

Tall tales to be told

By **CHERIE BEACH**

Hotel Darwin staff are tip-toeing on eggshells as the hours slip by before an old Territory tradition is revived today.

The first local heat of the 1991 Yarn Spinning Championship begins tonight.

Hotel patrons will hear the first yarn told in the competition since Frank Hardy took out the title in the late 60s there.

He talked his way past a tattooed Queenslander called Talking Tex Tyrell who had won the title at the original championship held in Alice Springs.

Tyrell and Hardy will return to the Territory on August 1 to accept challenges from the local heat winner.

Squizzy Taylor, Playwright Suzanne Spinner, and radio announcer, Mr Col Crohn will judge the



Jack Hunt who won the 1989 Best Yarn Spinning title on Australia Day will spin some tall Territory tales at the Hotel Darwin's first Australian Championship heat tonight.

first heat.

Australia Day 1989 best Territory yarn spinner, Mr Jack Hunt, well-known hotel patron, Cowboy Bill and noted story tellers, Mr Bert Truman, Mr

Charlie Decantzow and Mr Alan Alder will tell tall tales as convincingly as they can at the Hotel.

And the staff are praying the event will not be reduced to

scuffles resulting from the friendly competition.

"It might end up like what we saw on the Ray Martin Show," hotel publicist Ms Kelly Brett said.

"We may have to put them at opposite ends of the swimming pool."

A four-hour limit has been set as a precaution for the competition. "Otherwise it would go all night."

TONIGHT

THE HOTEL DARWIN

presents

HEAT ONE Ansett.

of

"THE WORLD CHAMPION YARN SPINNER COMPETITION"

The Territory's best storytellers battle it out in the Green Room

8 PM

10 Herbert Street
81 9211



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WANTED

You are needed for the Hotel Darwin's
"THE WORLD CHAMPION YARN SPINNER COMPETITION"

SUNDAY, 4TH AUGUST

Heats: Thurs, 18th JULY 8pm
Thurs, 25th JULY 8pm
Thurs, 1st AUGUST 8pm

Local champ to compete against Frank Hardy
"Tall Tale" Tex Tyrell and Jack Ayling.

TO WIN \$1000 CASH

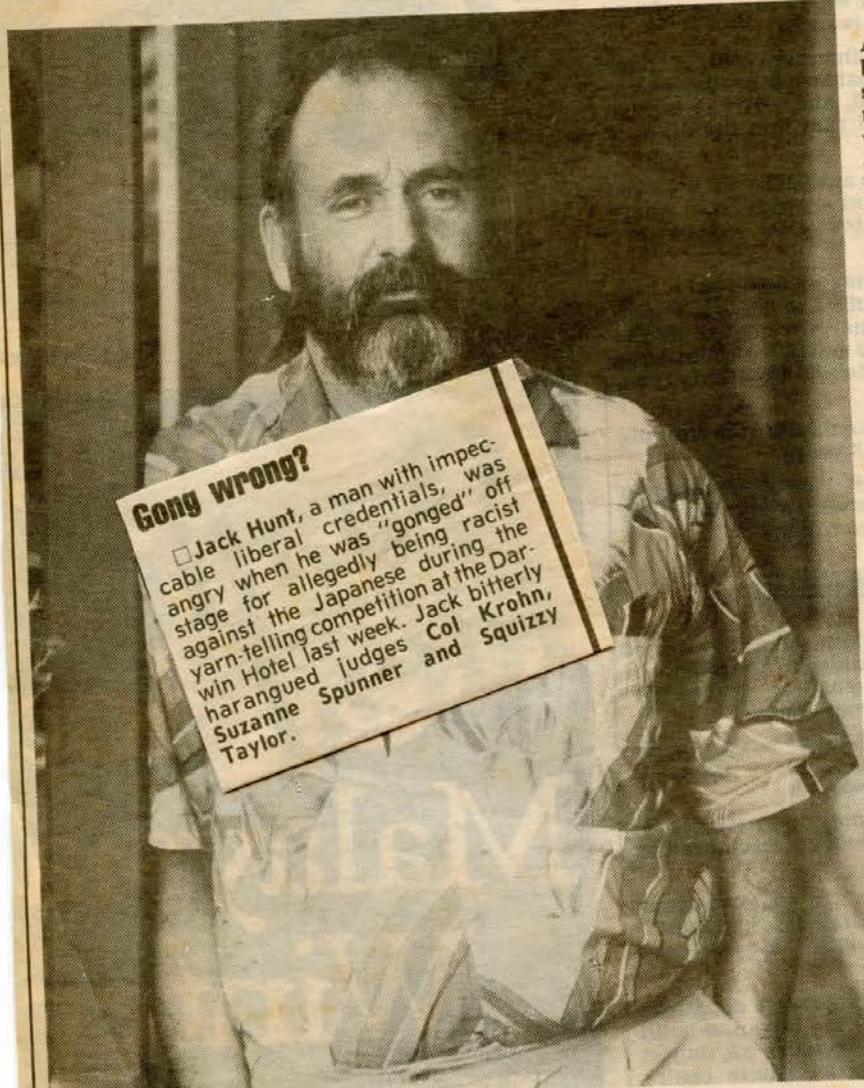
Nominate yourself or dob in a friend
Name: Ph. No

