

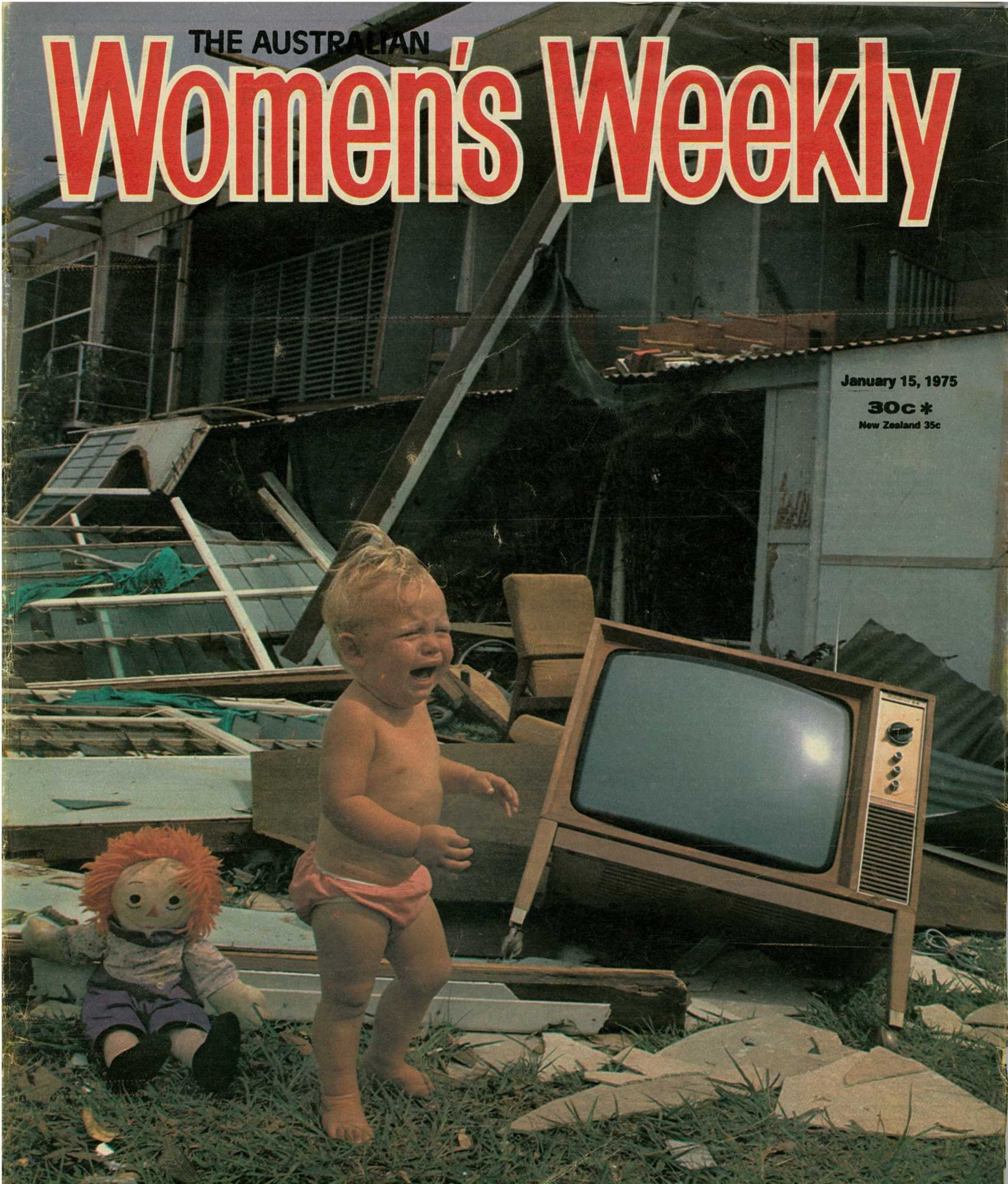
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Women's Weekly

