

GLENN MILLER
1944 - 2024
LONG AGO AND FAR AWAY



Glenn Miller Birthplace Society
August 2024 Update

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Continued from the 2023 Glenn Miller Birthplace Society Essay, *"The Army Air Force Orchestras:"*

Army Air Forces Asset

Capt. Glenn Miller started lobbying to take the Army Air Forces Training Command orchestra overseas in October 1943, when he flew to Fort Worth for meetings with Gen. Barton K. Yount and his AAF Training Command headquarters staff. There, the priority appeared to be planning to protect "important public relations assets," including Miller's Radio Production Unit and Orchestra. A recommendation circulating in Washington indicated that the War Department would seek to consolidate all radio assets into the unified command of the Army Service Forces. This specifically meant the newly reorganized Radio Branch, now the Armed Forces Radio Service. Col. Thomas H. A. Lewis in Los Angeles wanted all radio broadcasting to report to him. The AAF, including Gen. H. H. Arnold in Washington and Gen. Yount, declined the proposal. It was at this critical juncture for the AAF that Capt. Miller asked Gen. Yount to consider sending his unit overseas. Although Yount agreed to confer with Arnold about the possibility, neither was inclined to let Miller go. The AAF considered the Miller unit their public awareness, recruiting, and fundraising crown jewel.

When someone leaked word of Miller's request to the media, the AAF replied that Capt. Miller's network broadcasts and other activities made him more valuable on the home front. Furthermore, the AAF was about to redefine and organize its media assets to protect them from the War Department and AFRS. Capt. Miller's request was set aside - for the time being.

V-Discs

On October 29, the AAFTC radio orchestra and the marching band contingent from Yale went to the Victor Recording Studios in New York for a V-Disc recording session produced by Sgt. Tony Janak. The whole band recorded *St. Louis Blues March*, *Buckle-Down*, *Winsocki*, and *El Capitan* (in deference to John Philip Sousa); the radio orchestra recorded *Star Dust* and *Stormy Weather (Keeps Rainin' All the Time)*, and Capt. Miller recorded a voice introduction for *Star Dust*. Glenn held up the session to clarify the name of the artist and orchestra. Per War Department policy, the Army had told Janak to label the discs simply as the 418th AAF Band, an interpretation of the War Department edict to minimize recognition of individuals. Miller refused to proceed until Janak amended the session sheets to read, "Capt. Glenn Miller and the Army Air Forces Training Command Orchestra." After several hurried phone calls to officials, Janak agreed to include Miller's name on all subsequent Miller V-Discs. When he entered the AAF, Glenn Miller decided that anything he recorded would bear his name because he would have rights to any recordings. As much of a patriot as Glenn was, he was also very pragmatic and far-sighted. Not for the first or last time in uniform, Capt. Miller prevailed. Washington had verified to Janak that Miller was an exception to War Department policy.



V-Disc Recording Session, Victor Studios, New York, October 29, 1943

This was the first of several Miller V-Disc studio sessions. In February 1944, the V-Disc producers started using copies of Miller's *I Sustain the Wings* broadcasts from NBC as source material for Miller AAF V-Discs.

Organizational Enhancements

Two key people joined the Miller Unit in November 1943. Glenn's civilian manager, Don Haynes, completed Office Candidate School at Miami Beach, Florida, on November 13 and reported for duty at Yale as Capt. Miller's administrative officer (Miller's executive officer was Lt. Donald Briggs). On November 20, Pvt. Paul Dudley, formerly producer of the Blue Network's *Coca-Cola Victory Parade of Spotlight Bands*, joined Miller as a scriptwriter. As a condition of his transfer, Miller had to share Dudley with the Treasury Department until a war loan drive was completed. Dudley was soon promoted to Technical Sergeant and assumed the role of radio producer. They were teamed with radio director Sgt. George Voutsas, formerly of the maestro Arturo Toscanini NBC Symphony Orchestra broadcasts, the two formed a powerful Miller radio production brain trust.

On December 6, Gen. Yount formalized changes to protect the AAF Radio Production Units. About the Miller organization stationed at Yale University, twenty-four of the twenty-eight men from the 418th AAF Band were transferred into the newly established Second AAF Radio Production Unit. The men that Capt. Miller assigned to other AAF Technical School

departments, did, too. This would not be the first time that accommodations had to be made to handle Capt. Miller's required headcount. Army regulations capped bands at twenty-eight members, whereas Glenn had dozens more in his unit. Removing the headcount restriction allowed Capt. Miller to focus on broadcasting and recording activities. The personnel of the Second AAF Radio Production Unit no longer had base duties, including the marching band. The 418th AAF Band was spun off as the new 718th AAF Band with a separate personnel roster who could serve as replacements for the elite unit and handle all post functions. When Warrant Office Robert Boucher took command of the 718th, Capt. Miller gave him the marching band music library. The 718th also continued to form the nucleus for the band led by Cpl. Ray McKinley on the regional *Wings For Tomorrow* broadcasts, which was the genesis for the forthcoming *Swing Shift* series. By formalizing the AAF Radio Production Units' new structure, Gen. Yount protected AAF assets and fulfilled Capt. Miller's January 1943 proposal concerning radio broadcasting. Capt. Glenn Miller thus entered 1944 free to do what he wanted with his elite unit but determined, as always, to do much more.



