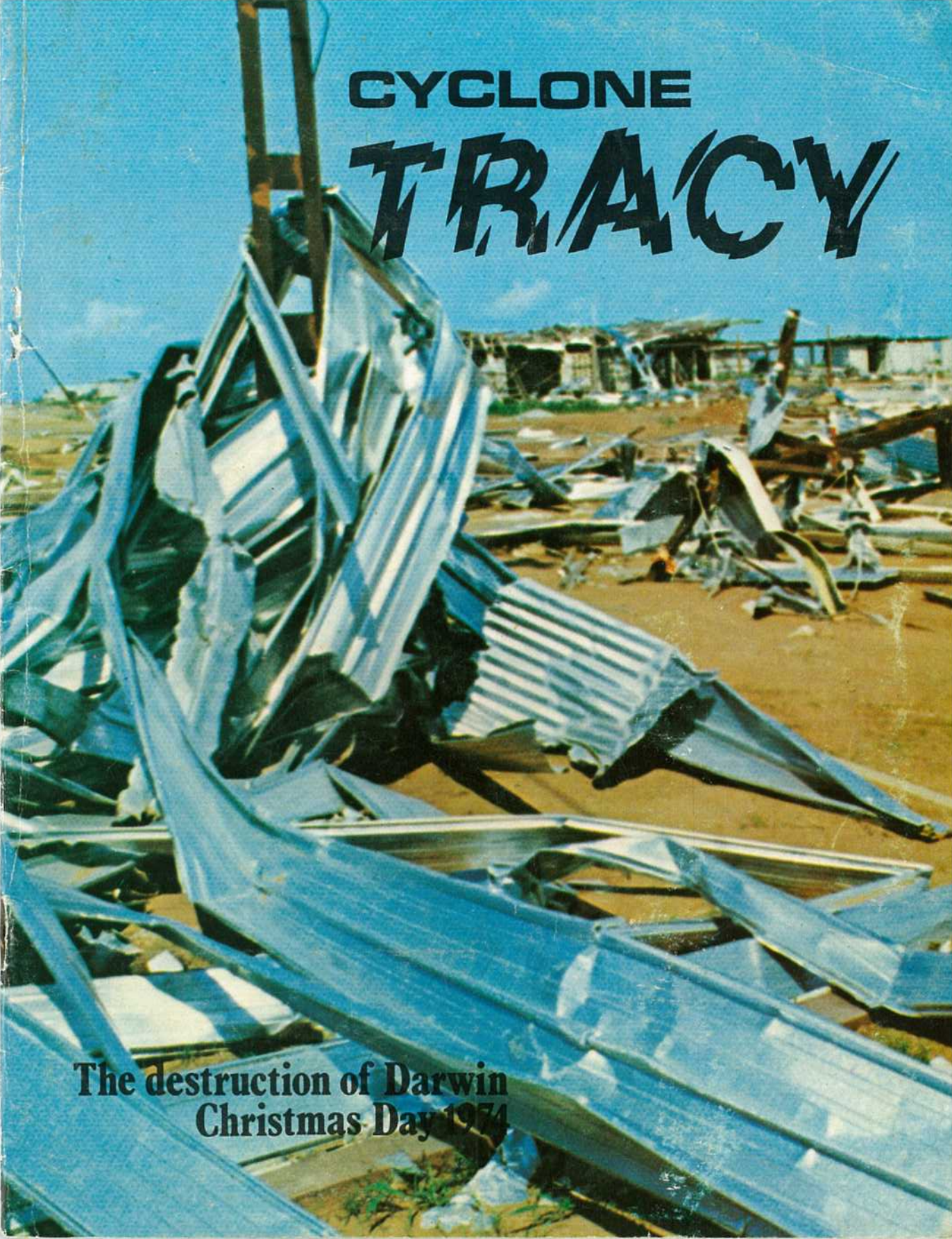
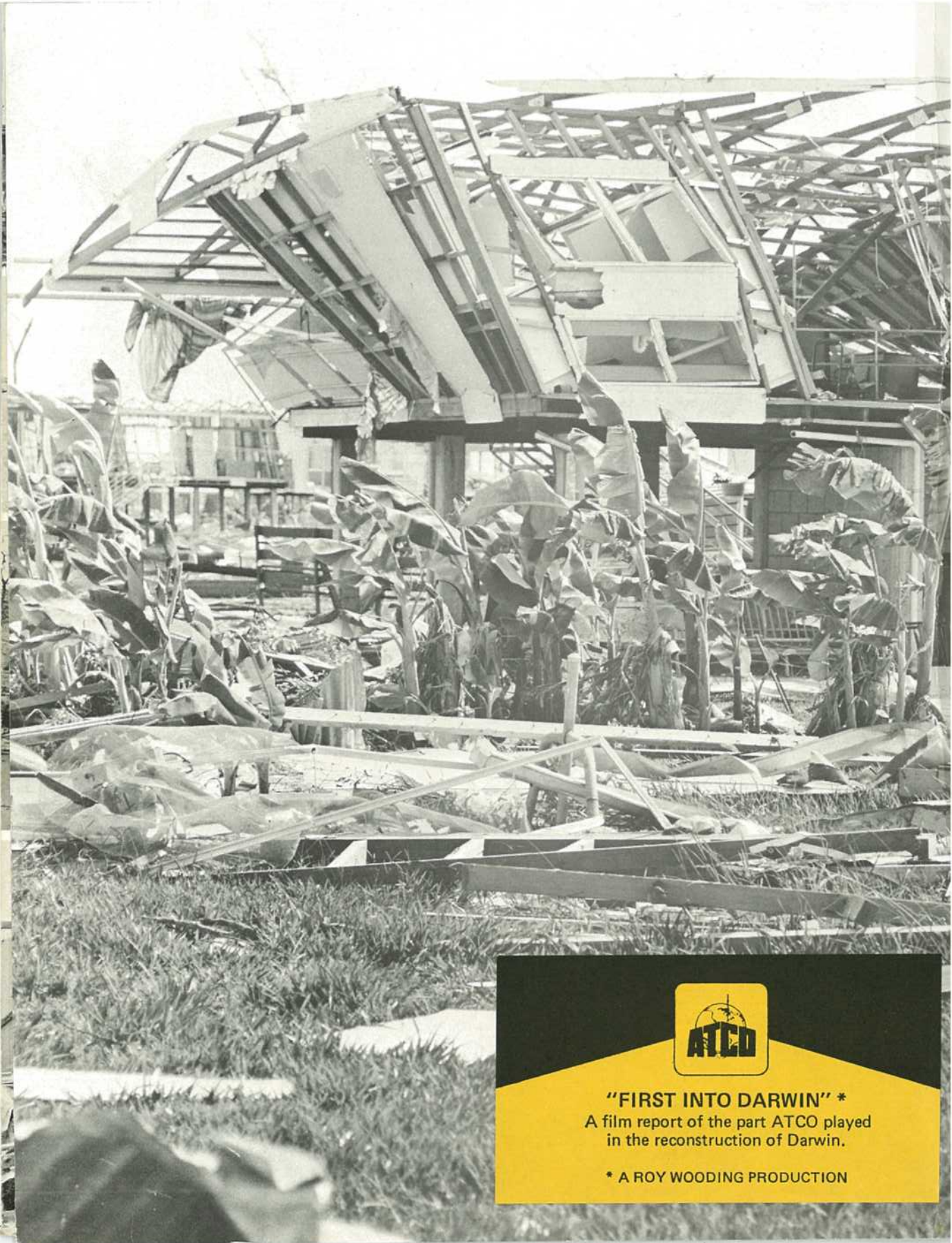
CYCLONE TRACY