January 15, 1975

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OUR COVER

Our staff photographer Keith Barlow caught 15-month-old Gavin Jones of Parap, Darwin unselfconsciously expressing his unhappiness and bewilderment at his once secure world lying in a tangled heap. But Gavin's mother soon dried his eyes, and in the comfort of her arms a happier toddler joined his family beside an optimistic New Year "message" (see picture this page)

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For our photographer Keith Barlow it was "Christmas Day in Paradise, Boxing Day in Hell"

A hurried phone call and a brief note sent out with rolls of film gave his vivid account of the horror he found in Darwin.

STAFF photographer Keith Barlow flew to Darwin mid-morning on Boxing Day. He had spent Christmas Day at home in Sydney with his wife, two children, and relatives.

He is a veteran, having covered many "big" events - royal tours in Australia and abroad, floods, bush-

fires - so after hearing the news of Cyclone Tracy, he came to work on Boxing Day with a small suitcase of overnight clothes.

At Mascot airport he got the last seat on a Navy plane flying to Darwin to take up supplies and bring back refugees.

Because of the urgent demands on space he was allowed to take only his camera gear, into which he thrust a few toilet articles.

So he went with shaving gear, comb, toothbrush, and deodorant shoved in the camera bag, and the clothes he stood up in.

There was no question of being able to return immediately or at will.

In those days right after the disaster, seats were too urgently needed for the ill, the injured, the homeless.

At midday the next day, Friday, he was able to put through a call to Sydney.

"In the hotel rooms left standing, we're sleeping in wet blankets," he said. "I'm on the sixth floor. There's a premium on food. I've been getting by on a couple of apples.

"The only buildings left

are the big solid ones. For the rest, it's like Hiroshima. "It's too terrible."

This is the letter he included in a package of unprocessed color film he sent us:

"How did I ever get mixed up in this? The horror of disaster is everywhere. You can sense it every way... hear it, see it, smell it, touch it, taste it, feel it.

"I would not have thought it possible to spend Christmas Day in Paradise and Boxing Day in Hell, and can only hope to be out of it in the New Year.

"I wish it were possible to lock the room and close off the scene for a few

hours. But there is not a room in Darwin left with such privacy, such luxury.

"How the death-rate is so low is the miracle of Darwin.

"Every person I have spoken to talks of miracle. Everyone consoles themselves with their luck in being alive - how their home and only refuge was torn away round them, leaving them at the mercy of Cyclone Tracy.

"I wish I could write you all my impressions.

"I hope these pictures can tell part of the story."

Keith took all the post-cyclone Darwin pictures in this issue, in the first days after Christmas.

The tragedy of Darwin

Australians have been deeply moved by the disaster that struck Darwin in the early hours of Christmas Day. They responded with overwhelming generosity to a call by the Nine network, News Ltd, and The Australian Women's Weekly.

SYMPATHY, compassion and practical help cradled the dazed Darwin evacuees through their first shocked reaction to the disaster they suffered. Cold cash in the hand from the National Nine-News Ltd Telethon helped get them back on their feet.

The organisation of the telethon was a spontaneous reaction from the directors of Channel Nine as soon as the magnitude of the disaster was realised.

Two hours after the news arrived on Christmas Day, the complex arrangements were under way.

The telethon that swamped its sponsors in cash was called the Nine Network-News Ltd Darwin Appeal. It covered Australia, through capital city and regional TV channels and was backed by national newspaper coverage.

"Our thought was that after the heart-warming first help, evacuees would need cash for clothing and food. We wanted a deep bank account we could dip into and put whatever cold cash was required into the evacuees' hands," said Mr Alex Baz, director of Special Events at TCN-9.

GRIM FIGHTING SPIRIT. Mrs Jones, mother of the child on our cover (see panel at left), sits with her children beside a sign she put up outside the shambles of her home.

"We got that at the telethon through the generosity of the Australian people."

