in both personal and property crime this calendar year. A downward trend as such does not come about by chance – it comes about through hard work, team effort and a commitment to reducing crime in our community. Much work will need to be done next year to sustain this trend, but I would like to thank all of those who have contributed thus far to successful crime reduction strategies during the year.

Christmas is a busy time for many of our members as they safeguard and protect the community. Nonetheless, I hope it is a time when they are able to spend time with their families and share in the peace and joy of Christmas.

I would like to wish everyone a merry Christmas and every success in personal and work endeavours in 2003.

PAUL WHITE
Commissioner

Media Unit goodbyes

Media and Corporate Communications Director Denise Hurley has left PFES after two years. Denise will take up a position as Public Affairs Manager at RMIT in Victoria. Among Denise's highlights of her time with the Tri-Service were the successful organisation of the NTsafe Expo last year and the media management of the Falconio investigation. Commissioner Paul White thanked Denise for her work as Media Director and wished her all the best for her new role.

The Media Unit also farewells Media Liaison Officers Rebecca Cass and Christine Atkinson, who have worked with the Tri-Service 18 months and three years respectively. Both have taken up positions with the Territory Government and also count among their highlights working on the Falconio investigation.

The Drug Enforcement Unit must be sampling the products they're seizing! They've taken to playing basketball in full breathing apparatus in the middle of the day. At the end of the game they sound like they're all auditioning for the role of Darth Vader in the next Star Wars film.



Front cover - The Tri-Service welcomed 37 new members in October – 25 police and 12 firefighters. The recruits have come from diverse backgrounds including aviation mechanic, chocolate salesman (the perfect job?), lifeguard, Corrections and Defence. Family and friends were wowed at the fire graduation as the new members showed off their skills – extinguishing a flaming gas bottle and battling an explosion. Photos by John Pini and Todd Sinclair.

Vollies enjoy the challenge

By Christine Atkinson

NT Emergency Service volunteers abseiled down Parliament House to launch their new recruiting video, *Enjoy the Challenge*, during National State Emergency Services Awareness Week in November.

To further demonstrate their rescue skills, the vollies cut an accident victim, none other than the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services Paul Henderson, from the wreckage of a car.

The 12-minute video features some of nearly 600 NTES volunteers. Highlighting the work of volunteers, including boat rescues, parcel drops and land searches, *Enjoy the Challenge*, aims to encourage Territorians to learn some great new skills and lend a hand.

NTES Volunteers "rescue" Minister Paul Henderson at the video launch in Darwin.

"We're seeking an additional 70 volunteers, but of course, the Northern Territory Emergency Services would take as many volunteers as they can," said Mr Henderson. "The Emergency Service volunteers provide a much-needed service to the community and I urge all Territorians to consider taking up the challenge of this rewarding role."

The video will be shown by volunteer units at Shows, public displays, schools and libraries around the Territory as part of the drive to encourage more people to sign up as volunteers.

"The Northern Territory Emergency Service may be the second smallest in the country, but our dedicated volunteers play a vital role in our community," Mr Henderson said. "During a cyclone, after a car accident, or when someone is lost in the bush, the volunteers lend a hand to get the public through safely."

CONGRATULATIONS

to Sergeant Mary Ann Skelton for receiving an Excellence in Policing Award from at the Women in Policing Globally 2002 conference in October. Mary Ann was honoured for the most significant achievement in improving the relationship between women in the community and in law enforcement and policing, specifically working with the culturally diverse Darwin community.

Former NT Police biologist Joy Kuhl won the award for most outstanding female practitioner for establishing the NT's forensic capabilities and being active in the wider women's sector.

From the Editor's desk....

It's Christmas time again, but the Tri-Service doesn't take a break. NTES is recruiting with a new video – as our back cover shows, they've been showing off their rescue skills. And there are new police and fire members (seen on our front cover). The police and fireies have been battling it out on the Dragon Boat field – is this Darwin's newest version of survival of the fittest? Once again the Territory has had a first with the Arid Zone crime scene examiners course teaching both local and interstate police the differences of working in tropical and desert regions.

This is my last Drum. After three years with the Tri-Service, it's time to move on. I will be staying in the Territory, so no doubt I'll see you all again. Take care of yourselves and have a fantastic Christmas and a safe New Year.

Thanks to everyone who has supported me with stories, ideas, photos, gossip and friendship. A huge thanks to Kris Lee who does the layout and design of the magazine and the staff at the NT Government Printer who have been so helpful.

