



Preserving NT's military history

As an Order of Australia recipient, an author of eight books on military history and, more recently, a naval officer working in US Forces in Baghdad, it's clear that alumnus **TOM LEWIS** was never destined for the quiet life.

During his military career, Dr Tom Lewis was not only awarded the Order of Australia Medal for his services to naval history, but he was also awarded the US Army Commendation Medal for outstanding service during his time in Iraq.

These are major accomplishments in their own right, but when it's considered that he wrote several of his books as he worked on a PhD at CDU, then the measure of the man becomes apparent.

Clearly, Dr Lewis is not a fan of resting on his laurels or shy of a new challenge, as was aptly demonstrated in his return to Darwin at the end of 2007.

He has once again become involved in Northern Territory history, and last year became the secretary of the Royal Australian Artillery Association, which operates the Darwin Military Museum at East Point. Dr Lewis is engaged with the association as it undertakes a major expansion of the site.

"I'm drawn to military history, particularly here in the Northern Territory, as there is just so much still left to unearth," he told *Origins*.

"During World War II, Darwin really took a pounding with a number of attacks on the city by Japanese forces. There's even a Japanese submarine with 80 crew members still aboard sunk outside the harbour.

"This history runs the risk of being lost as the majority who experienced the war years have moved away from the NT

in order to retire, so I feel I'm on a mission to keep this history alive and not let it be forgotten," he said.

And he'll certainly be afforded the resources as the Military Museum was recently identified for a sizeable financial boost from the NT Government to revamp and reinvigorate the site with extra buildings planned amid expanded grounds.

Dr Lewis said that one of his primary aims as a key member of the association would be to establish formal collaborations with other World War II museums nationally and internationally.

"There is just so much still to tell in terms of Northern Territory military history and I intend to find as many ways as possible to give testimony to our history," he said.

And armed with the award-winning passion he appears to bring to each of his endeavours, there's no doubt he will indeed pinpoint the Territory's military history on the world map.

TEXT

Row Booker

IMAGE

Courtesy Tom Lewis

LEFT

Dr Tom Lewis, in his role as a commander working with US forces deployed to Baghdad.