The telethon was a "sky's-the-limit" job and was kicked off with a donation of \$25,000 from The Australian Women's Weekly, TCN-9, and GTV-9. News Ltd contributed \$25,000.

Fast following this, a donation of \$10,000 from

the King Ranch, a personal donation of \$5,000 from Mr P. L. Baillieu, and \$30,000 from the New South Wales Government gave telethon organisers \$95,000 cash to distribute through the Red Cross 48 hours after the disaster.

It gave immediate help to the stunned, bewildered victims arriving in cities all over Australia.

"We had hard cash available to people who had lost their all, who wanted money for clothes, for food. We wanted to see they weren't penniless," said Mr Baz.

More than \$300,000 had been donated before the telethon began.

The money will be distributed by the Red Cross

and by a committee set up in Darwin.

Brian Henderson, anchor-man for the telethon, said he was amazed at its organisation.

"An affair like this really needs months of preparation," he said.

The Darwin Appeal Telethon was exceptionally professional, variety integrated with scheduled programs and movies. Henderson kept a tight rein on both live and recorded programs and long acknowledgments of donations.

"I was pleased with the pace of the program," he said. "I always try to keep such shows as entertaining and pacy as possible.

"Although this one raged on and on, I went home and got some sleep when I could."

"In the early days of TV the tradition was for the anchor-man to stay on his feet for the 24 or 36 hours the telethon lasted. I know better now.

"I didn't think I'd ever be more amazed at Australian generosity than I was over the Queensland Flood Appeals early in 1974, but this time they have been even more splendid.

"When you think of the hard times, the unemployment, and the general economic climate, the result has been great. Money wasn't tight on New Year's Day round TCN-9."

If you have not yet contributed, send your donation to Post Office Box 50, Willoughby, NSW 2068. Cheques and money orders should be made out to Darwin Appeal.





DISASTER AREA: Shattered homes in suburban Nightcliff, one of Darwin's worst affected districts. This picture was taken from the top of a still-standing apartment building.

NEXT WEEK

16-page lift-out

Our 1975 SCHOOL BOOK LABELS

to cut out and paste
on exercise books

Bright color pictures
of animals, flowers,
pop stars, and famous
Australian steam trains

Special

BACK to SCHOOL section

includes an article by
well-known educationist
who puts both sides of

**HOW MUCH SAY
SHOULD PARENTS HAVE
IN RUNNING SCHOOLS?**

SWIMWEAR KNITS

in pretty pastels
bikinis, one-piece,
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amusing book about his
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including Jackie Kennedy,
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New ideas for SALADS

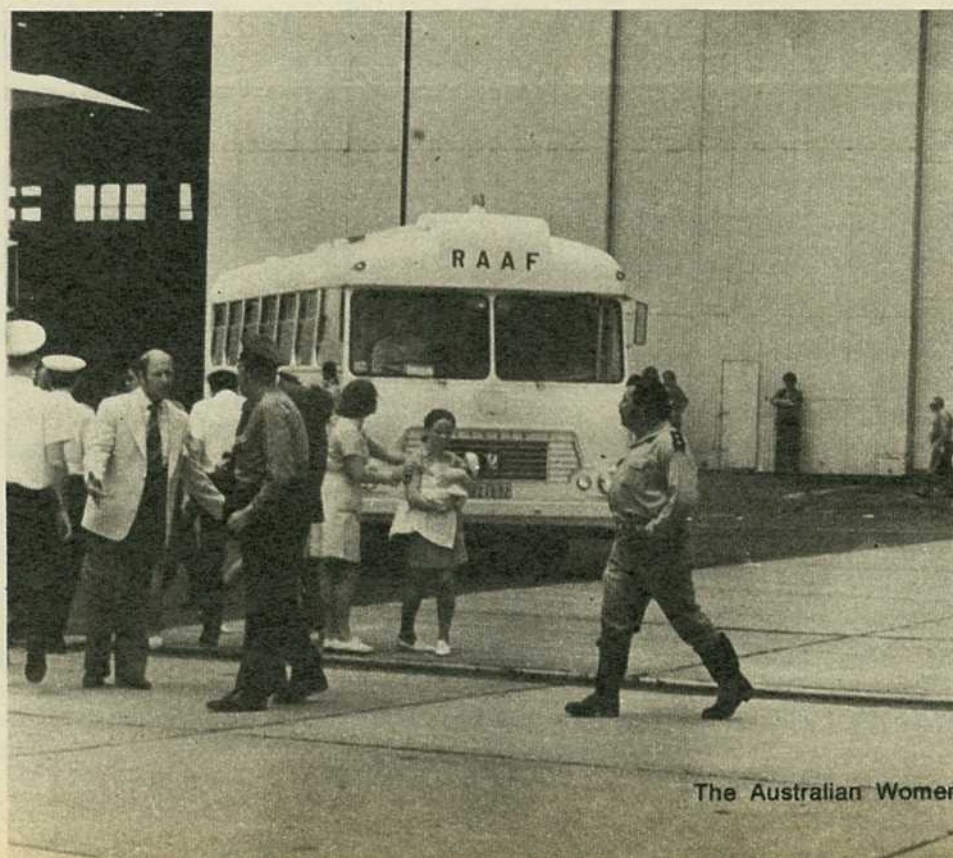
to accompany hot or
cold meats, or as a
meal in themselves