If you have any ideas, stories or photos for the next issue of the Drum, contact the Media Unit by phone, mail or e-mail.

Christine Atkinson
Editor



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STUDIES IN THE SAND

By Christine Atkinson

Australia's first arid zone crime scene examiners course was held in Alice Springs in June.

The course, which attracted 10 police from the NT and three from South Australia, provided an insight into the different approaches to crime scenes in different regions, specifically the difficulties in both arid and tropical areas. It focussed on fingerprints, biology and crime scene examination.

Course organiser Senior Sergeant Lane Crews, Officer in Charge of Forensic Services, said the course was an opportunity for "coal-face workers" to get together and share their knowledge, such as working with different soil samples, making plaster casts in different conditions, and dealing with items exposed to the elements. They also covered keeping equipment functioning in extreme hot or cold conditions.

"When you all work for the same state, people assume that everyone does it the same way, but in actual fact that's not the case," Senior Sgt Crews said.

ARID PRINTS

By Christine Atkinson

Sergeant John Moloney, Officer in Charge of Fingerprints Section, gave a presentation to the Arid Zone Crime Scene course in Alice Springs on obtaining offender fingerprints from murder victims.

Sgt Moloney said while there hasn't been a case in Australia of prints being taken from a body, there have been several high profile cases overseas.

In one case, a Japanese man was identified from a moulded fingerprint left on the throat of his victim. The man's print was indented into the woman's skin. Another case saw a man in the United States arrested for three murders after a latent fingerprint was found on the ankle of one female victim.

Sgt Moloney said getting a positive print from a body is unlikely, but not impossible.

"Crime Scene Examiners should keep it in the back of their minds. If they think it's possible, they should call the Fingerprints Section and we'll ask them the conditions the body's been kept in."

All cases where prints have been taken from bodies had several things in common which contributed to the successful print identification. In all cases, the victims were women. They all died suddenly. Each body was found in an area where the humidity was higher than 50% and the temperatures were between 15 and 24 degrees C.

The course was well-received by participants and there are plans to offer another course inviting police from all over Australia. The course built on the growing respect other jurisdictions have for Territory policing.

"The South Australian people were quite impressed with our resources, equipment and management system," S/Sgt Crews said.

"The bigger states used to treat the NT as lesser because we're smaller. We actually have a say now. People ring us and ask opinions. We had the first DNA legislation, the first NAFIS/Livescan link. We're striving ahead."

Jail breaker tracked

By Theresa Kuilboer

Former ACPO Riley Presley was presented with a Commissioner's Letter of Appreciation recently for his part in the apprehension of escaped prisoner Johnny Fitzara Club from the Alice Springs jail in May 2002.

Club headed to the Boundary Bore Community in the Harts Range police district and led police on a 13-day chase before he was recaptured. To a large extent, Riley Presley of Ti Tree and fellow ACPO Roy Curtis of Yvendumu were responsible for his recapture after tracking the prisoner over extremely rough terrain.

"Incidents such as these highlight the value of Aboriginal tracking skills. Such skills and expertise are highly regarded and acknowledged as valuable tools that can assist police and the community in the location of offenders and lost and missing persons," said Commissioner Paul White, in his letter.



Assistant Commissioner Doug Smith presents former ACPO Riley Presley with his Commissioner's Letter of Appreciation.

Johnny Hunt on his horse Vaquero during the recent Masters games in Alice Springs