The destruction of Darwin
Christmas Day 1974

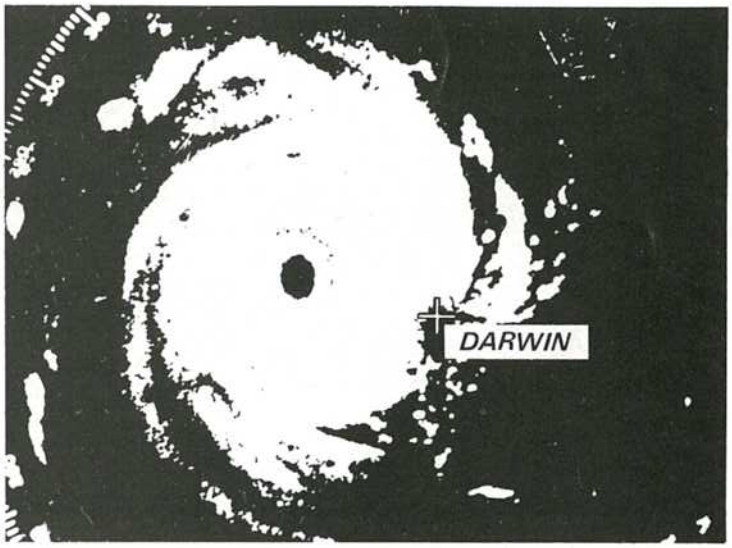


ATCO

"FIRST INTO DARWIN" *

A film report of the part ATCO played in the reconstruction of Darwin.

* A ROY WOODING PRODUCTION



In the early hours of Christmas Day, 1974, the city of Darwin was devastated by the worst natural disaster ever to occur in Australia.

