

Chapter News October 2014

Folded Wings

Vi Milstead Warren C.M.

October 17, 1919 – June 27, 2014

Vi Milstead, a former Toronto Chapter member (CAHS #2490), passed gently on June 27th, surrounded by caregivers and her good friend Marilyn Dickson (CAHS #5356). Born in Toronto October 17, 1919 to Edith and Harold Milstead, Vi had one brother, Fred. As a young teenager Vi wanted to be a surgeon, but when her mother opened a wool shop, Vi was taken out of school, thus ending that dream. In the meantime Vi set her sights on aviation. Vi helped out in her mother's shop, saving all of her earnings to pay for flying lessons. When she began flying lessons, her instructor had a film made, Let's Learn to Fly, starring Vi. No doubt he chose Vi to demonstrate that "even girls can learn to fly". Soon after she completed her Private Pilot Licence, her mother sold the wool shop and Vi lost her income source. So she started her own business to earn money to pay for her commercial lessons.



Vi Milstead (Warren) in 1946 prior to flying Miss Canada to Washington
Photo Courtesy - CASM

Within the next ten years, besides owning a business in North Toronto, Vi taught others to fly at Barker Field. When civilian flying ceased during WWII, Vi joined the Air Transport Auxiliary in England, delivering airplanes from factories to the military bases. With the ATA Vi logged over 600 hours on 47 different types of aircraft, 74 if we count different marks. As a First Officer, she was qualified on all but the four engine planes. After the war, Vi instructed again at Barker Field. One of the highlights of this time was flying the 1946 "Miss Canada" to Washington to invite the President of the United States to Toronto for Canada's first international air show. While at Barker Field Vi met Arnold Warren, the man she later married. They moved to Sudbury, instructing and flying as bush pilots. They also worked stints at the Windsor Flying Club, and then on the RMS Sagamo on Muskoka Lakes before moving to Indonesia where Arnold taught flying. Though officials gave Vi a piece of paper allowing her to fly in Indonesia, they would not hire a woman as an instructor. Once Arnold completed the terms of his contract, they returned to Canada where they found more lucrative employment, Arnold at a community college and Vi as a librarian at Orenda Engines and then the Ontario Water Resources Commission. They continued to fly recreationally after retirement, between the Magdalen Islands in Quebec and Colborne, Ontario.

Vi was active in several Colborne organizations such as Inner Wheel (Rotary), Second Helpings, Meals on Wheels and volunteering in the elementary school. Some of the Rotary exchange students continued to keep in touch with Vi. Vi was a gracious hostess, warmly welcoming guests and wanting them to be comfortable. Vi deeply missed Arnold after his death in June, 2000, but she welcomed new friends in her life, particularly Marian Carter. They enjoyed wonderful times together until Marian's passing. Vi received many awards for her flying career and her community work, including an Amelia Earhart Medal, a Paul Harris Medal, the Rusty Blakey Memorial Award, an Order of Canada (Canada Medal), a Diamond Jubilee Medal and induction into Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame in 2010. Vi knew how she wanted to live her life and could be feisty if she sensed other people's plans interfered with hers. A celebration of Vi's life was held on Saturday July 5 at MacCoubrey's Funeral Home in Colborne with a reception following at the Colborne United Church. Chapter President, Sheldon Benner, attended on behalf of the Chapter. Memorial donations are welcome for the Vi Milstead and Arnold Warren Flight Training Scholarship Fund, the David Suzuki Foundation or a charity of your choice. *Files from Marilyn Dickson and the Chapter.*

Editor's Note: For more on Vi and her service in the ATA please see the CAHS Journal Fall 1999 Issue