



Isabel covered in dust from Cape York meets baby brother Tommy with Lee and Graham Meyers

On the Road with Isabel

Words & pictures by Nancy Bates Q83355

Journalist Nancy Bates and husband Tony are roaming Australia in Isabel, a 4WD Global Warrior motorhome built by All Terrain Warriors with marine-style construction and finish. Isabel was the second Global Warrior off the Yandina production line, with the first shipped overseas.

Isabel Meets Tommy

After cruising to the top of Cape York and down the Bloomfield Track to Cooktown, we were surprised to come across Isabel's little brother Tommy, Global Warrior number three. Lee and Graham Meyers from the Sunshine Coast were just as surprised to find that the only two Global Warriors in Australia, at the time, had crossed paths.

We compared notes and admired what each couple had done in fitting out, personalising and modifying our respective Global Warriors. Tommy, bearing a turtle logo, had been fitted with 240 volts and a washing machine that was Lee's prized possession. She wasn't leaving home without it. The couple are formerly from Toowoomba.

"Graham is probably best described as a nearly old bloke, chasing his dream of freedom without a deadline," said Lee. "Me? I'm a traveller soaking up the beauty of the world, while trying to make sense of human activity."

Both couples like to be self-sufficient and get to out-of-the-way places without



Our little convoy on Tom's highway west

having to tow anything. The tough, well-sealed fibreglass Global Warrior, with showers, toilet, solar panels and electric pop-up roofs, is fitting the bill.

North-West from Chillagoe

Old Tom Prior snorted when we asked him about the condition of the unsealed top road to Karumba. We had been told it

was pretty rough with a lot of bulldust, but Tom, 75 years young, assured us he had driven over it a couple of weeks ago and it was like a highway.

We took his advice with a little salt; on the Western Queensland roads they don't come much tougher than Tom. And nothing, he says, comes tougher than his beloved Fords.

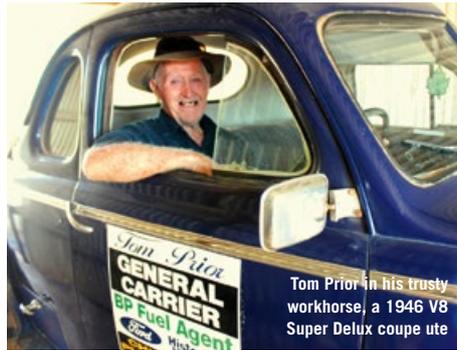
Feature On the Road with Isabel

Tom was the general carrier at Chillagoe from 1957 until about six or seven years ago. His quaint BP bowsters sit in a dusty yard behind an obscure building on a back street of this little town, west of Cairns.

Gleaming in the open shed were millions of dollars' worth of fantastic Fords in mint condition. His old favourite workhorse, a dark blue 1946 V8 Super Deluxe coupe ute, has pride of place.

"She hasn't been tuned for 35 years but I bet she'll tick over first start." It did, and apparently so did every other machine in his collection, including a 1942 Ford ex-army truck that he swore was brand new.

Chillagoe was an expected delight to visit. For \$6 a night you could camp at the rodeo grounds, not far from the intriguing balancing rock. Three tours of the town's limestone caves were on offer and a comprehensive information centre at The Hub told of the town's colourful past and present. Massive blocks of quarried marble were scattered on the landscape like giant building blocks, testimony to a modern industry that has its ups and downs. The town's rodeo and music festival are lively annual events, as is the wheelbarrow race to Mareeba.



Tom Prior in his trusty workhorse, a 1946 V8 Super Deluxe coupe ute



The 1928 Model A Ford



Tom's sparkling 1965 Shelby Mustang

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The top road to Karumba

Tom was the town's treasure for us, however; barefoot in the dust and wearing a gap-toothed grin, he was adamant that Fords were the only transport worth having in the west. Nothing else was tough enough. The only reason the other brands were going was because there was bitumen.

He patted a 1958 green 18cwt Freighter, "You'd drive around Australia in this in top gear. In the next couple of years I'm going to drive it around Australia."

A 1928 Model A with a polished timber tray was parked near a bubble-wrapped, red-trimmed, white 1970 XW Ford Falcon GT 351c, built in Australia and arguably the best muscle car in the world in its time. A gleaming red and white 1965



Tony and Graham talk personal Global Warrior modifications

Shelby Mustang sat opposite a brown Pilot sedan from the late '40s. Tom opened the back door of the Pilot to show its rope interior handles and roominess. "You could hold a dance in here."

A 1958 Ford F8000 powered by a supercharged Cummins had done a million and a half miles, said Tom, 90% of it in rough conditions and "look, there's no play in the steering wheel". No play in the door hinges either.

Eventually we dragged ourselves away and bought fuel for our 600 kilometre

bowser-less journey on the 'highway' that turned out to be not too bad – until we hit the more poorly maintained roads of the Carpentaria Shire.

As a byway to roam through brilliant bird life, rivers and sunlit plains extended, it was a grand alternative to the well-travelled Savannah Way. We didn't have a Ford in our little convoy but we are keeping our eyes out for old Tom when he sets out to cruise around Australia in his 1958 Freighter. 🚚

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