‘Museums are terrific, especially for historians!’ The many legacies of Mickey Dewar (1 January 1956 – 23 April 2017)

Ann McGrath

It took a sense of an ending. But I realised belatedly that Mickey Dewar’s contribution to Northern Territory history had not been adequately acknowledged. In March 2017, at age 61, Mickey had accepted that she did not have long to live, though friends and colleagues like myself were less willing to do so. She was in the midst of organising a conference to honour of our elderly mutual colleague Emeritus Professor Alan Powell, to which I’d been invited. I told her that I wanted to nominate her for some overdue recognition; I was certain that it would attract support. She responded that she was ‘not that good a historian’. With characteristic self-deprecating humour, she followed up with a text message:

Thank you... for your flattering and totally undeserved offer to nominate [me] for an AO. Ann – they only give them to live people!!! [Though] I’m sure your argued case would have me coming out a feminist cross between Herodotus, Mark [sic] Bloch, Simon Schama and Geoffrey Blainey!

Her light-hearted romp through her history heroes summed up her brazen wit, love of classical scholarship, interdisciplinarity, landscape history and eclectic politics. Admittedly, she gave them a ‘feminist cross’; we were of a generation that heartily embraced feminism, with Germaine Greer being one of our celebrity heroines.¹ The list also encapsulated Mickey’s belief in history’s potential to reach popular audiences and to function as a catalyst

1 McGrath, ‘The Female Eunuch in the Suburbs’.

for social change. It is easy to find ample evidence to refute her assertion that she was ‘not that good a historian’. Michelle Dewar – called ‘Mickey’ by her family all her life and so known to her friends and colleagues – was a champion of history across many genres. Her contribution to the study of the north was rigorous, broad ranging and prolific. Her body of work is often highly entertaining, iconoclastic and always meticulously researched. Fiercely intelligent and articulate, with an enviable vocabulary, she had a strong command of literature from the Greek classics to the present. When I complimented her on this, she said ‘I only read trash!’. She won major history prizes, including the Northern Territory’s top history book award in 2011 for *Darwin – No Place Like Home*, a social history of Territory housing.² Although she grew up in Melbourne’s south-east, for Mickey, Darwin had indeed become home.

Figure 1: Mickey Dewar and her lifetime hero Germaine Greer, 2010.

Source: Dewar Ritchie Photo Collection.

She excelled as a talented communicator across multiple forms of media, sharing historical research with diverse local and national audiences. In her enduring engagement with Northern Territory history, Mickey Dewar’s interests ranged far and wide. The topics, the genres, the institutions in which she worked were remarkably varied. Professionally, she did not

2 Dewar, *Darwin – No Place Like Home*.

fit into any one group or conference circuit. She recognised how much research was needed on multiple interesting subjects and got on with it with energy and panache. But although she persevered long enough in each sector to make a difference, she moved on, gradually taking on the whole gamut.

She did not seek to climb the narrow and slippery academic ladder, but branched out, eventually taking her historical training and knowledge into the political arena, when she worked as senior adviser to the first female chief minister of the Northern Territory, Clare Martin, between 2002 and 2005. Yet, throughout her career, Mickey continued to develop her craft as a public historian, publishing not only heritage and other public policy reports, but regularly contributing to academic journals and book collections.³

Figure 2: Clare Martin and Mickey Dewar at the launch of their book *Speak for Yourself* on chief ministers of the Northern Territory, 2012.

Source: Dewar Ritchie Photo Collection.

3 See Dewar's selected publications in Appendix 2 of this volume.

Figure 3: Mickey Dewar with her students and a baby in Mililingimbi community, c. 1983.

Source: Dewar Ritchie Photo Collection.

Always serious about her scholarship, Mickey also saw history as great fun. She thought of her life, and her career, as ‘a party’. As a young woman she had studied for her Bachelor of Arts (Honours) at the University of Melbourne, where she combined reading voraciously with having a wild time. At Ormond College, she made lifelong friends, and met her future husband. She enjoyed Greg Denning’s classes, where she undertook a project on the notorious Captain Bligh, whom she was delighted to defend. She first went to the Northern Territory in 1981 to study for a Graduate Diploma in Education at the Darwin Community College, then took up a remote teaching post with an Aboriginal community, in Mililingimbi.