ABOVE: Mrs Jill Wilkshire (sitting on case) with Carole, 3½, and Stuart, 5 (standing), and Mrs Robin Cook with her daughter Monique, 16 months, wait at Darwin airport for a plane to take them to another city. Families who got out with a case of clothes and some of their children's Christmas toys counted themselves doubly lucky.



RIGHT: Three-year-old Natasha McDonald sleeps on a case at the airport. . . . By the evening of December 30, five days after the cyclone, only about 20,000 people remained in Darwin out of its 45,000 population. Many had left by car and truck, and on foot.



LEFT: In Sydney, a nurse carries a badly wounded baby off the first Hercules aircraft to land there from Darwin after the disaster. The baby was one of 18 seriously injured people aboard.

RIGHT: Mr Pat Neal with his wife and children, twins Bronwyn and Warren, 2½ years, and Evan, 4½, at Darwin Airport before Mrs Neal and the children were evacuated.

The refugees leave Darwin

It was the greatest airlift of civilians in history . . . more than half the population safely away in five days



Help and self-help amid



Darwin refugees board a United States Air Force Starlifter during the massive airlift of the city's homeless which was carried out by a fleet of civil and defence planes, almost entirely Australian.



LEFT: Michel Loister fills a bucket at a motel swimming pool which provided a much-appreciated source of water for washing and flushing toilets, although it was unfit for drinking. The two cars were blown into the pool by the cyclone.

ABOVE: A hot meal for Mr and Mrs Bruce McDougall and their children, from left, Paul (12), Diana (10), Russell (7), beside the wreckage of their home in the Darwin suburb of Wagaman. During the cyclone, the family huddled in a linen cupboard with their pet dog and cat.

the chaos

Until evacuation to the South, survivors gamely battled on among the ruins



A long queue of residents waits patiently at the Darwin communications building to send reassuring telegrams to families and relatives in other States after links with the outside world, cut by the cyclone, were re-established.



ABOVE: At Fannie Bay jail the force of the storm twisted and brought down steel fencing and partially destroyed one of the watch towers normally manned by guards.

RIGHT: In contrast to the complete devastation in some areas, this section was lucky with buildings unroofed and damaged but still standing. Remarkably, the tall water tower in the background survived.



This is what happened to one of the thousands of Darwin families on that unimaginable night that ended with Christmas Day. Some fared rather better, some tragically worse . . . but a great deal of the experience was common to everyone.

A different, dreadful, Christmas Day

AROUND THREE in the morning, the sounds from hell took on a new intensity. The young parents, Chris and Kathleen Crellin, braced themselves, knowing that this was the back of the cyclone's eye.