For five hours Cyclone Tracy ravaged the city and as dawn broke on Christmas morning the 45,000 men, women and children who lived in Darwin were horrified to find their city destroyed.

Nearly fifty people were killed or missing; thousands of homes were completely destroyed; every tree and bush was stripped of its foliage; cars, caravans, boats, aeroplanes - anything that was movable was shattered and wrecked.

There was no water, no electricity, no power, no communication with the outside world.

But one thing was not destroyed - the spirit and will of the people.

A gigantic nationwide rescue and relief operation was under way within hours and thousands of people were evacuated from the stricken city.

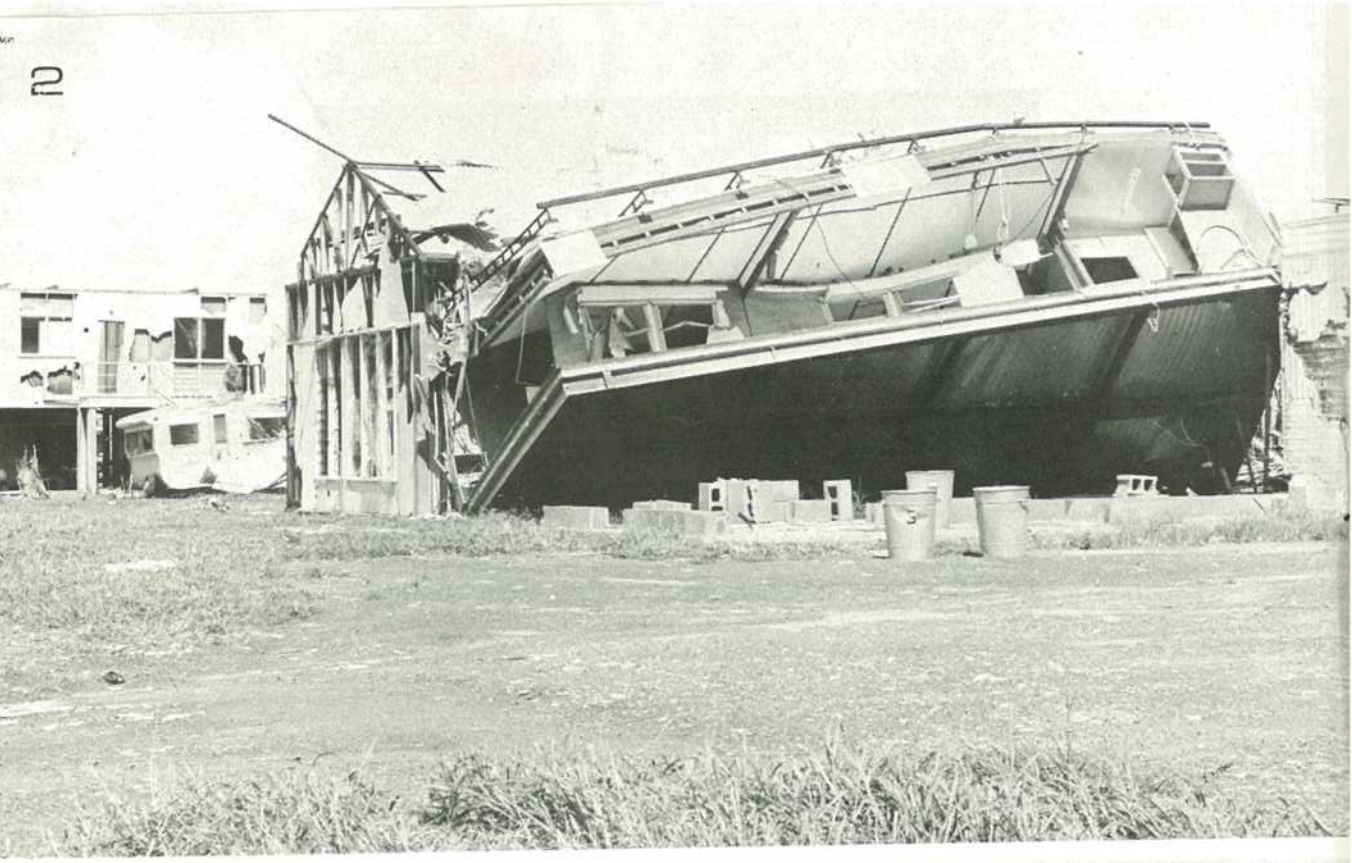
Material and financial aid came instantly from every part of Australia in an overwhelming flood of sympathy and generosity.

This booklet graphically records the destruction of a city, but one thing is quite certain - Darwin will rise again.

Bernie Kilgariff, M.L.A.