She married David Ritchie and had two children, Sam and Susannah. When they were still young, she undertook a Master of Arts at the University of New England, winning the Louise T. Daley Prize for Australian History in 1989. She then commenced another postgraduate degree, completing it in an impressively short time, in 1994, becoming the first graduate to a Doctor of Philosophy at Charles Darwin University. Mickey worked as research assistant to Dr H. C. (Nugget) Coombs, for his book *Aboriginal Autonomy* (Cambridge University Press, 1994) and

subsequently was appointed senior curator of history at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, a position she held for the next decade.

After her role as a political adviser and several years as principal of 'Mickey Dewar Historical Research & Consulting', Mickey decided on a new career as a librarian, undertaking a Diploma and then Masters of Library and Information Management from the University of South Australia, and completing it in 2015. For the last three years of her life, Mickey held the position in charge of the Special Collection in the Northern Territory Library, which is the reference collection on Territory history. In this role Mickey curated several exhibitions and organised public history programs.

Mickey Dewar was, then, a leading Territory historian, a museum developer, curator and manager, heritage specialist, consultant historian, teacher, political adviser, librarian, archivist and a highly effective board member, contributing to Territory-wide and national committees. In many ways, this diversified career trajectory makes Mickey Dewar an ideal role model for young historians. Yet, when one early career scholar asked her for advice on developing a successful career like her own, she dismissed her accomplishments as if accidental. There was wisdom, however, in the advice given, which I paraphrase: 'Just do the next fun project, and in 20 years' time you'll look back and you will have had a wonderful career'. But there was a deeper message: a history career was meant to be enjoyed – to be fun. That became her rule and her mantra.

Though if I may say so, not every party is all fun. Of course, there were the usual ups and downs – the tough times when facing institutional obstacles, being worn down by work stresses, the demands of motherhood, nasty party politics and, at times, personal insecurities. She was not to be defeated, however, moving onto new challenges, gaining new skills and undertaking additional degrees to ensure she was fully qualified in fresh fields of endeavour.

This collection aims to bring the historical works of Dr Mickey Dewar to the attention of the wider national and international audience. Although our present medium is text, we do not lose sight of the fact that Mickey became not only a champion of history in many venues, but also across many mediums. This book emerges from a special panel that was held at the Australian Historical Association Conference in Newcastle. Suggested by its then president Lynette Russell, this book builds upon the papers at that conference. Additionally, it takes up Lynette's suggestion to republish

one of Mickey's most ambitious, significant and yet still little-known works, *In Search of the Never-Never*. First published in 1997 by the now defunct Northern Territory University (now Charles Darwin University) Press, it was well produced but not well distributed.⁴ It is held in few libraries. In this publication, we are pleased to include the full text of this opus on Northern Territory writing, which was joint winner of the Jessie Litchfield Award for Literature.

To complement its timely republication, environmental historian Chris O'Brien provides a detailed discussion and thematic overview, which will assist in enriching readers' appreciation of it and enhance its value as a teaching tool. Chris outlines the book's many strengths, exploring its potential to inform and guide research directions and to thus provide a kind of road map for future scholarship. Also in this collection, leading Territory historian and Emeritus Professor David Carment, who was a colleague of Mickey's in the NT for decades, presents a first-hand overview of her work in museums, in the historical society and in heritage. He discusses her publications, which ranged over topics from Aboriginal history, massacres, outlaws, the frontier, telegraph stations, jails and urban heritage. His informative chapter provides us with a clear, often moving, picture of her lively and significant contribution to the Northern Territory. Although David and Mickey disagreed about some scholarly matters, and had one rather public spat, they remained firm and trusted friends.⁵

At the Newcastle conference, Acting Director of the National Archives of Australia Anne Lyons outlined some of the crucial work Mickey played as an advocate for regional archival collections. As a long-serving board member of the National Archives, Mickey not only used the archives to undertake quality research on Northern Territory housing for her prize-winning book, but she also played a vital role in saving the NT Archives from closure. To a somewhat bureaucratically oriented committee, she brought thoughtful intellectual concepts, stressing the significance of the archives for future education and future historical knowledge. Anne Lyons has attested that, as a board member, Mickey Dewar was often reserved, but that she would chip in at just the right time – with contributions that revealed conscientious preparation, well-made arguments and a wisdom drawn from wide experience. In honour of her contribution,

4 The press did an excellent job of producing her work, which is graced by a cover design based upon the painting *Akiletye atwerreme* by Rod Moss, an appropriate combination of ancient landscape and text that mirrors Mickey's interest in words and landscapes.

