



The Old Fliers Group

Attached to the Royal Aero Club of WA (Inc).

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ERROR

Incorrect meeting date

There was an error in the last bulletin regarding our first meeting in 2019.

CORRECTION

The first OFG meeting in 2019 will be on
Friday January 25th 2019.

Mark it in your diary now.

Report on our last meeting

Over ninety people attended our last meeting for 2018 to enjoy lunch and the traditional Christmas pudding and a free Lotto ticket.

Steve Rogers spoke first about the ill-fated 'Black-Buck Six' raid on the Falklands in 1982. A Vulcan Bomber was diverted to Rio de Janeiro on a Mayday. It had a serious problem with an armed "hung-up" Shrike missile under the wing.

It was an exciting time for all concerned!

Steve's talk was followed by your editor who spoke about Robin Miller who became widely-known as 'The Sugarbird Lady'.

Robin was the daughter of Mary Durack (later Dame) and Horrie Miller. The Duracks were a well-established family in the pastoral industry in the north of WA. Mary was the daughter of the state politician "MP" Durack. She became a noted writer. Horrie Miller established MacRobertson Miller Aviation in W.A. in 1934. Previously, in 1929, Horrie hit the headlines when he won the 1929 Centenary Air Race from Sydney to Perth.

Robin grew up wanting to be a pilot, but at that time there were limited opportunities for females in commercial aviation so she turned to nursing – qualifying as a triple-certificate nurse in 1964.

While studying nursing Robin joined the Royal Aero Club where she gained her Private Pilot Licence and later, in 1967, gained her Commercial Pilot Licence.

Following a major outbreak of poliomyelitis in Western Australia, most of the urban population had been vaccinated against the disease with the Salk vaccine. The people in the outback were not so lucky. The problems of performing the

necessary vaccinations over such a huge area proved to be insurmountable.

Robin put both of her qualifications to good effect when, in mid-1967, she negotiated with the Health Department of W.A. to administer the new Sabin oral anti-polio vaccine. It was available as syrup and not an injection. Robin administered the necessary dose after applying it to a sugar cube.

The program covered over half of the state and many Aboriginals, and others, were immunised with 37,000 doses of the vaccine. Robin became known as the 'Sugarbird Lady'. Young aboriginals had trouble pronouncing the word 'sugar' so to them she became the "Tchooger Bird Lady".

To carry out her work she purchased an aircraft, first a Cessna 182, and then a Mooney Super M20.

At the outback centres there were, at times, people suffering from sickness and injury. Where necessary, Robin moved patients to established medical facilities; her work therefore overlapped that of the RFDS.



The memorial to Robin.

She married Dr Harold Dicks of the RFDS and together they ferried many aircraft from overseas back to Perth. She died of cancer aged just 35 years. When you drive past RFDS at Jandakot, look to a replica of her Mooney, VH-REM, and spare a thought.

Next Meeting

The next OFG meeting will be at the Royal Aero Club, starting at noon on **Friday January 25th**. Our Speaker of the Day will be John Wager who will talk on the War in the Pacific. Your editor will talk about the businessman and aviator Hermann Ittershagen.

Hope to see you there.

Brian Hernan.