



## PROFILE

*Austin Miller*



INDUCTED: 2010



Aussie Miller was one of the original larrikins of Australian motorsport and his two main loves were racing and aviation.

**H**e was born in Melbourne in 1923 and after racing a TQ midget at speedway tracks in Victoria and New South Wales in his younger days, he moved to circuit racing, first coming to prominence in 1958 when he won the Victorian Road Racing Championship.

In 1959 Aussie moved to Launceston to take over as licensee at the Hotel Monaco – a name which, of course, has great links to motorsport.

The pub soon became the motorsport hub for racing enthusiasts from all over Tasmania.

But Aussie's love affair with Tasmania had started before then and he had been a regular at the Longford International Grand Prix Circuit during the late 1950s, competing in a Formula 2 Cooper Climax 1500.

The car was known as the "Miller Special" and which legend has it that Aussie flew a Percival EP9 from England to Australia in 1957 and in the back of his plane, in pieces, in boxes, labelled as crop spraying equipment for his agricultural spraying business, to avoid paying taxes, was the "Miller Special".

After he moved to Launceston, Aussie continued to race interstate in major events, including rounds of the Australian Gold Star, which was at the time the Australian driver's championship.

In 1959 he again won the Victorian Road Racing Championship, the Tasmanian Hillclimb Championship and a round of the Gold Star at Phillip Island (Vic.).

That same year Aussie had a brush with Hollywood, when he was contracted to perform as a stunt-driver and stand-in driver for the legendary Fred Astaire in the movie *On The Beach*, which was filmed in Australia.

The following year Aussie won several speed trials in Victoria, was second in the Gold Star round at Phillip Island and sixth in the Bathurst 1000.

But although he was meeting with success on the circuits, Aussie's speed trials had given him a taste for something larger – an obsession to break the Australian land speed record.

Not having the budget to purchase a purpose-built car capable of breaking the record, Aussie and mechanic Geoff Smedley set about building a suitable car in the loft in a building next to the Hotel Monaco.

The car was a Type 51 2.2 Cooper Climax, into which they fitted a 400HP V8 Chevrolet engine and modified a Citroen gearbox to a two-speed version capable of producing a speed of 205 miles per hour (about 328 km/hr) at 6500rpm.

Finally, on November 19, 1961, Aussie realised his dream at Bakers Beach on the North-West Coast when he broke the record with successive runs over a timed kilometre, reaching speeds of 172mph and 156mph, to record an average speed of 164mph, breaking the existing record by 6mph.

Aussie also continued to race on the circuits and competed against some of Australia's and the world's top internationals of the era at all levels up to, and including, Formula One.

Some of his famous rivals included Stirling Moss, Jack Brabham, John Surtees, Len Lukey and Stan Jones.

In 1961 Aussie also finished fourth in an international Formula One race at Warwick Farm (Sydney) and was fourth in the Gold Star round at Longford.

At one time Aussie held the outright lap records for Symmons Plains, Baskerville and Phillip Island tracks all at the same time.

Aussie retired in from racing in 1962, after an international race meeting at Sandown (Vic.) to concentrate on his agricultural spraying business and flying career. He passed away in 2009 at the age of 85.

Profile by Martin Agatyn.