5 Dewar, 'If I Was Writing My Own History I'd Be a Hero'.

'MUSEUMS ARE TERRIFIC, ESPECIALLY FOR HISTORIANS!'

the National Archives Council has established an annual 'Mickey Dewar Oration' to further Mickey's belief that those of us with the capability to read the stories that emerge from the archival record have an obligation to tell them.⁶

NAA
NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF AUSTRALIA

INVITATION

Dr Mickey Dewar Oration

Date: Wednesday 29 August 2018
Time: 6pm for a 6.30pm start – 8pm
Location: Mal Nairn Auditorium
Charles Darwin University
Ellengowan Dr, Casuarina NT 0810
MC: Kristy O'Brien, ABC journalist
Oration speaker: The Honorable Clare Martin,
Former Chief Minister of the Northern Territory
For enquiries: danielle.dagostino@naa.gov.au
Drinks and canapés will be provided

Register here by Monday 20 August

Dr Mickey Dewar contributed significantly to the Northern Territory as a respected historian and as a three-term member of the National Archives of Australia Advisory Council, drawing upon her comprehensive knowledge of and passion for Australian history.

As an Advisory Council member, Dr Dewar was a judge of the Frederick Watson Fellowship. She also actively contributed to a range of major issues addressed by the Council, including amendments to the Archives Act in 2009 that changed the closed period for records in the National Archives from 30 to 20 years.

Figure 4: Flyer for Dr Mickey Dewar Oration, Charles Darwin University, 29 August 2018.

Source: Dewar Ritchie Photo Collection.

6 'Northern Territory Historian Is Commemorated by the National Archives', National Archives of Australia, 14 June 2018, accessed 8 September 2018, www.naa.gov.au/about-us/media/media-releases/2018/nt-historian-commemorated.aspx.

Earlier in her career, Mickey was reluctant to serve on boards and committees, but in order to support Territory collections, she overcame this disinclination. She also served and played key roles on the NT Place Names Committee, Heritage Committee and the Historical Society, amongst others.

Although she had a big impact on my life as a friend and colleague, I was certainly not the only one to enjoy her sparkling company. Many people had an equally memorable time working with her, remembering her as erudite, extremely well read, a great conversationalist, warm, enthusiastic, funny, witty and often outrageous. Her passion for Territory history was contagious. Those who knew her recall her many talents, her efficiency and reliability, and her generosity towards colleagues and younger historians. One fondly recalled her aplomb in wearing stylish hats.

I want to add some of my own comments about *In Search of the Never-Never*, which was so comprehensive a survey of Territory writing that it could only have been tackled by an avid reader. This fast-moving analysis demonstrates an astonishing command of the entire published literature on the Northern Territory. In ways unconventional, it brings the disciplines of literature and history into the same conversation. Dewar does not select specific genres or pick one or two periods. Rather, she tackles the lot. And she has read the lot. In its lucid introduction, she writes:

I began this study of Northern Territory writing and its relationship to Australian identity primarily because I enjoyed reading Northern Territory writing. What could be more pleasant than to sit down for three years with Ion Idriess or Jeannie Gunn and read exciting adventure stories of the Territory's past? After ploughing through some thousand or so novels and reference books, I began to feel as if I never cared if I read another Northern Territory novel in my life.⁷

Mickey does not categorise the books into popular and highbrow, into fiction and non-fiction, memoir or 'histories'. The results of her survey are seen through a historian's eyes; she contextualises these publications in their times, unearthing contrasting representations and unexpected emphases. Themes of landscape, class, colonialism, race, the atomic age, sexual relations on the frontier, ideas of 'wilderness' and Aboriginality are scrutinised, with conclusions well ahead of other writers. This is all complemented by a highly readable style and an excellent bibliography.

⁷ Dewar, *In Search of the Never-Never*, ix.

From the late nineteenth through the twentieth century, hundreds of books were published on the Territory – most replete with drama. It was Australia's wild west, its never-ending frontier zone – a land of often cruel and murderous 'colonisers', though most passed through temporarily rather than ever colonised or settled. It became an imagined space for adventure fantasy, crime mysteries, of larger-than-life sagas. A place of wild country and wild people, a threatening zone of colonial encounter and, later, of romanticised wilderness. Such visions were both central and apposite to the Australian dream of successful colonisation leading to a comfortable lifestyle and home.