Speaker of the Northern Territory
Legislative Assembly

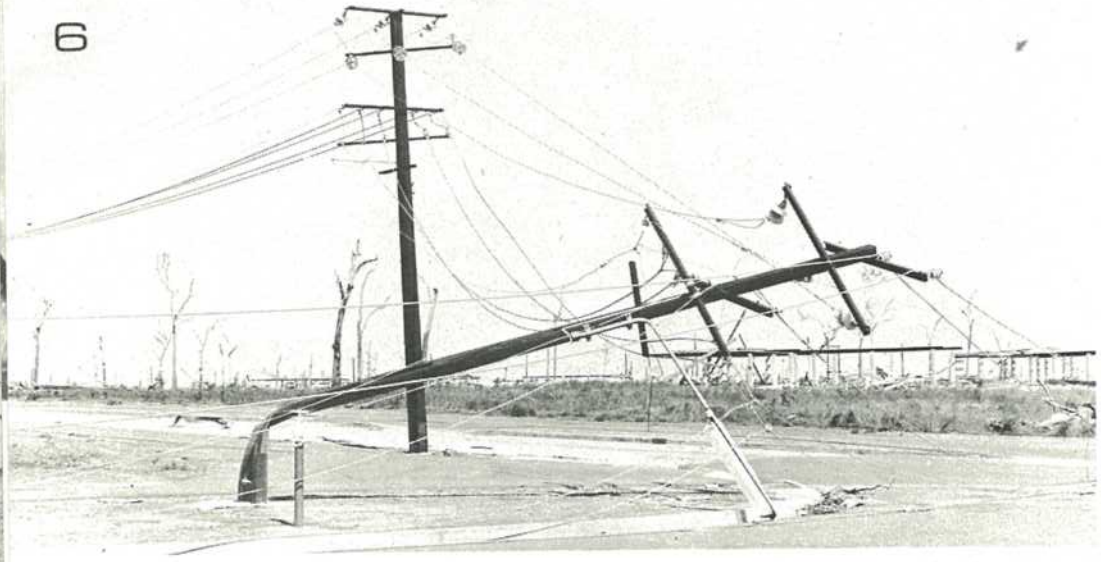
2

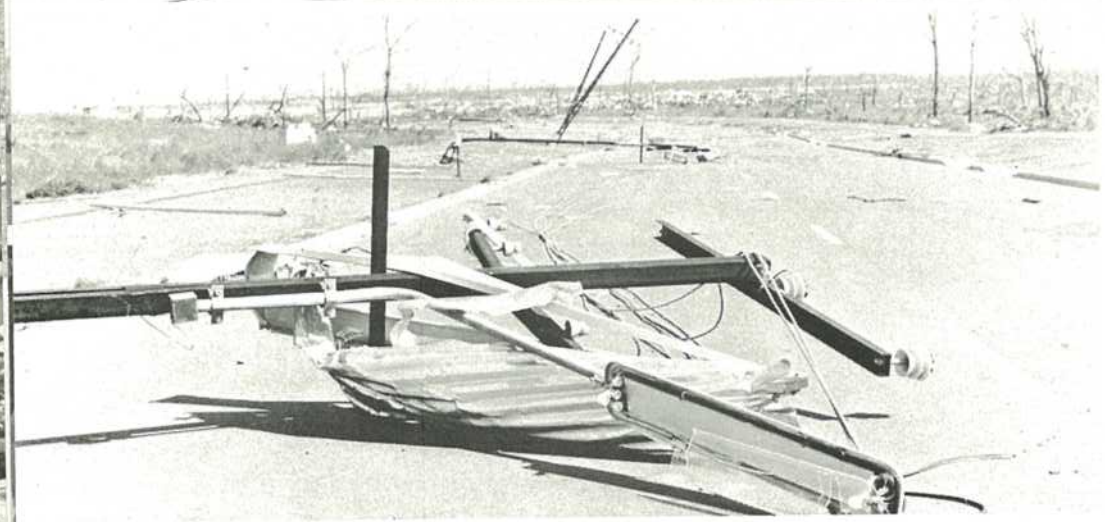


NAVY

