



ABOVE: The Rev. Gary Jacobs blesses the new RFDS aircraft and says a prayer for Miss Miller. BELOW: A recent picture of Miss Miller.

'Sugar Bird Lady' dies aged 35

To the Aborigines of the North-West she was known as the "Sugar Bird Lady" and to white people all over Australia she was the flying nurse.

Miss Robin Miller—WA's best known woman pilot, whose daily work was packed with more experiences than most people's lives—died of cancer early yesterday morning. She was 34.

In a flying and nursing career that spanned more than 15 years she brought relief to thousands of people scattered throughout WA.

She was called the "Sugar Bird Lady" because she would arrive at Aboriginal outposts to give Sabin oral anti-polio vaccines on sugar lumps.

Her mercy flights in her little Mooney aircraft, which was registered in her initials VH-REM (Robin Elizabeth Miller), took her to remote mining camps, cattle stations, ports, missions, townships and Rottnest Island, in all kinds of weather.

With her husband, Dr Harold Dicks, who was president of the Royal Flying Doctor Service for 20 years, she ferried aircraft from the United States to Jandakot airfield.

The couple ferried eight aircraft back to WA.

Awards

Miss Miller was honoured by the National Nursing Association in Mantova, Italy. It awarded her its diploma of merit for service to human life.

Five years ago she was named Woman Pilot of the Year.

Often, when visiting remote stations she would run out of daylight. And on many station runs she would have to spend the night wrapped up in a blanket, in her plane parked on the station airstrip.

She always carried a blanket and rations for those visits in the North-West and in 1927 formed MacRobertson Miller Airlines. Her mother is the author Mary Durack.

Miss Miller would be difficult to replace.

"She was a terrific operator, always ready to fly when called on," he said.

"Her passing has left a big void in the service."

Tributes were paid to Miss Miller yesterday at the dedication ceremony of an RFDS aircraft, which she and Dr Dicks flew to Perth from the U.S. in August.

The president of the RFDS, Mr J. R. Ewing, said that her death meant a tremendous loss to the service.

The Minister for Health, Mr Baxter, who dedicated the plane, said that Miss Miller had rendered a wonderful service.

Miss Miller will be buried at Broome, where she lived for much of her childhood.



SEVEN DIE IN DAY OF ROAD CRASHES

Seven people lost their lives in a 13½-hour series of road accidents throughout the State on Saturday.

The total included two double fatalities.

There have been 10 road deaths in WA in the first eight days of the month all but one occurred between 12.30pm on Friday and 10pm on Saturday.

The death toll shocked the Minister for Traffic, Mr O'Connor, who said that the roads would be heavily policed next weekend in a bid to stop the trend.

"I am not prepared to let this continue," he said. "We have got to get more man-hours on the roads in weekends."

"I will be having talks with the Commissioner of Police and the chairman of the Road Traffic Authority tomorrow to work out ways of doing this. I can assure you that it will be done."

"Anyone who breaks the law on the road in future, particularly in weekends, will be asking for trouble."

The year's road toll is 298, compared with 315 at the same time last year. There have been 153 deaths on country roads and 105 in the metropolitan area.

Timetable

This was how Saturday's crashes occurred:

8.30am: Santo Prutti Ciarello (34), of Port Hedland, was killed when his Kombi van overturned at Nanutarra, 360km north of Carnarvon, on North-West Coastal Highway.

In a head-on collision on the Narrows Bridge.

Those killed were Peter Laurence Seymour (29) and Glen Gifford Seymour (3), of Regency Drive, Crestwood.

A Falcon utility veered from the outward lane at the city end of the bridge and collided with a Mercedes-Benz sedan which Mr Seymour was driving towards Perth.

A Mazda sedan then crashed into the Mercedes.

A young couple in the Mazda were unhurt but badly shocked.

Ambulance men and a passing doctor gave first aid to the driver of the Falcon for more than 30 minutes while firemen used hydraulic jacks and an electric saw to free him.

The man was admitted to Royal Perth Hospital. No further details were available yesterday.