Master in the saddle

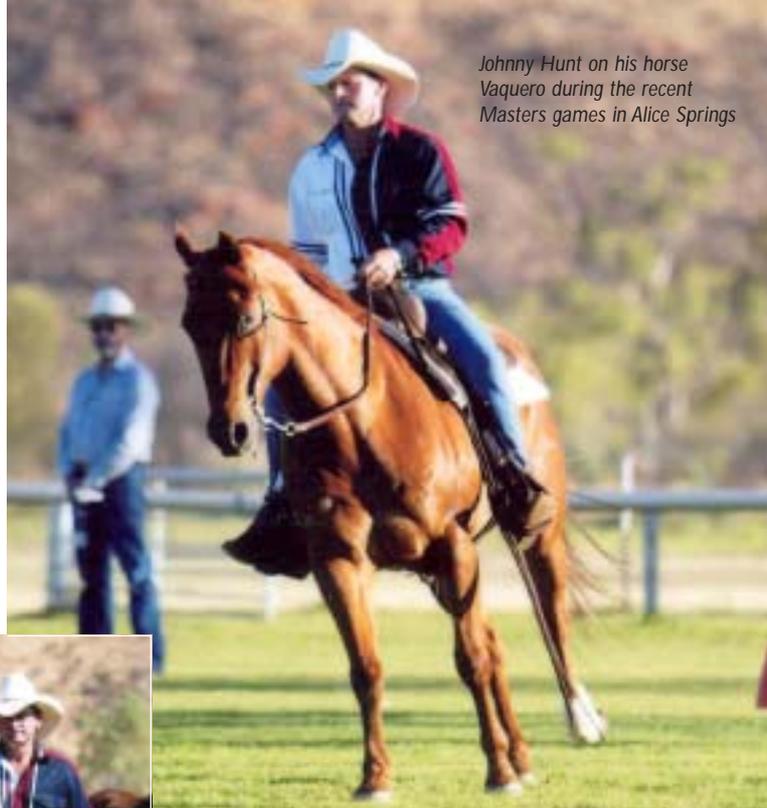
By Theresa Kuilboer

Alice Springs Police Tracker Johnny Hunt ended up with a swag of medals after competing in the Masters Games Western events.

He won gold on his 11-year-old gelding *Vaquero* in the reigning event and bronze on the same horse in the horsemanship event.

Johnny swapped horses for the next two events and won silver on another 11-year-old gelding *Doc's Pistol*. He then secured another bronze in the Western Pleasure event.

Johnny is well known for his equestrian skills and comes from a life-long background of horseriding. He almost literally began riding before he could walk as he grew up in rural New South Wales and has rarely been out of the saddle since. He worked all over Queensland and the Territory as a stockman before leaving his bush camps at the behest of his wife Alison to take up an offer of the Tracker's job at Hermannsburg in 1979.



After 11 years at Hermannsburg he transferred to Alice Springs as a Tracker and has been here ever since.

These days he rides for pleasure, but his skills as a horseman have become so well known he has earned the title of Alice Springs' own "horse whisperer."

ACPO disarms knifeman

By Theresa Kuilboer

Aboriginal Community Police Officer Andrew Jabaltjari Spencer has been awarded a Commissioner's Commendation for bravery after he single-handedly disarmed a man with a knife at Kintore and was injured as a result.

Following a disturbance on the community, ACPO Spencer confronted the man who was armed with a knife and in a highly agitated state.

A large hostile crowd had gathered but ACPO Spencer continued to negotiate with the armed man for the surrender of the knife. As the offender turned away, the ACPO grabbed him to disarm him. The man turned and cut Andrew to the forearm, causing a severe wound. However, this did not deter Andrew who, ignoring the wound, continued to disarm the man.

This is not the first time Andrew's work as an ACPO has given him recognition. Last April he was awarded a Commissioner's Letter of Recognition for his actions following a triple fatality near Kintore. Then-

Commissioner Brian Bates, in his letter, commended Andrew "courage and resolve" in dealing with the accident, especially in light of the fact the fatalities included his own relatives.



ACPO Andrew Spencer received his latest award in August when Commissioner Paul White (pictured above) flew to Kintore to make the presentation personally.

Andrew has been an ACPO for ten years and has served the community of Kintore for most of that time. Until a few years ago he was the sole ACPO at the remote community. The nearest police officers are stationed 275 kilometres away at Papunya.

Come fly with me

By Theresa Kuilboer

A special era of the NT Police ended in October this year with the retirement of Senior Police Pilot Roger Rudduck.

All those who have ever flown with this legend of the Airwing know what made Roger special. It was not merely his status as the longest serving pilot in the NT Police force with 21 years under his belt, but his attention to all the little things.

For years Roger's visits were always eagerly-awaited by those serving on remote stations. With the Airwing's plane would come bush orders, newspapers and all the latest news from the bigger centres, plus Roger would pitch in wherever he could when the members were busy.

His "in-flight service" became legendary as well. Just because it was a small plane was no reason his passengers shouldn't enjoy a cuppa and a muesli bar en-route, according to Roger.



His legendary status extended to Rugby Union as well. Roger spent many years playing A grade in Darwin before moving to Alice Springs where he founded the Dingo Cubs. He nurtured many younger players over the years and became everyone's preferred team manager and coach – especially on overseas tours. He held many official positions in the world of rugby union and his great contribution to the sport was recognised in 2000 when he was awarded the Australian Sports Medal for services to Rugby Union and this year when he received life membership of NTRU.