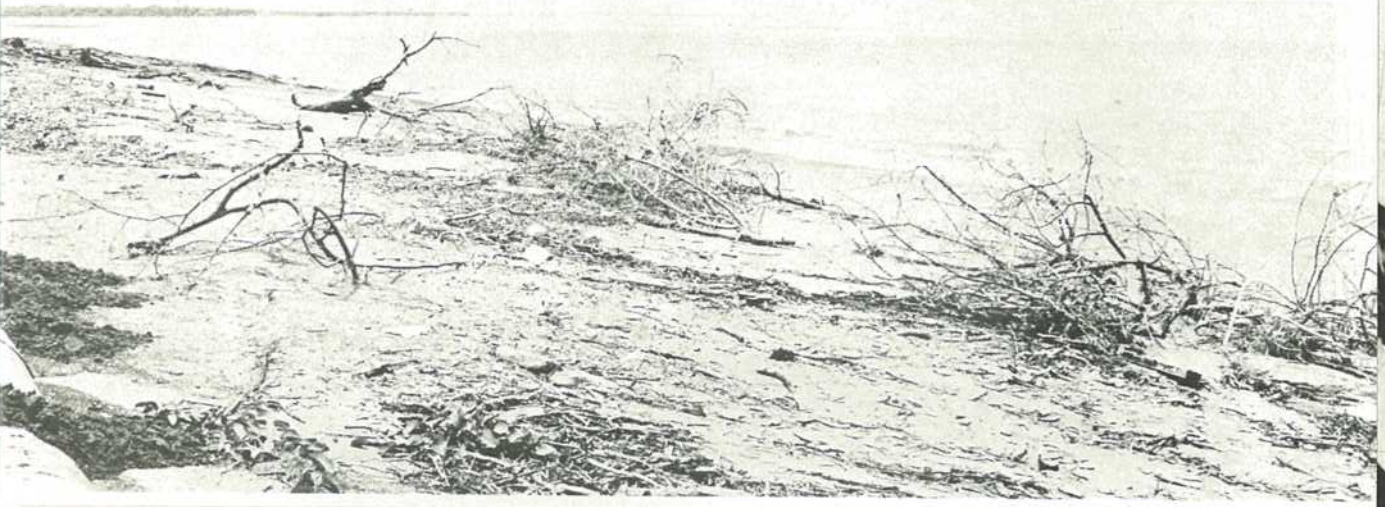
FRAGILE

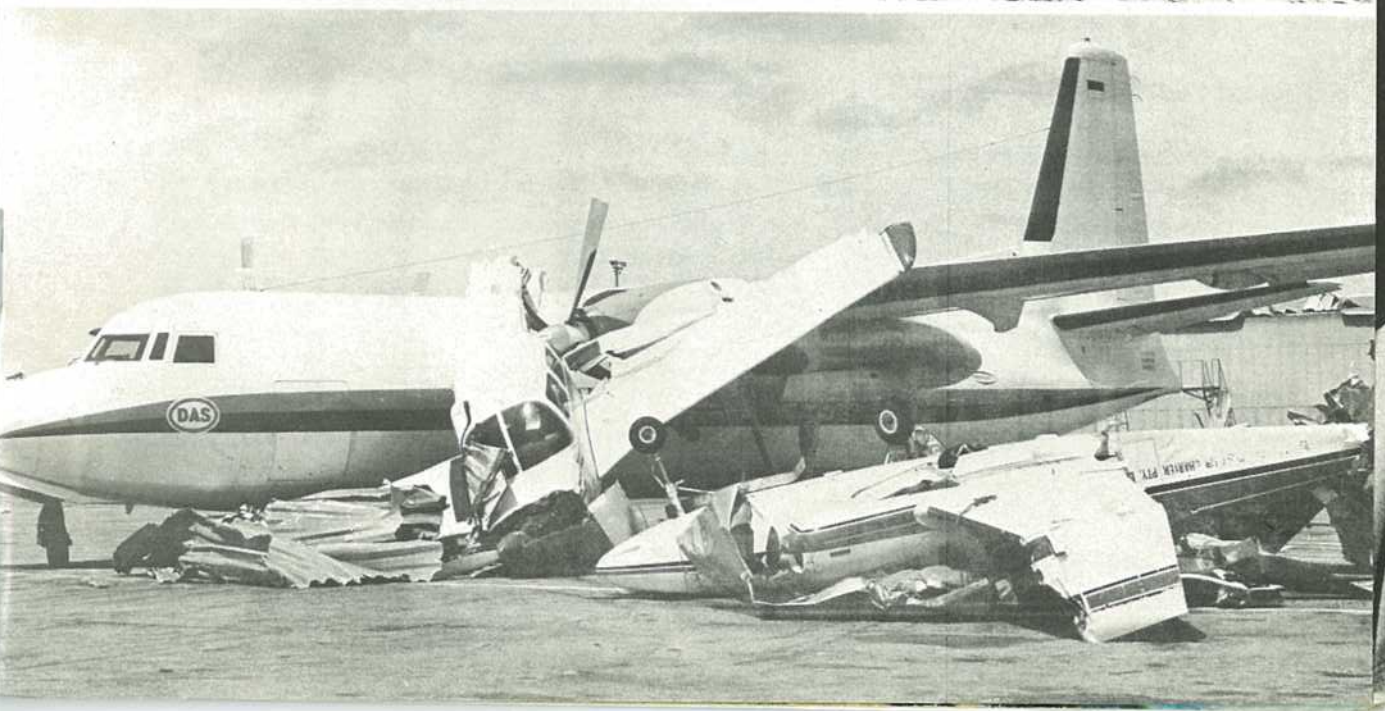
6





TOO ONE AND ALL
HAPPY NEW YEAR

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