

Local pilot, Glenn Miller, killed in helicopter crash

Searchers have recovered the body of Glenn Miller, the colorful and adventuresome Santa Barbaran who died along with two other members of a film crew when the helicopter he was piloting struck a cable and crashed into the Colorado River.

The bodies were recovered yesterday near Lees Ferry, Ariz., where the chopper crashed near sundown Saturday, the Coconino County sheriff's office said.

A fourth crew member, Lori Lee Gere, of Tarzana, was hospitalized in Page, Ariz., after the crash with only minor injuries.

According to Billy Graham, director of the EMI Production "American Eagle," Ms. Gere was thrown clear of the helicopter on impact and managed to swim away from the wreckage until she was pulled from the water.

Ms. Gere has no recollection of the accident, said Graham, who talked to her in the hospital yesterday. He said that she recalled "only that they were flying and then she was in the water."

The others killed in the crash were identified as Diane Dougherty, 27, of Tucson, and Frank Novak, 49, of Los Angeles.

All four aboard the helicopter were

employed by EMI Productions, Inc., of Los Angeles.

Miller, 52, was a veteran pilot with a penchant for adventure, whose exploits brought him into the news on more than one occasion. The most recent was in March, 1981, when his 85-foot boat Coral Sea was seized by armed Colombian sailors while it was on a treasure-hunting expedition in the Caribbean. He and his crew were released after a week, along with their vessel, and the incident captured nationwide publicity.

Miller, who built the Coral Sea in a Milpas Street boatyard, launched the vessel in 1974, continuing the diving charter business he had started in the early '60s.

Miller was flying his Hughes helicopter about 30 feet above the river when he struck a cable stretched between the river banks at Lees Ferry, a launching site for river-rafting trips through the Grand Canyon.

Graham said that Miller's craft and two other helicopters were returning to a local airport shortly before 7 p.m. after a day's shooting up the canyon. While the other two pilots were aware of the cable hazard, Miller, who had never flown the canyon before, was

unaware of it, Graham said.

The cable, a leftover from old mining days, is presently used to lower depth measuring devices into the river, said Graham. In the collision the cable smashed the bubble nose of Miller's helicopter, causing the helicopter to somersault on its back, he said.

The helicopter reportedly skipped over the water for about 300 yards, and according to sheriff's deputy Linda Kuczynski, the wreckage was submerged in 19 feet of water within 30 to 60 seconds.

Graham, who was flying in one of the two other helicopters, said that they had landed and were waiting for Miller's arrival when police cars arrived to advise them of the accident.

Dale Whitmore, a fishing guide from nearby Marble Canyon, and Rudy Forner, an employee of Garrett Turbine Engine Co. in Phoenix, were credited with rescuing the lone survivor. Whitmore pulled her out by her hair after he and Forner launched a small boat from a nearby dock, said Jim Stubbs, publisher of the weekly Lake Powell Chronicle.

The bodies of Miller and Ms. Dougherty were recovered from the helicop-

See Page A-8, Col. 8



News-Press photo by Bob Ponce

SANTA BARBARAN Glenn Miller, shown above with one of his helicopters, died over

the weekend when a craft he was flying crashed in the Colorado River.

4/19/1982

Miller piloting film crew down Colorado River

Continued from Page A-1

ter's fuselage by National Park Service divers yesterday morning, deputy Kuczynski said. Novak's body was recovered 500 yards downriver, she added.

Dark, swift current and temperatures of 42 degrees hampered recovery efforts Saturday, but the current was eased when the federal Bureau of Reclamation reduced water releases from dams upriver, she said.

Graham, who directed the film's predecessor, "Birds of Prey," said that "American Eagle" involved helicopter stunts but that Miller was not involved in them. Miller had a speaking role in the film as a truck driver, using his own truck and trailer rig in his scenes.