In Search of the Never-Never presents critical insights into national and international imaginings of not only the Northern Territory but, in my opinion, fresh perspectives on northern Australia as a whole. The study of the north still needs many more scholars and far more detailed attention. How it has been encapsulated in literature reveals so much about the Australian national psyche and identity. Writers on the north inscribed peculiar imaginings of these spaces distant from urban centres – variously thought of as a dangerous or 'hostile land', an 'empty land', a far away 'Never Never' and a romantic 'wilderness', these were landscapes that both repelled and allured the 'white man'. In a matter-of-fact, illuminating writing style, Dewar discusses the blind spots, the tough violence and the euphemistic dismissal of colonising violence and the negation of women's presence. Only a 'little Missus' – a small and innocuous white woman – might occasionally be acceptable. Compellingly, she finds that male fears of both white and Aboriginal women morphed into the misogynist idea of the north as a 'white man's space'.

Mickey was swept up in the challenge to fill great gaps in historical knowledge of the Northern Territory – including in the development of key resources, analyses and communication. The appointments of Alan Powell and later David Carment made a big difference to the study of Northern Territory history, building upon the work of earlier researchers and the Northern Territory historical society. However, this loyalty to the local mission affected Mickey's profile amongst the wider Australian history community. Rather than going for more mainstream publishers, Mickey tended to choose small local publishing houses and regional collections. Mickey wrote regular articles on a range of topics for the *Journal of Northern Territory History*. Although she also published elsewhere, mostly she relied upon local outlets, which had an inevitably limited readership. Another reason for her work being less known is simply that it was

undertaken and published far from the main centres of academe and of mainstream publishing and distribution. Charles Darwin University (previously the Northern Territory University and before that the Darwin Community College) was a latecomer on the Australian university scene. With the oldest, largest and most prestigious history departments based in the south-east, Australian history still suffers from its Melbourne–Sydney axis. Despite the best efforts of many historians, other cities and states receive less attention. Not being a state at all, and certainly not fitting into the well-worn narratives of Australian history that feature economic and legislative progress, Northern Territory history suffers a Cinderella status. Fortunately, the prestigious New South Wales Premier's History Prize, with its regional history category, provided Mickey with some important national recognition when her books were shortlisted.

As the museum curator of Northern Territory history, Mickey Dewar soon became better known in museum circles than in history circles. Serving as curator at the NT Museum and Art Gallery between 1994 and 2007, she left lasting legacies, having pioneered the development of significant Northern Territory history collections. She collected material culture concerning white Territory 'pioneers' in the cattle industry, diverse industries and missions, and materials associated with notable Aboriginal Australians. She recorded oral histories, sometimes forming enduring friendships with participants. Significantly, she led development of the Cyclone Tracy Gallery, which she curated between 1997 and 2007. It provides an immersive experience of the cyclone that hit Darwin on Christmas Eve 1974. She was keen to convey the look of the houses, the sounds and feel of the cyclone as it took place and the memories of those who lived through it, as well as its aftermath. It became a kind of unifying historical encounter that defined a common Darwinian identity – irrespective of whether people were even residents before or during the cyclone. Immersive and multi-sensory, it demonstrated her talent for combining visual evidence, oral history, material culture and archival research to bring social and urban history to life. The temporary exhibition was so successful that it became a permanent exhibition in the NT Museum and Art Gallery. It continues to be promoted as an international destination on such sites as TripAdvisor.

Also outstanding was Dewar's work in historical interpretation and development of displays for the Fannie Bay Gaol, now a popular destination for heritage tourists. Her creative flair enabled her to convey well-researched history in entertaining ways for all ages and interests.

She helped present an important site of Darwin's carceral history in ways that conveyed its complex social, cultural and colonial past. This was followed by her book *Inside-Out: A Social History of Fannie Bay Gaol* (1999),⁸ one of the books shortlisted for the NSW Premier's History Award for Community and Regional History.