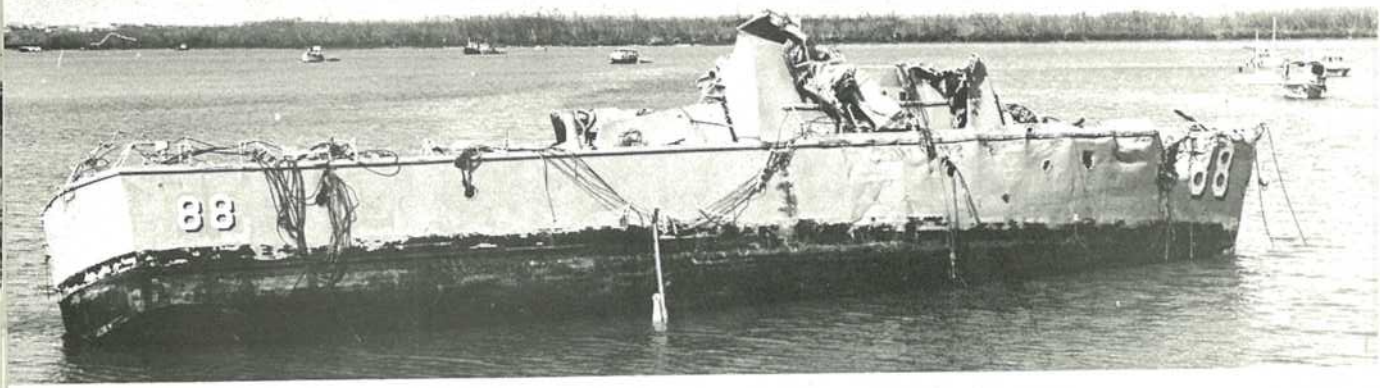
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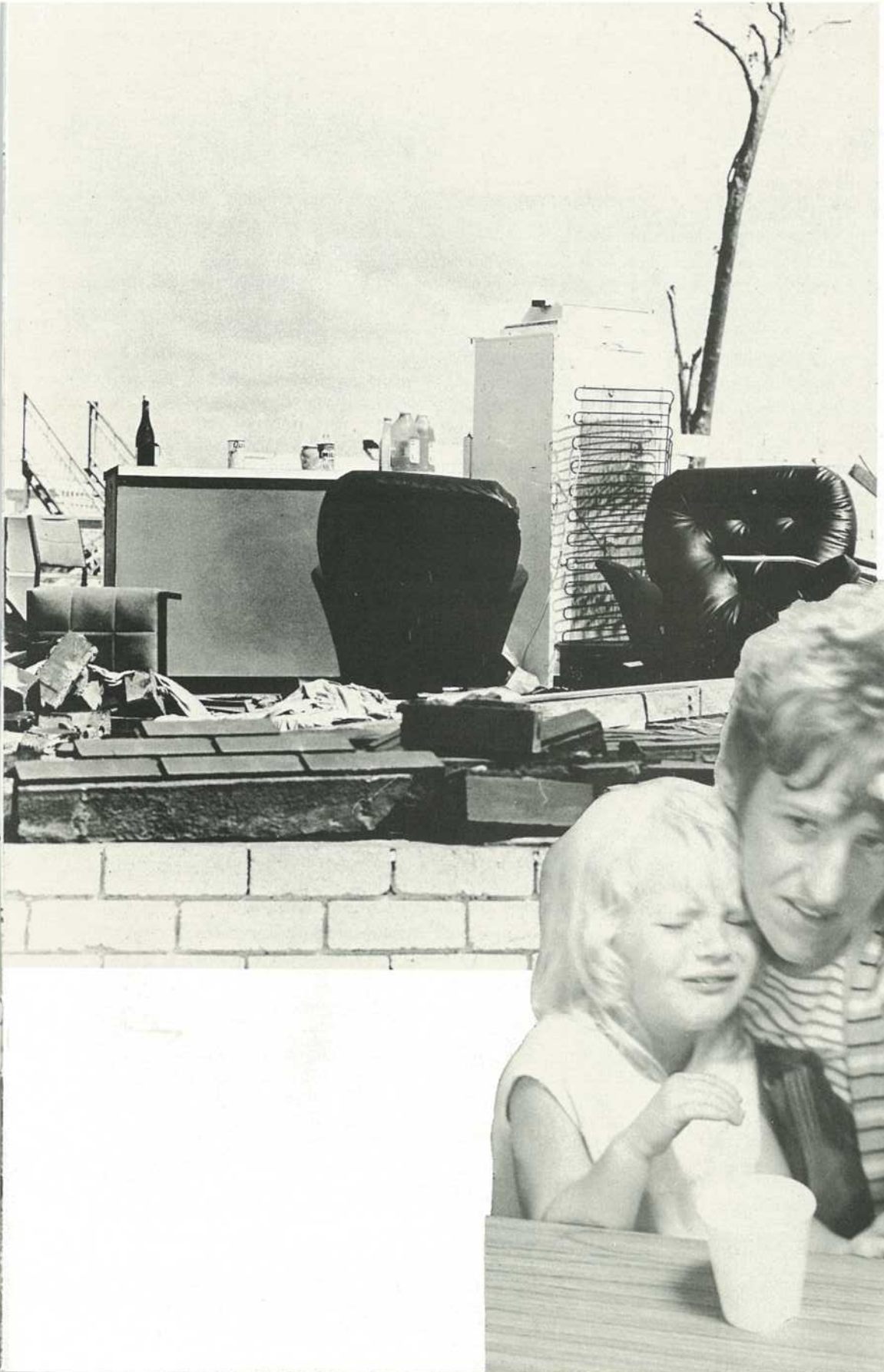
ALICE SPRINGS

