

TOPICS

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OUR TOWN: Birgitte Hansen's painting of the Newcastle earthquake, with Jon Fleming in the top right corner in uniform.

Earthquake worker a safe pair of hands

JON Fleming became part of Novocastrian history when an iconic photograph was taken of him in the aftermath of the Newcastle earthquake.

Jon, then aged 20, was involved in the recovery effort with the Army Reserve.

"I was throwing bricks off the roof as part of the clean up. The chimney was damaged," Jon said.

"A photographer from *The Sydney Morning Herald* turned up and took a photo and the next thing it was in the paper."

By coincidence, he was working on the roof of the Cooks Hill house where his grandmother lived for decades. She passed away in the months before the quake hit.

"It was the house that my mother grew up in," he said.

"We worked on literally 40 to 50 different properties throughout the clean up. But at that particular moment, the photographer snapped the photo."

The photo was later used in a mural painted by Newcastle artist Birgitte Hansen.

The *Newcastle Herald* had commissioned the mural for its one-year anniversary coverage of the earthquake.

Birgitte used news photos to gain inspiration and subject matter for the painting,



Jon Fleming.

which has been cropped for this story.

The faces in the painting include victims, rescuers, building workers and civilians.

She said her painting sought to depict that the earthquake "brought us together as a community".

She added that the photo of Jon was "just right" for the mural.

The top right of the mural shows Jon in uniform, throwing the brick off the roof.

He thinks about the earthquake around this time every year. The 31st anniversary of the quake falls on December 28.

"It's something you can't forget. Everyone in Newcastle has a story of where they were.

"I was at a friend's place at Adamstown. We were about to play golf. The house literally felt like it was coming off its piers.

"We ran out of the house and looked up the road and saw a domino effect of everyone out the front of their houses, wondering what on earth had gone on."

Jon said he felt "very fortunate to be in the mural, as part of Newcastle's history".

"It was a bad day of course. But I'm proud to have helped in the recovery," he said.

A Helping Hand

Jon Fleming found himself involved in another crisis this year - the pandemic.

He's general manager and part owner of Industree Group, which sells personal protection equipment.

As you can imagine, the company has had a busy year.

While he has a good head for business, he also has a social conscience.

In the early stages of the pandemic, there was a shortage of face masks.

People with medical conditions were particularly fearful about not having any masks. Jon and his company helped people in need - just like he did all those years ago on that roof.

TODAY IN HISTORY

- 1845 Explorer Ludwig Leichhardt arrives in Australia's Northern Territory from Brisbane.
- 1903 Orville and Wilbur Wright make the first successful airplane flight in history, soaring over sand dunes near Kitty Hawk, North Carolina.
- 1941 Japanese troops begin an invasion of North Borneo in World War II.
- 1991 Boris Yeltsin and Mikhail Gorbachev agree to dissolve the Soviet Union and proclaim a new commonwealth on New Year's Day.
- 2014 The United States and Cuba re-establish diplomatic relations after severing them in 1961.

BIRTHDAYS

Domenico Cimarosa, Italian composer (1749-1801); Clifton Pugh, Australian artist (1924-1990); Robert Guccione, US publisher (1930-2010); Kerry Packer, Australian media magnate (1937-2005); Eugene Levy, Canadian actor (1946-); Wes Studi, US actor (1947-); Bill Pullman, US actor (1953-); Peter Farrelly, US filmmaker (1956-); Sara Dallin, English singer (1961-); Milla Jovovich, Ukrainian-born US actor (1975-).

TRIVIA

- 1 How many teeth does a crocodile typically have: 66, 77 or 88?
- 2 An Aussiedor is a hybrid of what two dog breeds?
- 3 By what names are Saudi Arabia's Makkah and al-Madinah better known in Australia?
- 4 In which ocean would you find the Mariana Trench, the deepest place on Earth?
- 5 In 1935, cane toads were introduced to Australia to control what insect?
- 6 Traditionally, on which day during Easter would pancakes be made?
- 7 According to the song *My Favourite Things*, from *The Sound of Music*, what comes next: "Cream coloured ponies and crisp apple strudels, Door bells and sleigh bells and ..."?
- 8 Beefsteak, cherry and dwarf are all varieties of what?
- 9 What name is given to someone who studies reptiles and amphibians?
- 10 Who wrote *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*?

ANSWERS: 1. 66 2. Labrador and Australian Shepherd 3. Mecca and Medina 4. Pacific Ocean 5. Scarab beetles 6. Shrove Tuesday 7. Schmitzel with noodles 8. Tomatoes 9. Herpetologist 10. Naomi Klein

TODAY'S TEXT

The Lord was pleased to make you His own.

1 Samuel 12:22

<http://www.torchtrust.org/>

STAR SNAP

TOM Cruise has been recorded making angry comments towards crew working in London on *Mission: Impossible 7*. Cruise was outraged that workers had broken COVID-19 protocols. He raised concerns about people losing their homes and trying to put food on their table. "That's what I sleep with every night," he said.



Tom Cruise.

WHAT'S ON

FERRIS Bueller's Day Off is on 9GO! at 7.30pm on Thursday. Rick Stein's Secret France is on ABC at 8.32pm. The Beatles: Eight Days a Week - The Touring Years is on SBS at 7.30pm, followed by Lennon's Last Weekend at 9.30pm. The first test cricket match between Australia and India is on Seven at 8pm.

ODD SPOT

AN ONTARIO family was left disappointed after missing out on seeing Santa Claus at a drive-through light festival because he was taking a bathroom break. A mother said her seven-year-old twins were in tears. A festival spokesperson said they were looking into "getting an inflatable Santa or elf to replace him during his potty breaks".