

Information Sheet No. 18



City of
Greater Geraldton
Regional Library

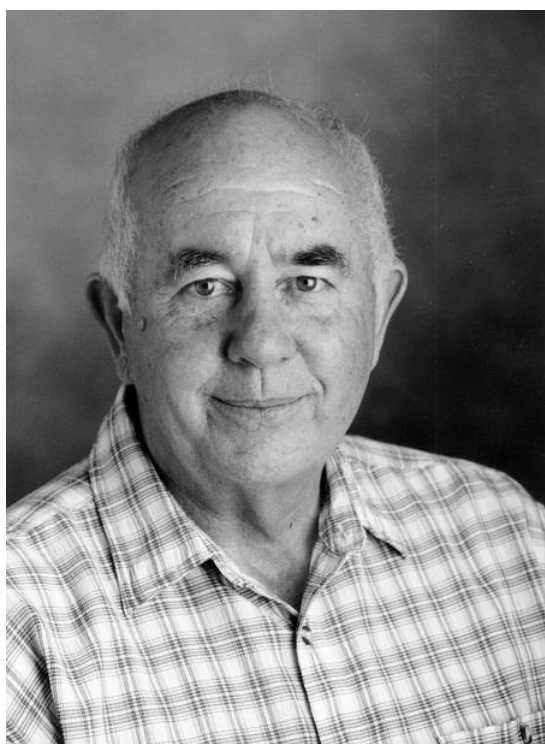


Heritage Services

Geraldton Regional Library

MAXWELL CRAMER – Co-Discoverer of *Batavia*

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| 1934, Jul 6 | - Born in Geraldton, WA. |
| 1964 | - Co-Discoverer of Dutch Galleon <i>Batavia</i> . |
| 1979 | - Geraldton Citizen of the Year. |
| 1993-1994 | - Chairman, Geraldton Maritime Heritage Association. |
| 1999 | - Geraldton Citizen of the Year. |
| 1999 | - Author of <i>Treasures, Tragedies and Triumphs of the Batavia Coast</i> . |
| 2007 | - Author of <i>The Discovery of the French Coin on Dirk Hartog Island</i> |



Max Cramer. Photo donated by Max Cramer,
P 83.

Born in Geraldton on 6 July 1934, Max Cramer spent his childhood at Mt Fairfax Farm, Moonyoonooka. He left Geraldton Senior High School at the age of 16 to begin an apprenticeship as a carpenter, which eventually led to a career as a builder. His building career included work on the Bunbury Powerhouse and restoration of heritage buildings in Mt Magnet and Cue. Max is a foundation member of the Master Builder's Association. In February 1958, Max married Ines Sacristani from Busselton and they had three children, Kim, Mark and Paul.

A lifelong interest in fishing and scuba diving led him to develop a part-time sideline as a commercial diver. Max is also a foundation and life member of the Geraldton Skin Diving Club. In May 1963, Max, his brother Graham and a friend, Greg Allen, became the first people to dive on the wreck of the Dutch East India Merchantman *Batavia*. The following year, also

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in May, Max, his brother Graham and friend, Tom Brady, made the first dive on the *Zuytdorp*, another Dutch ship wrecked on the cliffs north of Kalbarri. Max Cramer's tireless promotion of the tragic and bloody *Batavia* story redefined the Geraldton area as the Batavia Coast and his efforts to have the *Batavia* artefacts permanently housed in a Geraldton Museum culminated in the building of the Geraldton Maritime Museum, the predecessor of the WA Museum Geraldton.

Max had many interests and his activities contributed much to the local colour in Geraldton, including his magician shows, regular floats and costumes in the Sunshine Festival. He also manufactured replicas of *Batavia* artefacts and other historical curiosities such as Dirk Hartog's plate. Max rebuilt one of Geraldton's icons from the past, a children's swing known locally as the "Merry-Go-Round", which was made famous by the book *The Merry-go-round in the sea* by Randolph Stow.

In January 1998, Max led an expedition to Dirk Hartog Island which uncovered a French Silver Ecu left as a marker in Turtle Bay by Captain Saint-Aloüarn when he claimed Western Australia for France in 1772.

Voted Citizen of the Year in 1979 and 1999, Max published his memoirs, *Treasures, Tragedies and Triumphs of the Batavia Coast* in 1999, and *The Discovery of the French Coin on Dirk Hartog Island* in 2007. In 2008 Max was awarded an Order of Australia medal.

Max Cramer passed away on 3 August 2010, aged 76 years.

References

Text taken from **Geraldton: 150 Years, 150 Lives**, Local Studies Department, Geraldton Regional Library, 2001, p. 41.

Copies are available from the Library, 37 Marine Terrace, Geraldton (PO Box 101, Geraldton, WA, 6531) for \$27.50 (plus \$6.50 postage and handling).