They crouched with their children in what had been the hallway, under a glass-strewn blanket, in the howling dark. They were beyond speech, almost beyond thought.

Even Sean, only two, made no sound, and had made none for hours. Nor had Kylie cried or whimpered, though she was only three weeks old.

The world had gone mad, and these little ones were shocked into silence.

Over the cacophony of shrieking wind and rain, there came a new sound, sudden, like an explosion. Close by, something had blown up.

It was hard to tell what, in the din and the pitch dark.

Then the parents guessed. The glass doors on to the verandah had exploded.

As if at a signal, the whole side of the house tore away. In a series of giant crashings, objects were sucked like paper into the wildness outside — heavy objects, solid furniture, the big refrigerator, even the stove.

Now the hallway in which the little family lay stood almost alone. Glass whirled about, raining down on the blanket. The din was unendurable, the darkness — though dawn was not far off — as impenetrable as ever.

How long could the walls of the little hallway remain standing? And the strip of ceiling over their heads, their precarious shelter against this most murderous of storms?

There was a sound of rending, somewhere above them, and curiously slow.

It was the ceiling. One

By
KAY KEAVNEY

end of the ceiling was coming down . . .

"It wasn't the kind of Christmas Day we'd planned," Kathleen Crellin said wryly.

She and her tall Melburnian husband, Chris, were "city slickers" but Darwin had won their hearts, and will always hold them.

Each had gone separately to the Top End, adventure-bound. They had met there, and married. She was a clerk, he an insurance salesman who became an officer of the Northern Territory Police.

The house that cyclone Tracy was tearing apart was a Government house. Fully furnished, up on stilts, blessed by fresh sea breezes, it was one of the perquisites that made a policeman's lot a happy one.

But the young Crellins

were an independent pair, and shared the Australian itch for owning their own home. So they were buying the place.

Just in the past few months, they'd spend over \$3000 on solid improvements. Hadn't upped the insurance to cover them, though . . .

They'd replaced all the Government furniture, too, with their own, piece by piece.

Well, it had seemed a splendid idea at the time.

The night before, on Christmas Eve, Chris had been on duty. Kathleen was flat out at home, preparing for the big day on the morrow — Kylie's first Christmas, Sean's first as a big brother.

At 7 pm, on the news, she'd heard the cyclone warnings, and as usual had locked things likely to blow round underneath the house.

She'd heard cyclone warnings before.

She was too busy to hear the later, more serious, warnings, though she got a bit worried when the wind began howling among the big mahogany trees in the yard.

In fact, after she'd gone to bed, she kept getting up to look at those bending trees.

And she got a bottle for Kylie from the fridge, and some candles. Just in time, too, for the power went off.

Chris got home round midnight, and by then it was pretty bad. Chris didn't undress.

He got mattresses and blankets and cushions and put them in the hall, which was windowless and therefore safer, and moved his family in there.