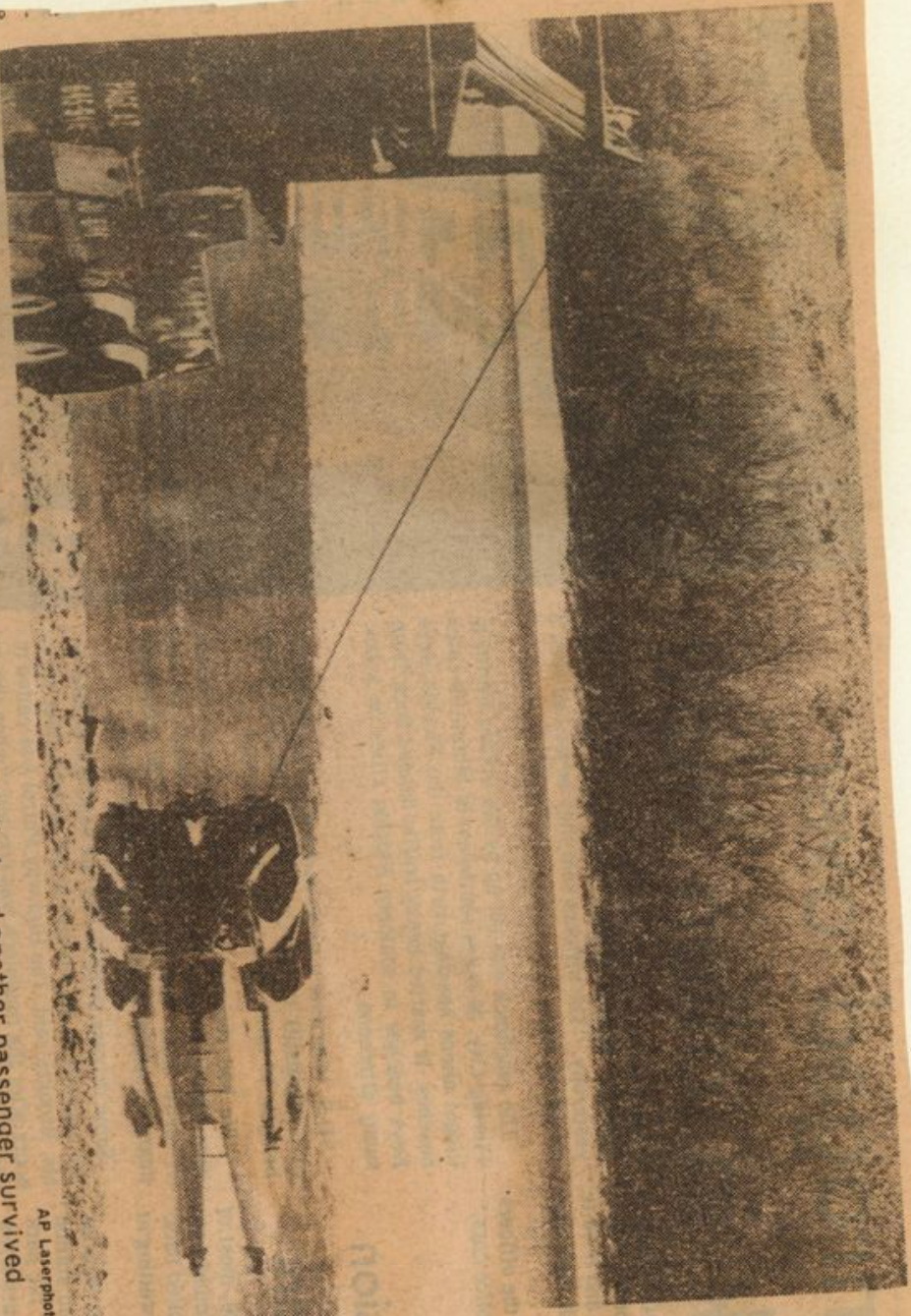
Graham, speaking from location in Arizona, said that the entire crew of roughly 70 EMI employees was deeply shaken by the incident.

"Everyone down here had fallen in love with him," said Graham. "He was the most unique guy and everyone who came into contact with him felt the same way. He was a man who didn't sit around dreaming about things but went out and did them."

The production, which began on location March 15, was resumed today, said Graham, and shooting would be worked out so that Miller will appear in the final version. The film stars Larry Hagman and Susan Anspach.

Miller will be cremated in Arizona, with his ashes flown back to Santa Barbara to be scattered over the Channel Islands.

He was born Oct. 9, 1929 in Santa Barbara, and attended Laguna Blanca and Santa Barbara High schools. According to Miller's survivors — son, Zachary, and daughter, Kathy — no services will be held according to his wishes.



AP Laserphoto

were killed and another passenger survived the crash, which occurred just before sundown yesterday.

THE WRECKAGE of a helicopter, which carried Santa Barbara's Glenn Miller to his death, is fished from the Colorado River near Lees Ferry, Ariz. Two other persons