



The George Medal

# The air crash hero was scared

Herald Staff Reporter

**"You bet I was  
scared!" a hero  
said today.**

He is Mr John Alfred Miller, 27-year-old farmer, of Tinamba West, near Maffra, who has been awarded the George Medal for his heroism in rescuing a RAAF trainee pilot from a burning Tiger Moth last year.

Miller's wife, Pat, was listening to the early-morning news at the farmhouse today when she suddenly shouted to him: "You're going to get a medal!"

**That was the first** Miller had heard of it. "I had not a clue it was coming!" he said.

The other man who took part in the rescue, Clarence Peter Semmens, 37, who owns the property where Miller is share-farming, didn't know he had been awarded the Queen's Commendation until I phoned to tell him.

## A SURPRISE

**"That's a surprise!"** was his comment.

Miller and Semmens were inspecting a paddock last October 18 when they saw a Tiger Moth in difficulties.

The pilot, national service trainee James Rex Morton, 18, of Maidstone, was on his first solo cross-country flight. He struck bad weather and decided to force-land in a paddock.

The plane hit power lines 30 ft. up, somersaulted and nose-dived into the ground, upside-down, trapping Morton in his seat.

Miller and Semmens were on the scene as the plane burst into flames.

## FREED HIM

Miller defied the flames and rushed in and released the badly-injured pilot, whose clothes were on fire.

Semens joined him, and together they got Morton out of the cockpit, dragged him clear of the burning plane, and tore his blazing clothes off.

Miller, who has been dairy share-farming for a year, said today he had "forgotten all about the rescue."

"I was scared that the petrol tank might blow up, but the pilot was still in there, so something had to be done about it," he said.

Semens said there hadn't been time to "feel anything" as he dashed into the blazing aircraft to help in the rescue.

In Laverton RAF hospital today, Morton commented: "A George Medal for rescuing ME? That's terrific."

Morton has lost both legs.