or contact Kelli at The Hotel Darwin 81 9211

Sponsored by

Ansett.

Ex-Pom takes trio by the ta



Mike Hayes is proving a champion yarn spinner.

Gong wrong?
 □ Jack Hunt, a man with impeccable liberal credentials, was angry when he was "gonged" off stage for allegedly being racist against the Japanese during the yarn-telling competition at the Darwin Hotel last week. Jack bitterly harangued judges Col Krohn, Suzanne Spinner and Squizzy Taylor.

An English-born ACT prickly farmer beat three local yarn spinners in the lead-up to the final event of the world yarn-spinning championships at the Hotel Darwin on Thursday night.

Mike Hayes won with 473.5 points, narrowly beating Territorian Peter Steele.

Hayes, from NSW, arrived in Darwin this week to pit his Outback adventure stories against Darwin identity "Cowboy Bill" Garrison, Peter Steele and Kevin Naughton in a bid to challenge the title holder, Frank Hardy.

The runner-up, Peter Steele with 460.5 points will go into the final Sunday night v Hayes.

ABC presenter Kevin Naughton achieved 404.5 points and David Gardiner 404.5 points.

Cowboy Bill could take the heat and "through" after just one yarn.

Hardy and his former title holder Talking Tex have arrived in Darwin to prepare for the final tomorrow.

Tyrell will back his title Hardy in 1984.

The Hotel Darwin promotions Ms Kelly B...

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Hardy won his title in 1984 from "Talking Tex" Tyrell.

Hayes has had his eye on the title ever since.

Opportunity

"It is a shame the competition wasn't carried over annually since it first began in the '60s. But when I read in the Sydney Morning Herald Darwin was to host the championships, I couldn't miss the opportunity."

"I have always had a secret sneaking ambition to have a go at Frank Hardy."

"Title-holders have to put their records on the line so they can learn other yarns from the challengers."

Born an Englishman, Hayes said Australians were the best yarn-spinners in the world.

"It's the Australian art of conversation."

"You really need some age and experience to tell a yarn and that is where I had the edge."

Story-tellers from Texas, Wales, Scotland and England will be invited to swap tales at the Hotel Darwin for the 1992 titles.

Top tales take dash of spice for flavor
 By CHERIE BEACH

The winner of the 1991 World Yarn-spinning Championship has made a startling admission.

Former journalist, Mike Hayes, says he is a professional liar.

The one-time head of Darwin's ABC radio newsroom and now ACT prickly farmer reckons bending the truth gives a story an edge it would not have on bare facts.

"That sounds strange coming from a journalist doesn't it?" he said.

"But the yarn-spinning code-of-ethics is a lot stronger than the journalist's code of ethics."

Hayes, who will return to Darwin to put his title on the line in 1992, said he added some spice to his favorite bush yarns to topple title-holder Frank Hardy at the Hotel Darwin on Sunday night.

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JULIA COOPER
chats to two tellers of
tall tales

JUST when you thought it was safe to sit in the pub and have a quiet drink ... Tex Tyrrell and Frank Hardy are on their way back to the Territory with longer yarns than ever.