Mickey had the energy to explore and champion historical research via multimedia communication and commemoration events. She shared living history stories through publishing, curating memorial events, developing museum and library collections and exhibitions. Producer Kate O'Toole from ABC Radio Darwin and Radio National often called upon her, considering her a talented storyteller.⁹ ABC Radio Darwin gave her a regular timeslot, which she took up with relish. She was also a valued contributor to the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (ADB), a resource used in so many schools and by the general public. For the ADB, she wrote several biographies, on Indigenous and non-Indigenous Territorians, including on journalist Douglas Lockwood and Dhakiyarr Wirrpanda, who was punished for his role in the Caledon Bay massacres and who mysteriously disappeared after being released.¹⁰ She was involved in both curating memorial events and publishing on them, such as in the case of Borella's War. Although not taking any credit for it, in one of her biographical entries she made mention of a documentary film and memorial event *Wukidi*,¹¹ which she played a key role in organising in 2003 when working for the chief minister: 'a ceremony of reconciliation [was] held at the Supreme Court, Darwin, where a memorial was dedicated to him and to McColl'.¹²

Mickey delighted in giving advice, which often verged on the dogmatic. I used to seek her counsel about all kinds of things, including what kind of hairstyle or outfit should be worn to important academic occasions. Sometimes I also sought her career advice. In 2000, I was considering switching from a secure tenured job at the University of New South Wales to a management position at the National Museum of Australia, then still

8 Dewar, *Inside-Out*.

9 Kate O'Toole, conversation with Ann McGrath, 26 April 2017. An ABC program marking Mickey's death was compiled and broadcast on 26 April.

10 Dewar and Lockwood, 'Lockwood, Douglas Wright (1918–1980)'.

11 Joan McColl, 'Wukidi! The Reconciliation of McColl and Wirrpanda', Independent Australia, 22 July 2015, accessed 8 September 2018, independentaustalia.net/australia/australia-display/wukidi-the-reconciliation-of-mccoll-and-wirrpanda,7975.

12 Dewar, 'Dhakiyarr Wirrpanda (1900–1934)'.

under construction. Although I shared Mickey's desire to communicate in multimedia and to wider audiences, it was a difficult decision. I headed my email plea: 'URGENT ADVICE ANSWER NOW!'. In a typically quirky email, Mickey promptly responded, combining her serious work commitment with lashings of irreverent humour.

Dearest Ann

Working in a museum is terrific. You really have a great time with fun openings, interesting visitors, work with lots of great people (not just academics) and communicate with meaning to all Australians!! You'd love all the glitterati stuff...And if you even publish one article a year people think it's really great and talk about your terrific publishing track record. (You never give a lecture again without slides because museum audiences get bored unless there's something to look at; ideas are not enough just on their own!)

Legitimately you can worry about dressing up and spending money on your hair and stuff because everyone has to look reasonably good in a museum. ... (I can never get used to how democratic universities are compared to museums...Museums are all smoked salmon and bottled wine and universities are all cafes and casks. Now this does have a down side of course but I can live with that!)

By the way, I bet you think I'm joking about all this but in fact I'm deadly serious. Museums are terrific, especially for historians! Go for it. You'll have a great time and you'll never have to drink instant coffee at a meeting again!

Love
Mickey.

Mickey was an avid reader and a wordsmith. She wrote press releases, briefings and helped prepare speeches for the chief minister of the Northern Territory. Her own presentations had everyone riveted. At conferences, when she presented a paper, the only listening position to adopt was on the edge of your chair. She had a great sense of suspense, timing and drama. Listening to her once giving an after-dinner speech outdoors at the museum at sunset was akin to going to a ticketed performance. Clever, incisive, broad ranging, refreshing. So well prepared, rehearsed even. Yet she had warned me not to bother attending; it was going to be terribly boring. Little did I know she'd actively participated in the University of Melbourne student theatre group. Although she described

herself as 'bookish', being a very fast reader who was always running out of material, she was physically assured and highly theatrical. Mickey was an artist of the visual, the aural, the three-dimensional and the experiential. Influenced by the likes of Greg Denning, Mickey was a very animated performer of history.

Gracious in recognising scholars who influenced her thinking, she was kind in her humour – at least to everyone but herself. Despite frequent displays of uber-confidence, she was both fiercely competitive and relentlessly self-effacing. She was fearful of the ways others would judge her and fearful of other things too. Although she could afford overseas adventures, and was fascinated by ancient Mediterranean and European history, she avoided long-distance travel and shunned planes as much as possible. It was only when she worked for the chief minister that she had no choice but to overcome her aviation fears. I was amazed to see her travelling frequently all over the Territory in tiny planes. Just a year before her death, she and her husband David travelled to Europe for the very first time.