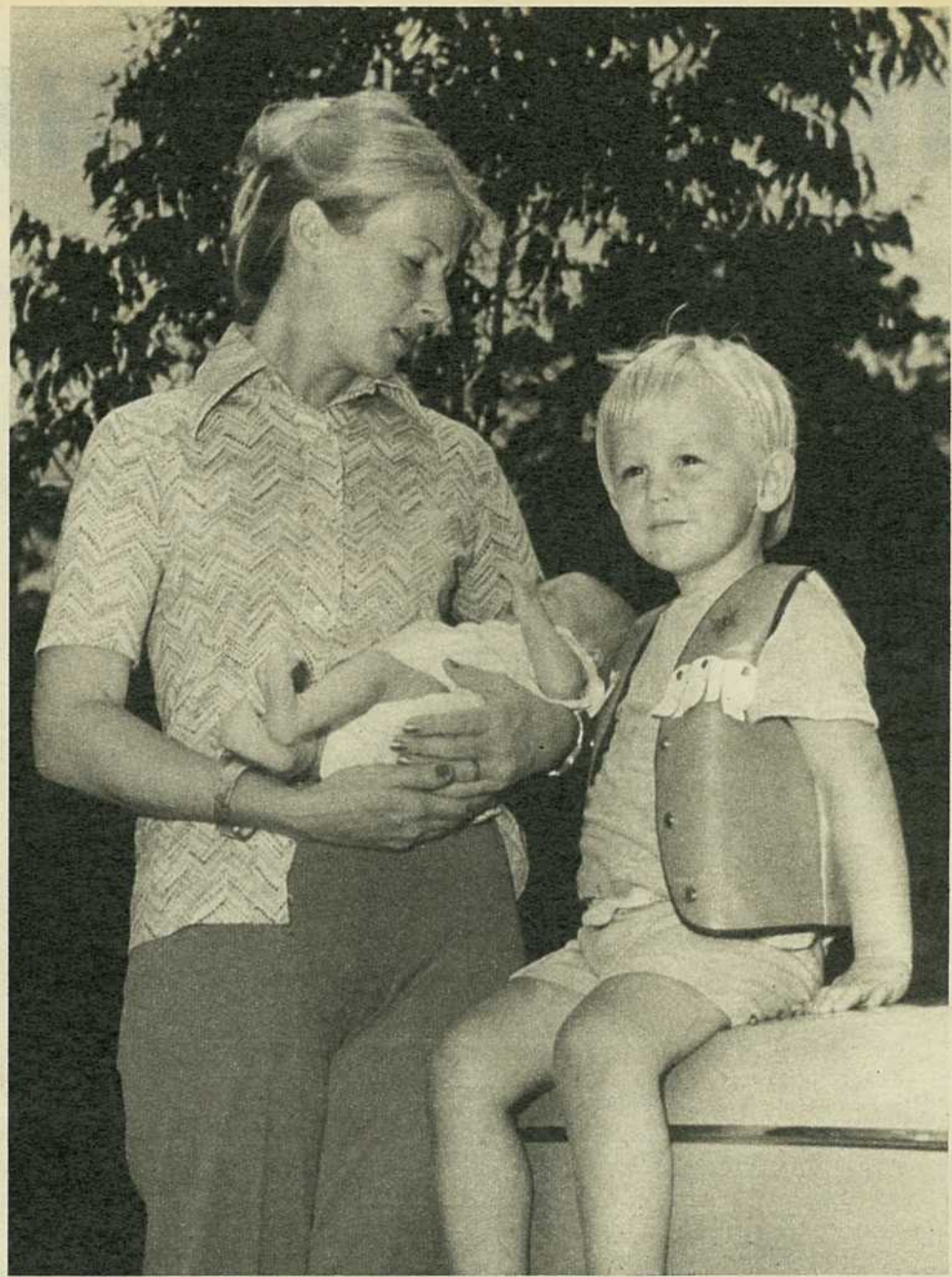
It wasn't too bad while there were candles. But when

they were finished the darkness was total and Sean began to whimper.

Then Sean's bedroom blew in with a monstrous shattering of glass, and Chris said, "Let's get out."

But he ducked back, holding them all beneath the protective blanket. The storm bellowed, and the entire top part of the house opposite blew off and came crashing into the Crellins' master bedroom.

Now the front of the house was gone, and the night full of terrible sounds — the wind, the interminable rain, the crashing of glass, the cracking and ripping of corrugated iron. Nearly every roof in Darwin was constructed of corrugated iron.



Kathleen Crellin, her son Sean, 2, and three-week-old daughter, Kylie, in Sydney after they had been evacuated from Darwin.

Sean and the baby were silent in the face of it all. Soon, though, Kathleen thought, the baby must start crying for milk, and there's no way of warming it.

There was a slight but blessed abatement. The eye of the cyclone . . .

