

# FURRIER SELLING OUT AFTER 18 YEARS

By Lois P. Hatton

Pioneer Press Fashion Editor

It was with drooping spirits and a feeling of genuine sorrow over the impending closing of Hope Furs, Inc. that I visited the shop to learn how the clearance sale of the vast array of furs was progressing.

In the histories of retiring fur businesses, liquidation has usually extended over many months, even years, but Eva Hope proposes to complete the clearance of Hope Furs in a matter of weeks. To that end she has slashed prices to figures that are irresistible to the thrifty woman contemplating a new fur coat. Currently styles, quality furs reduced to cost and below cost prices, have an appeal to any bargain lover. In fact one customer found the challenge so strong that she ended up buying seven coats for herself and members of her family.

With that kind of response one might expect to find choice limited and assortment now depleted but inroads on that large original stock have not upset the balance. Mink in all its beautiful variations of natural and mutation, Persian lamb in black, gray and brown; Alaskan seal nutria, beaver and otter, along with assembled mink in wide variety, sheared raccoon and many other furs offer the buyer an attractive choice.

Available styles cover the whole fashion range in the different coat lengths and detailing, and the small furs are so many that a most fashionable cape—stole or scarf may be bought at an unbelievable figure.

Two coats impressed me as garments never to be forgotten. One is a full length coat in that most beautiful mink mutation known as heather, cut on flattering lines and with skins exquisitely manipulated. The other is a 30-inch jacket of Stewart mink, the finest and most beautifully clear blue-gray in the entire family of gray mutations.

The stock of basic furs, the dressed pelts and plates in Hope work shop must be disposed of, too, and that department is speeding up work on coats using these furs, including many varieties of assembled mink, and producing absolutely new coats to add to stock.

My appraisal of any apparel business is according to its appreciation and expression of sound fashion, good taste and quality. By that measuring stick Eva Hope has always been

at the top of the list and her holm, a popular furrier at that retirement will be a loss to St. Paul's entire retail business. My appreciation of the high standing she has earned in the fur industry has been corroborated many times in the tributes paid her by the most important men in New York's wholesale end of the industry.

To Eva Hope love for furs began in her teens and determination to enter the fur business was established while she was in business school. On graduation she applied to F. V. Ek-

time. She has often said that he hired her as bookkeeper just to get rid of her. Her interest was not confined to the ledgers but penetrated to every phase of the fur business during her 17 years with the organization. At the end of that time change in the firm's personnel prompted Eva Hope to act on her friends' urgency and to go into business for herself and to establish the attractive shop at 65 E. Sixth which has borne her name for 18 years.



**PRESIDENT AND MANAGER** of the retail fur business she founded 18 years ago at 65 E. Sixth, Eva Hope has announced her forthcoming retirement following the liquidation of the stock of furs. In private life she is Mrs. Ray S. Miller, 1544 Edgumbe rd.

# Eva Hope Miller, downtown merchant, devotee of Air National Guard, dies at 97

**JULIO OJEDA-ZAPATA** STAFF WRITER

**H**ow devoted was Eva Hope Miller to the Minnesota Air National Guard?

Well, she once took the Guard to a Twins game at the old Metropolitan Stadium. That's the entire wing, which then consisted of more than 1,000 people.

"She was seen as the first lady of the Air National Guard, not only in Minnesota but everywhere," said Phil Knight, a retired Air Force colonel who served in the guard for 17 years.

Miller, a furrier in downtown St. Paul for decades, died at her St. Paul home Monday. She was 97.

Miller was the widow of Maj.



**Miller**

Gen. Ray Miller, a Minnesotan who was the father of the Minnesota Air National Guard.

A museum of memorabilia at the Guard base honors Ray Miller, who helped push through Congress an authorization to set up squadrons in seven states. But the museum also is a testament to Eva Hope Miller, who was largely responsible for amassing and financing the collection of clippings, pictures, old flight suits and parts of vintage aircraft.

The collection began modestly when Miller began dating her husband in her 20s, and continued growing after he died in 1961.

"She idolized Ray Miller. That was her consuming interest," Knight said. "She threw herself into the activities of the Air National Guard."

Miller remained active into the 1990s. She passed out an annual award to enlisted personnel that is named after her husband.

Miller founded Hope Furs with

a sister during the Depression and operated the store until 1952, when her husband was diagnosed with cancer.

"Two women starting a business during the Depression was a big deal, because women didn't own businesses in those days," said a niece, Jane Campbell, of Chesterfield, Mo.

Miller was a prominent businesswoman. She persuaded city leaders to install streetlights in downtown St. Paul and organized the area's first Christmas tree lighting in the early 1930s. Miller helped create the first credit Blue Book, a list of shoppers' credit ratings.

Besides Jane Campbell, Miller is survived by another niece, Molly Conney of St. Paul, and nephews Thomas Hope of Rochester, N.Y., and George Hope of Cross Lake, Minn.

Services will be at 11 a.m. Saturday at Acacia Park Cemetery, 2151 Pilot Knob Road, Mendota Heights.

# Obituaries

## Eva Hope Miller, civic activist and St. Paul furrier, dies

By David Chanen  
Staff Writer

April was to be a busy month for Eva Hope Miller.

The 97-year-old St. Paul resident was going to be the topic of a WCCO radio program, and April 15 was proclaimed by the governor as Eva Hope Miller Day. She was known for her "high-style quality" fur store in St. Paul and her efforts to make downtown more beautiful. Her husband was Maj. Gen. Ray Miller, who organized the first Air National Guard

base in the United States.

Miller, who described herself as "a little go-go-go," died at home Monday.

She was born in Winnebago, Minn., and graduated from Central High School in St. Paul. She worked at Eckholm Furs in St. Paul before she and her sister, Molly Hope, started Hope Furs on 6th St. in the late 1920s.

"It was during the Depression years, and she put in a lot of hours and hard

work to make it a success," said her niece, Jane Campbell, of Chesterfield, Mo. "Many of St. Paul's top families shopped there."

When she was a girl, Campbell and other relatives modeled fur coats in the store's window displays. Miller closed the shop when her husband's cancer was diagnosed in 1952. He died in 1961. She dated Ray for 23 years before they married in 1943, saying she was "too busy working to get married." But he was busy himself. After World War I, he was part of a Minnesota delegation that went

to Washington, D.C., and won Army authorization to start an air branch of the National Guard. The delegation established squadrons in seven states, including the 109th in Minnesota. Miller was special assistant to the chief of the Air Defense Command of the Air Force when he retired in 1951.

Campbell said Miller shared her husband's love for the military. She was active with the Reserve Officers Training Corps at the University of Minnesota and was chosen as a national Angel in 1972. She helped fund

the bride's room at the wedding chapel at the Air Guard base at Fort Snelling. She also collected her husband's notes, newspaper clippings, pictures and memorabilia, which will be displayed in a wing at the Air Guard museum at Fort Snelling.

Besides her two nieces, she is survived by two nephews. A graveside service will be held at 11 a.m. Saturday at Acacia Park Cemetery, 2151 Pilot Knob Rd., Mendota Heights. Arrangements are by Willwerscheid & Peters Mortuary, St. Paul.