Tex and Frank may be well known in the Top End but after speaking with them for just a few minutes the question is, are they well liked?

Frank and 62-year-old Tex are yarn-spinners.

The tall tale tellers are back

'Tall Tale Tex is not as good as he thinks he is .. there is no way he will win this competition, he's not really a yarn-spinner'

□ Frank Hardy during a visit to Wave Hill when he got to meet local kids and (right) Vincent Lindiari Jnr, whose father led the walk off that inspired the land rights campaign

They tell stories, recite extracts from ancient books they think are interesting and tell jokes Adam and Eve chortled over.

But there is not much chortling between Frank and Tex — they don't like one another very much.

Each speaks regularly of hitting the other over the head.

The long-time rivals will warm Darwin bar stools and make eardrums ache this month as they return to their beloved Territory for the Hotel Darwin's World Champion Yarn-Spinning Competition.

The two last fought a weary battle of words at the hotel's Australian Yarn-Spinning Championship in 1967.

Then Frank stole Tex's title, which he had held since 1954, after out talking Walkie Talkie Lloyd Nelson of Tennant Creek.

Frank and Tex would like the world to think they have been at each other's throats ever since that last big yarn, that they really do hate one another.

But there is about as much truth in that as there is in the stories they tell.

It is all a game played by larrikins like they don't seem to make anymore.

"Tall Tale Tex is not as good as he thinks he is," Frank said.

"There is no way he will win this competition, he's not really a yarn-spinner. He can do what he likes but he won't win.

"I reckon this is between me and this surprise local contestant I hear is in training.

"I hear some theatre group is training someone."

Let's hope so — someone has to put these two in their places.

Taking long-time Territorians back in time, the 1991 Yarn-Spinning Championship will be held at the Hotel Darwin on Sunday, August 4.

There will be three heats open to local competitors on July 18, 25 and August 1.

The winner of each heat will go on to compete in the championship against Tex, Frank and southern race caller and well-known yarn-spinner Jack Ayling.

Tex Tyrrell starting spinning tall tales while sitting around stock camps in South

beers. I don't know what makes a good yarn — but I don't consider Frank Hardy to be a very good yarn spinner.

"Last time I went up against him his so-called yarns sounded more like poetry to me."

And then, in between the countless and very long stories Tex just has to tell, the insults really start — he made the shocking announcement last week that he had let Frank win the 1967 championship.

"There was nothing for me to win for — the prize was a golden shovel and a radio. I

"That's rubbish," Frank said.

"Tex has been telling that story for years and he knows it's rubbish. He just dried up, he couldn't think of a yarn to tell and that's why I won."

The 1967 competition, organised by the then *News'* general manager Jim Bowditch was front-page news for days.

The rivalry and antics of Frank and Tex were entertainment moulded to Territory taste — hundreds of people packed the Darwin Hotel as the yarns kept coming.

Like Tex, Frank started telling yarns as a boy and never stopped — he has written 21 books, the most remembered is his first, *Power Without Glory*, published in the 1950s.

Frank was charged with criminal libel and jailed soon after the book's publication but was acquitted by a Melbourne Supreme Court jury after a sensational trial.

The novel became the most widely publicised Australian book, being translated into 20 languages and made into a television mini-series.

His play *The Daybreak Killers* won the Logie Award for Best TV Drama in 1972.

Frank and his alter ego, Truthful Jones, still write a weekly column for *Post* magazine.

But his passion is yarns.

"The man who can tell a good yarn is a man who can tell it with character, with funny and interesting detail and with some meaning to it — that's a good yarn," he said.

"And Tex doesn't tell them like that."

'I don't consider Frank Hardy to be a good yarn spinner. Last time I went up against him his so-called yarns sounded more like poetry.'

Australia when he was just nine-years-old.

"All the men used to sit around and spin yarns and I suppose I just picked it up from them," he said.

"Some people just don't like telling yarns at all, then there are others who come out of the closet after a few

had hundreds of radios and what would I do with a shovel," he said.

"But the second prize was a free half-page advertisement in the *Northern Territory News* and I wanted that because I'd just started a secondhand business and thought it would get me off to a good start."



□ A younger tattooed tall tale-telling Tex Tyrrell ... he doesn't think much of Frank Hardy