

LIFE & TIMES

MILLIE SINGER (1922 — 2013)

A ball of energy who lit up lives

Wife of clothier one of city's biggest boosters

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Edmonton Journal

Besides her late husband, Millie Singer loved dark chocolate and a spot of good 'ya, silk and cashmere, and everything royal — the King, the Queen and the Royal Mayfair Golf Club.

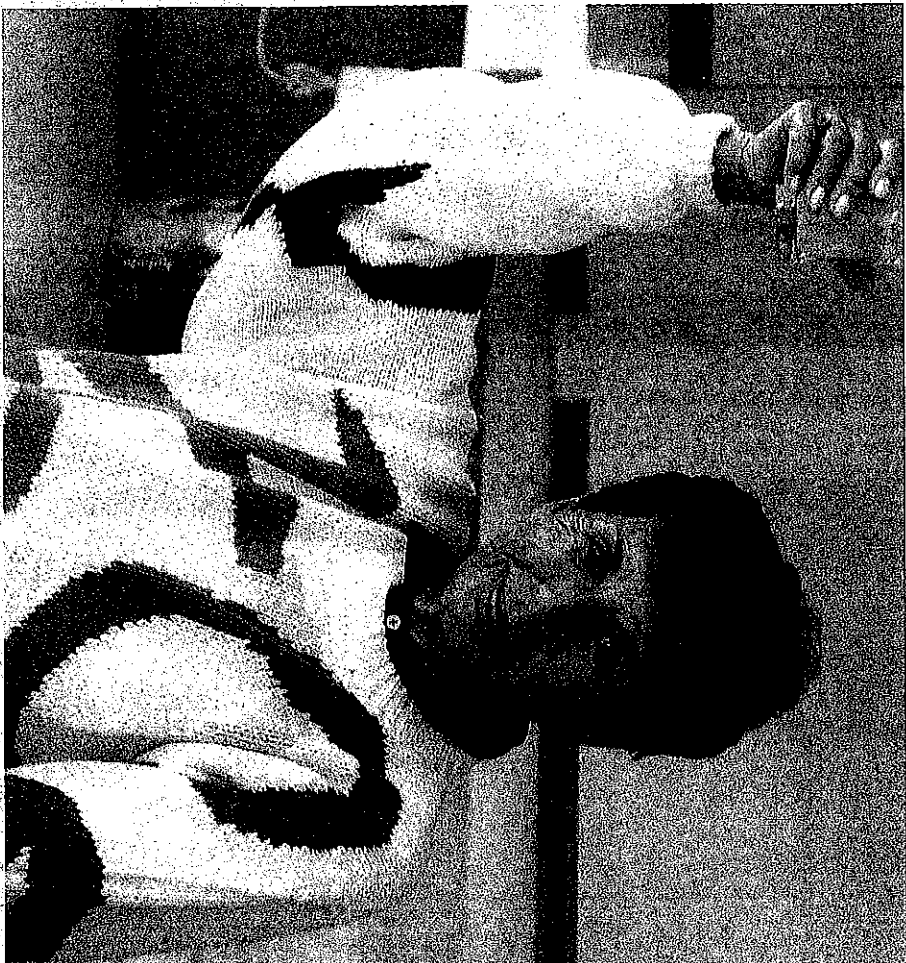
Married to clothier Henry Singer for 39 years, Millie was one of the city's biggest boosters, a fan of the Oilers and Eskimos and a member of a beautification committee that planted trees in downtown Edmonton, the city where she was born and raised and lived until her death on March 29 at age 91.

"Even though most members of the family moved to Vancouver, we could never get her to leave here," her daughter, Trudy Pekarsky, said at a gathering of family and friends following her funeral at Temple Beth Or on April 3. "She really loved the city. If we had taken her out of Edmonton, it would have been like taking a tree out of the soil."

Blonde and beautiful, Millie was only 18 when she met Henry, who was 10 years her senior and a whiz player in a jazz band that had just returned from a gig in Bermuda. Traveling to New York to study interior design, Millie returned to Edmonton after only three months because she was so smitten with her beau, who had been courting her despite her parents' concerns.

"My grandparents were horrified," Pekarsky said. "They asked, 'Who is this musician?' But she never looked at another."

They were inseparable until Henry's death in 1960. Millie playing Kate Hepburn to her husband's Spencer Tracy, raising their children Trudy, Danny, Fred and Trig, while Henry ran the menswear company that bears his name. After meeting her, Henry went straight, abandoning the vintage nifture salesman Louis Podersky. Millie attended Oliver and



PHOTOS: SUPPLIED

Taking Millie Singer out of Edmonton would have been like "taking a tree out of the soil," her daughter says. At left, Millie, then Millie Podersky, and husband Henry Singer, right, are seen in the early 1940s with Lillian Podersky and Lt. Arthur Singer of the Canadian Dental Corps.

who met her felt like she knew them," her son, Danny, said at the Royal Mayfair, where a gathering the same day as her funeral was held in a banquet room overlooking the 18th fairway, still blanketed with snow.

"It was her strength. She made everyone feel like she was their biggest fan. "She and my dad were special people. This is the end of an era in Edmonton, and for Edmonton."

Taught to play golf by her brothers in her youth, Millie won the Alberta women's junior title at 16 and was a senior champion at the Royal



business has flourished for three-quarters of a century. "She moved around him like a planet around the sun," Pekarsky said. "He was the centre of her universe."

The daughter of one of Edmonton's early pioneers, furniture salesman Louis Podersky, Millie attended Oliver and

eyesight began to fail. It also robbed her of her ability to drive and read, and she gradually stopped attending large social functions.

"One of the saddest things Mom ever said to me was, 'First I lost my Henry, then I lost myself,'" Pekarsky said during her eulogy before several hundred guests.

A woman who loved Maui, Miles Davis, Skatbooks and the North Saskatchewan River valley, Millie Singer told her children, "Don't cry smile" in the days before she died. In a letter written to her family 18 years earlier that was opened only after her death, she mused, "I've had a great life. It's nice to have no regrets."

"She was an amazing, lovely woman," Pekarsky said. "She never lost her essential Millieness. It was still there, flickering even at the very end."

In her last month, she was surrounded by family and friends. "She was my Audrey Hepburn," said Theresa Offeman, Millie's caregiver for 24 years. "There is no way for me to describe her as anything but that. Her charisma, the way she dressed. She was just a remarkable woman."

"It was an honour to know her." When they were first married, Millie and Henry Singer lived in the historic Armanoe Mansion in Oliver, overlooking the river. Recently, a bouquet was tied to a park bench outside the three-storey red-brick building. The bench has plaques bearing the Singers' names. "Together on this bench, as in life," one of the inscriptions reads.

Millie Singer spent many happy winters in Hawaii. Standing on her balcony at night and looking out over the Pacific Ocean, she would tell her daughter, "I know it's silly, but one of those stars is Henry."

"Now, when I look up at the stars on a crisp, clear night," Pekarsky said during her eulogy, "We'll see another star." Millie is finally with her Henry.
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