The RTA fatal accident squad is investigating the cause of the accident, which blocked the bridge for almost an hour.

7pm: Joyce Ivy Short (48), of Eighth Avenue, Inglewood, was killed when her Holden station wagon left Geraldton Highway near the 276km peg and overturned.

driving the other car, a Falcon sedan. His name was withheld.

A man and a woman in the Holden were seriously injured. They were transferred to RPHL. Their names were withheld.

10pm: An unidentified man was killed when a car overturned on South-Western Highway at Balingup. No further details were available late yesterday.

Egg prices over \$1 a dozen

The wholesale price of a dozen eggs will rise by between nine cents and 11 cents today, depending on size.

The retail prices of eggs will be \$1.07 (60 gram), \$1.04 (55g), \$1.01 (50g) and 98 cents (45g).

The chairman of the WA Egg Marketing Board, Mr J. C. Shovelton, yesterday announced a wholesale-price increase of nine cents a dozen eggs in the 60g, 55g and 50g sizes.

The wholesale price of 45g eggs would rise by 11 cents, he said.

The increases were necessary to cover recent rises in the price of wheat for feed and other price rises.

Thai Queen in Australia

CANBERRA: Queen Sirikit of Thailand arrived in Canberra last night to attend the graduation of the Crown Prince of Thailand from the Royal Military College, Duntroon, tomorrow.

The royal party will stay at the Lakeside Hotel and will attend a dinner given by the Governor-General, Sir John Kerr, tonight.

After tomorrow morning's ceremony Queen Sirikit will attend a reception given by the Thai Ambassador, Mr Vivadh Na Pombreja, and will attend the RMC's graduation ball.

She is expected to leave for Bangkok on Wednesday afternoon.

Mass for 20,000

About 20,000 Roman Catholics are expected to attend the final Mass for the Crusade for Mary to be held in the Supreme Court Gardens tonight.

A message from the Pope will be broadcast to the congregation.

The Archbishop of Sydney, Cardinal Freeman, will be the celebrant. The Most Rev. Dr L. J. Goody, nine bishops and more than 100 priests will also take part in the service.

Bailey's VIEW

A perky little Englishwoman has just flown back to London with the head of Sir David Brand among her luggage.

The head, moulded in the type of resin and fibreglass that is normally used to make surfboards, is the result of about 20 hours of work for sculptor Mrs Betty Miller.

"That's plus a bit of talking time," the ebullient Mrs Miller told me. "You have to talk a lot to get to understand the person and the face."

So, the former Premier sat on an improvised turntable set up on the plaster-littered floor of a studio at the Perth Technical College while Mrs Miller talked to him and tried to understand his face while she modelled it in local clay.

The clay head, together with those of deputy Lord Mayor Rod Evans and former city planner Paul Ritter, would have given Mrs Miller excess luggage problems when she boarded the aircraft.

"Besides, they're too vulnerable to damage," she said. "Cast in resin they weigh only a few grams each."

In England, they will be cast in bronze at the internationally-known foundry of Morris Singer, which handles the work of Henry Moore and others.

Eventually, the heads will come back to Perth, having cost about \$800 to \$1,000 each, according to size.

Mrs Miller originally came here for a few weeks of the English summer holidays in July.

IN the middle of a political campaign aimed at turning the lights on, the University of WA is taking the opposite view and wants to see them turned off. There is nothing political in the university's attitude; it wants to cut down its \$600,000 light bill which is expected to rise to more than \$700,000 next year.

With income static and costs rising, the administration is considering various areas in which money might be saved.

"We've only just started on the problem," says Mr Geoff Easton, an administrative officer who has been given the job of finding ways to cut costs. "Electricity was an obvious one, but we are looking into a number of areas. Our postage bill, for instance, is gigantic and we'll be taking a hard look at that."

"Everybody uses fans during the summer, and a lot of people here leave them on during the lunch hour, as well as the lights. It costs only about 3c for that hour, but if everyone did the same it would cost about \$50 a day or \$250 a week."

In future, everyone leaving lights on at the end of the day will find a reminder card left on the desk by the nightwatchmen.

Bill Bailey

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