Roger's flying career began when he attained his commercial pilot's licence at 19. For the first few years he flew for oil companies, charter airlines and even for the Portuguese Government Airlines in Timor before becoming a police officer and joining the NT Police Airwing in 1979.

In his long career Roger estimates he has clocked up approximately 15,000 flying hours – almost half of them with NT Police. He also estimates he has transported about 10,000 passengers, 175,000 kg of freight, 2500 prisoners and 88 bodies.

On his last official flight in his beloved Piper Navajo, the airport firies gave him a fitting farewell with a water cannon salute as he made his last landing – an honour extended to very few pilots over the years.

He will enjoy his well-earned retirement at Christies Beach, SA with his wife Barbara.

Bye bye Burnsy

By Theresa Kuilboer

Iain Burns, Strategic Planning Officer for Southern Region of NT Emergency Service, was farewelled at the end of August after four years of service in the Territory recently. Iain takes up the post of District Manager, West Pilbara, with the WA Fire and Emergency Services Authority, based in Port Hedland.

Hailing from WA, Iain is excited about taking up his new position in his home state, but says he has truly enjoyed his interesting and challenging time in the Territory

"It's been very different from what I had been used to in Western Australian. When I came over here originally I was in a single service agency. That was one of the main differences as here Emergency Service is part of the Tri-Service.

"I think the biggest achievement I have made since coming here has been raising the level of awareness towards Emergency Service volunteers, at least in the Southern Region of the Territory. This has been both raising awareness with the general public and within the Tri-service itself."

Among the most vivid memories Iain will take away with him during his time in the Territory was working side by side with the other agencies especially during times of flood in the last couple of years.

"When we worked side by side with police and the firies during the flooding we had here two years ago it was great, especially seeing the professionalism across the board."

Gentleman Jock retires

By Christine Atkinson

Position vacant: Distinguished gentleman required to fill recently vacated training position. Must have precisely creased uniform and perfectly shined shoes.

If we were trying to replace Jock Macpherson, that's the ad that would run. After 26 years, Jock has retired, his final position as Acting Commander of the PFES Training College. After spending the first half of his career in Darwin, in General Duties and as the Commissioner's Staff Sergeant, Jock was given a management-initiated transfer.

"Being sent to Alice Springs was the best thing that could've happened to me. I learnt a new style of policing. I developed confidence," Jock said.

Following a stretch in Alice, Jock decided he would go bush and moved to Nhulunbuy. He's also been stationed at the College twice, and in the public relations section.

Jock says one of his best experiences was as OIC of the Territory Response Group and Superintendent of Territory Support Division. Although he had no tactical background, Jock was very impressed with the quality of men in the unit, particularly during the Heiss and Baker

Jock with Gaye Blannin and Chris Haigh (seated)



search and the Palmerston shootings.

"Those men are absolutely committed, highly skilled and always applied those skills and training to anything they did," he said.

After 28 years in the tropics, Jock and his wife Joan are moving to South Australia where they have no connections but are attracted by the "dry, Mediterranean climate".

"I should thank the organisation for feeding and clothing me. And thank the vocation for experiences so rich and colourful my life's been improved," Jock said. "If I've made any contribution I've been very well rewarded for it over those years."

Jock says he'll probably hunt out some creative groups and creative learning opportunities to keep him busy.

Doug bowls a greener lawn

By Christine Atkinson

Lining the street outside the Darwin Fire Station, more than 100 people witnessed the Last Turn Out for Station Officer Doug Akers who died after a fall at home in October. He was 45.

A Bronto carried the coffin, topped with Doug's helmet and jacket, from the fire station to the chapel where a memorial service was held. The procession, which stretched hundreds of metres, included fire vehicles, ambulances, police vehicles and private cars. About 120 people crammed into the Rest Haven Chapel in Darwin to farewell Doug before a private cremation in Bendigo with his family.



The funeral procession arriving at the chapel

Having always been interested in firefighting, Doug was a volunteer firefighter in his home town before joining the Melbourne



Doug Akers' Last Turn Out at the Iliffe St fire station.

Metropolitan Fire Brigade. In 1987 Doug came to the Territory on exchange and decided he was going to move here. That became a reality in 1995.

Always enthusiastic, Doug took up lawn bowls in the last couple of years, and quickly made a splash, representing the Australia at the World Firefighter Games in South Africa, and the Northern Territory at the National Championships.

Earlier this year, Doug extended the hand of friendship a visiting French university student, taking him for a tour of Top End fire stations and plenty of fishing.

Doug's friendly face will be missed by all who knew him.