EWE

ES CAKES



THE PHOTOGRAPHS

- This photograph is symbolic of the fury of *Cyclone Tracy* which devastated thousands of Darwin homes. IFC
- A dramatic photograph of *Cyclone Tracy* just about to strike Darwin; the eye, or centre of the cyclone, can be clearly seen. The photograph was taken whilst viewing the radar screen in the Meteorological Office. *Photograph by courtesy of the Department of Meteorology* 1
- *Houses, yachts, cars and aeroplanes were lifted bodily and carried considerable distances from their original sites.* 2
- *With water supplies cut, this trickle from a hose provided a welcome shower and opportunity for a clean-up (top left); improvised cooking (top right); walls torn apart and concrete floors shattered, but the people are miraculously still alive (lower left); the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Bill Snedden, talks to a young survivor (lower right). Photographs by courtesy of the Melbourne Sun* 3
- The Navy did a tremendous job in Darwin. Helicopters of the Fleet Air Arm, operating from the aircraft carrier *HMAS Melbourne*, flew a continuous shuttle service to land Navy work parties and equipment. The photograph at the bottom left shows one of the most unpleasant tasks—the disposal of rotten food which necessitated the wearing of gas masks. *Photographs by courtesy of the Royal Australian Navy* 4
- No comment is necessary with regard to these striking photographs. 5
- The fearful fury and power of the wind twisted and bent steel telegraph poles and stripped every tree and bush of its foliage; the lower photograph shows some of the destruction at Darwin Airport. 6–7
- *HMAS Arrow* which was sunk in Darwin harbour with the loss of two lives (top); the lower photograph shows the wrecked guards' tower at Fanny Bay Gaol, but the toilet pedestal remains undamaged. 8
- Evacuees at Alice Springs airport where the Prime Minister, Mr. Gough Whitlam, heard survivors' stories of the disaster. 9
- The Territory's airline, Connair, played a significant part in the relief operations and ferried out the very first evacuees to leave Darwin by air. They are shown arriving in Alice Springs and at the Connair canteen. 10
- The anguish of a woman and child after their nightmare experience and loss of their home. *Lower photograph by courtesy of the Melbourne Sun* 11
- General scenes of the widespread devastation. IBC

The publishers acknowledge with thanks the courtesy of the Royal Australian Navy, the Melbourne Sun, the Department of Meteorology and Mr. Peter Kerrish for permitting us to reproduce their photographs. All photographs not acknowledged on page 12 were taken by Mr. Frank Bennie of Centre Photographics, Todd Street, Alice Springs. We also acknowledge the kindness of Mr. Bernie Kilgariff, M.L.A., Speaker in the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, for writing the Foreword.