Chris struggled out to the back door and wrenched it open. He turned away, heartsick.

"There's a powerline down right across the back steps," he told Kathleen. "The yard looks like a missile range. It looks as if an atom bomb has struck. We'll have to wait for daylight, and then try."

But the young parents knew that the worst still lay ahead — the back of the eye. And round three in the morning, it struck the house with a giant paw, tearing the side away.

Then, the ceiling . . .

"One whole end of the ceiling came away," said Kathleen, after reaching the safety of Sydney. "The noise and the rain and the glass were worse than ever. But by some miracle, the rest of the ceiling held. We just cowered there, hardly even speaking, until just on six, with first light."

Chris went ahead, to what was left of the front of their once-charming house. He carried Sean. Kathleen came behind, carrying the baby.

They stepped out to what had been their front garden,

and looked at the wreck of Darwin.

"In spite of all we'd heard through the night," she said, "we weren't prepared — you couldn't be prepared — for what we saw."

"It was still raining, teeming, though the wind had abated. Hardly anything was left standing. All our 15ft high mahogany trees were uprooted, lying about the yard and over the broken fences."

"Everywhere there was corrugated iron. Our fridge had been tossed like a toy halfway across the yard. Our car had been swivelled right around. Bits of our cassette recorder lay across the bottom step."

"We'd had wallpaper with pretty flowers on it on our kitchen wall. Bits of the wall with the flowers were scattered all over our neighbour's fence."

"I think that hit me most . . . the flowers on our kitchen wall . . ."

The family were practically penniless, with little but the clothes they were wearing. All their bright dreams had exploded in a few insane hours.

"But we were alive," said Kathleen. "And after a night like that, survival was all that mattered."

Followed a new fight for survival, in the devastated town, without water or sewerage or power, and with little food. Within hours,

many of Darwin's children were suffering from dysentery and gastro-enteritis.

Chris fought to get his family away, especially the new baby.

He managed to get them out to the airstrip. But it was days before he knew whether they'd actually got away.

He had work to do, back in the suffering town, and he had to leave his family, as did most of Darwin's men.

"We were turned away from the first plane," said Kathleen. "My friend Dorothy Symons, and her three little children, were with us, and they were turned away too, for those in more desperate need."

Round midday on the next day, the two women and five small children were aboard a plane, not even knowing or caring about their destination.

It was Sydney, where Kathleen's anxious parents, Mr and Mrs J. D. Payens, of Castle Hill, waited to take them all in.

And Kathleen was stoic, counting her blessings.

"Hardly a family in Darwin hasn't at least somebody injured, or dead," she said sombrely, nursing the silent baby.

"We've lost everything, it's true, but we're all alive. We're the lucky ones. And, some time soon, little Sean will get over the nightmare. Some time, please God, he'll smile again."

THE DARWIN THAT WAS—AND IS



A few years ago, looking across Darwin, from the Fannie Bay side, toward the commercial centre and shipping port. Darwin Hospital is in the foreground, by the swimming pool, with defence installations at right, extending to the Larrakeyah district. The cyclone de-roofed the hospital.

... Pictures (right) taken in the first two days after Tracy exploded on a peaceful city



ABOVE: Darwin homes before Tracy hit. Experts are thinking about new building designs for Darwin so that it will cope more effectively with cyclones.



RIGHT: In a shattered home only the remains of a bathroom still stand. Many residents were told that their bathroom would be one of the safest rooms.



ABOVE: Amid the iron and timber housing wreckage lie furnishings and possessions — sodden clothing, bedding, a fridge, and a bath. The cyclonic wind, at times in excess of 200 km/h (120 mph), blew first from the north-west, then after a lull — “the eye of the storm” — from the south-east. Buildings weakened by the first blast from one direction crumpled at the second from the other direction. Only the heaviest, most solid constructions withstood the cyclone.

RIGHT: A woman helping clean up the mess at her front gate — which stands even though the fence on one side of it has gone. Even the car windows have been blown in.