Figure 5: Left to right: Anita Angel, Mickey Dewar and David Ritchie at the opening night of 'The Nature of Things' exhibition at the Charles Darwin University Art Gallery, 2011.

Source: Dewar Ritchie Photo Collection.

Being a good historian, she contextualised her life in terms of the *longue durée*, concluding: '[We] were lucky enough to live in very good times'.¹³ Indeed, for the privileged amongst our generation, these were exciting, relatively peaceful times; the Vietnam War was over, university education had become accessible, Aboriginal Land Rights had been introduced in the Northern Territory, women's liberation was enabling, and our generation believed that we could make a difference for the better.

Once diagnosed with an aggressive form of motor neurone disease, Mickey accepted that there was no cure. She eschewed life-prolonging intervention, stating that she had enjoyed a full life, with her every dream fulfilled. Despite the disease quickly robbing her of all speech, in her text messages, she was as witty as ever. For her life narrative, she repeated that life was a big party. She wanted to enjoy memories of all the good times. She remembered – far better than I had – that the two of us had originally met at a party in Darwin. Born four days apart, both of us in our early 20s, all excited about just about everything, engaged in jolly repartee, being 'outrageous' – as she put it – and much dancing. More recently, she liked to say we were still 'partying on – albeit in a different way' – herself enjoying her newborn grandchild. Here is a slightly fuller excerpt from one of her cherished messages: 'We had such a good time, and were lucky enough to live in very good times. Can't get much better than that Ann – although I took a while to learn this when I was younger – I now do know when to leave the party!'

Although she looked back on her life and career as great fun, we know that she achieved as much as she did only through much hard yakka. Applying her sharp mind across a stunning array of genres, she brought northern history to both present and future publics with all the passion it deserved. These legacies live on in so many ways, including, for example, in her oral history recordings, voice recordings of her ABC radio segments, and in many historical collections. It will endure in the legacies of her policy work for the NT chief minister, where she applied herself to contemporary policy challenges. And as a board member of the archives, where she played a crucial role in ensuring that the Northern Territory did not lose its archive office.

13 Mickey Dewar, text message to Ann McGrath, 21 March 2017.

Figure 6: Ann McGrath and Mickey Dewar c. 1980. Partying mode. It looks like Mickey knew how to do duckface before anyone else had discovered it.
Source: Dewar Ritchie Photo Collection.

Like many people, I was shocked to hear of Mickey's illness and before long I would grieve her passing. While writing this introductory chapter reminded me anew of our immense loss, it has enabled me to better appreciate the quality and breadth of her work. Hopefully this book will bring her remarkable achievements to a larger national and international audience. Thanks to the Aboriginal History monograph series, we are pleased to share this collection in freely available and downloadable electronic format and in print.

As Lynette Russell, the President of the Australian Historical Association (who suggested this book in the first place), stated in *History Australia*, 'Mickey was in many ways an environmental historian before the label was used ...'. Summing up: 'Over the course of her career she made an outstanding contribution to Northern Territory history ... She worked as a teacher, a lecturer, a museum curator and an archivist'.¹⁴ And as we know, so much more. However, although Mickey was an innovator and

¹⁴ Russell, 'From the President', 324.

a mentor, once she quickly fobbed off the ‘flattery’ contained in this book, she would have followed it with hyperbolic praise for contributors Chris O’Brien and David Carment.

Mickey was posthumously awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia in the 2018 Australia Day Honours, for ‘service to the community of the Northern Territory’. A fitting description, as her *oeuvre* reached beyond history to enrich the people of the Territory as a whole. The award was presented by the Territory Administrator Vicki O’Halloran, only the second woman to occupy this position. It was accepted by Mickey’s great love, husband David Ritchie. The setting was the Territory’s historic Administrator’s residence and its lush tropical garden. This fine heritage building, with its white latticed, colonial-style verandahs, had survived both the bombing of Darwin in the Second World War and Cyclone Tracy. Mickey would have loved the ceremony and the party. I can see her there, on that beautiful site abutting the Arafura Sea. She is dressed up in a gorgeous frock and hat, wolfing down salmon and caviar canapes, drinking champagne and talking history.

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