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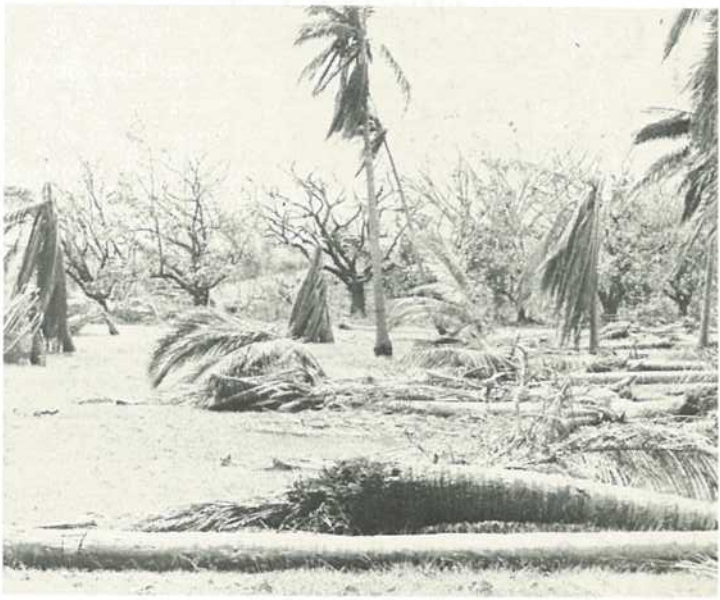
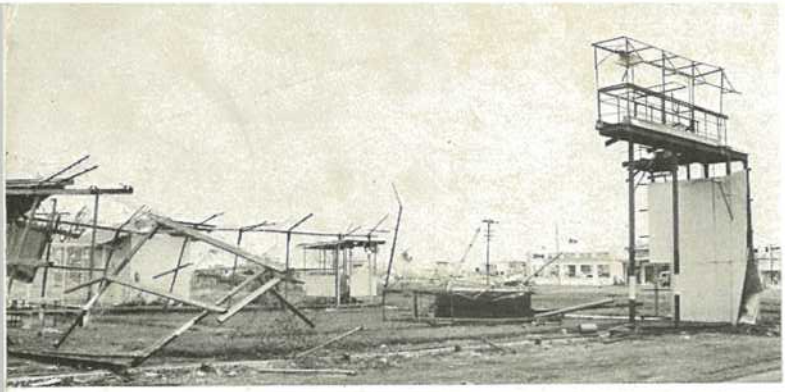
OCCUPIED





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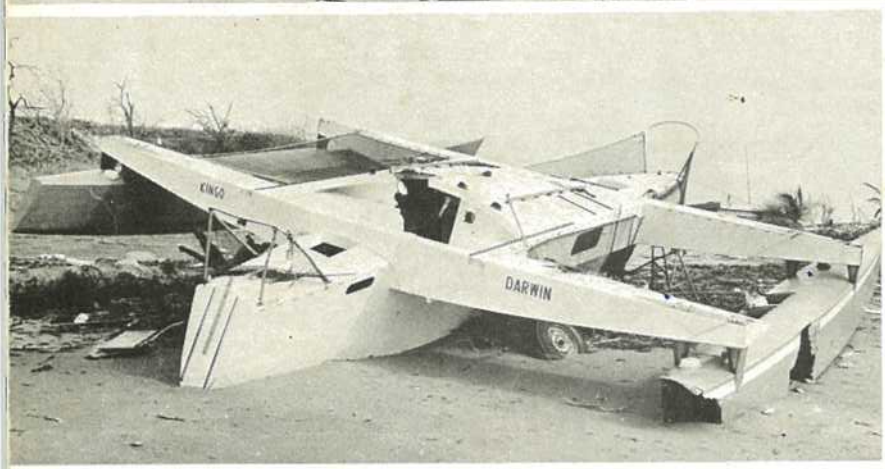
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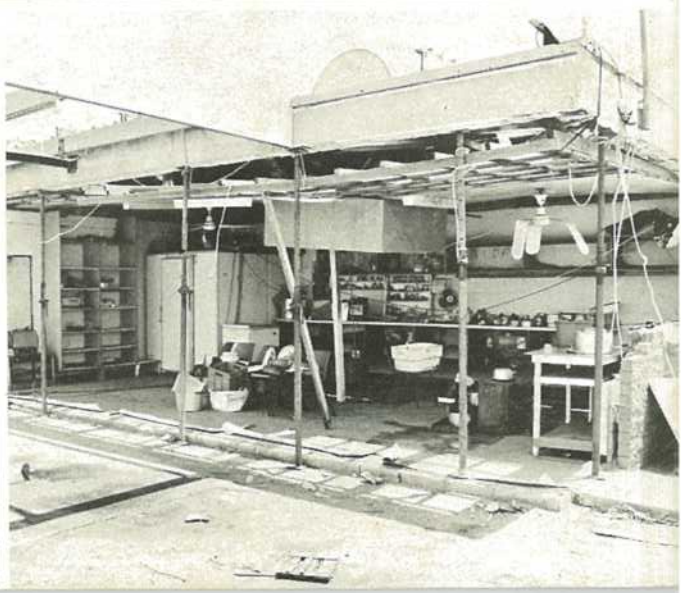
RAWLINGS
RESIDENCE
DONT TOUCH
DONT DEMOLISH
BACK IN 2 WEEKS
10/1/75