Wings For Tomorrow, Yale University, Cpl. Ray McKinley and the 718th AAF Band

I Sustain the Wings

As of January 1944, the Second AAF Radio Production Unit was responsible for the weekly production of *I Sustain the Wings* at NBC. Each week, depending upon other scheduled programs and recordings, the unit traveled from New Haven to New York City on either Thursday or Friday. They rehearsed and broadcast *I Sustain the Wings* from the Vanderbilt Theater, an NBC venue located at 148 West 48 Street, near NBC Radio City at Rockefeller Center. The theater would remain a broadcast facility for ABC after World War II. This assignment gave Capt. Miller a dedicated studio on Saturdays, and Guy Lombardo a dedicated studio on Sundays for his weekly network series. The Miller unit's *I Sustain the Wings* network broadcasts were at 6:00 p.m. and 11:30 p.m. Eastern War Time (equivalent to today's Daylight Savings Time). NBC affiliates coast-to-coast selected the feed that best suited their scheduling needs. NBC aired the broadcasts without commercials, and, in effect, the AAF awareness, recruiting, and fundraising content of the series were the messages and points of the musical and scripted presentations.

Uncle Sam Presents

Every Saturday, the unit also recorded *Uncle Sam Presents*, a fifteen-minute series designed for the armed forces overseas broadcast by the Voice of America, the international broadcasting service of the Office of War Information (OWI). The Miller unit recorded *Uncle Sam Presents*, broadcasting *I Sustain the Wings* from CBS between July 17 and September 11, 1943, and then from NBC starting September 18, 1943. NBC set aside Studio 6-A at Radio City to record programs for the OWI, AFRS, Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (CIAA), the Treasury Department, and other government agencies. Until now, it has been thought that the Miller unit probably recorded *Uncle Sam Presents* at NBC Studio 6-A. However, common sense and documentation confirm that the unit recorded the episodes at the Vanderbilt Theater. NBC records document the program recordings at 2:15 p.m. every Saturday ahead of *I Sustain the Wings*. The band did not need to set up and break down at two locations in one afternoon. The programs were transmitted to the NBC control room and recorded there, hence the assumption for decades that the programs came from Studio 6-A, where all OWI programs were generally recorded. And indeed, the Miller unit would soon be making other OWI programs from Studio 6-A, but on Fridays.

Music From America

Beginning in March 1944, the Second AAF Radio production Unit started recording for the OWI *Music From America* series on Fridays at NBC Studio 6-A. Made without spoken introductions, the musical episodes were circulated to Voice of America stations and U.S. embassies around the world, where local stations could insert announcements in multiple languages. During the 1990s, BMG (now Sony Legacy) issued selections from this series with the misleading name *Secret Broadcasts*.



Capt. Glenn Miller at NBC

Capt. Miller was hospitalized during Christmas in December 1943, not for the first or last time in uniform. This time, it was for severe influenza. Glenn was back by January 1, when the Miller unit appeared on the weekly NBC-BBC Transatlantic shortwave series *Atlantic Spotlight*. The simulcast aired at 12:30 p.m. in New York and 5:30 p.m. in London. Little did anyone know that Capt. Glenn Miller might soon be heard broadcasting *from* and not *to* London. Elsewhere, the unit remained very busy, with sub-units broadcasting *Wings for Tomorrow* and *Strings with Wings* over regional networks from New Haven; the full orchestra also recorded *Treasury Star Parade* episodes at NBC Studio 6-A. Capt. Miller and his staff planned another Treasury series, *Home Base*, and a series for the Women's Army Corps, *Partners in Victory*, which debuted in April 1944. The unit traveled to events throughout the Northeastern United States on Mondays through Thursdays. On one trip, they ventured as far west as Chicago. They also made plans for two extensive War Bond Tours, to be done in June and July, first across the Midwest and then into the Southeast. The unit also appeared on the AFRS *Command Performance* series and did the additional V-Disc recording sessions. Miller introduced a vocalist from M/Sgt. Harry Bluestone's Fort Worth, Texas AAF radio production unit on March 18 to share duty with Sgt. Johnny Desmond. Cpl. Bob Carroll (Marcus Kaufman) worked with Charlie Barnet, Meredith Willson, and NBC. Miller may have wanted to introduce Carroll to the coast-to-coast audience that *I Sustain the Wings* reached over the nationwide NBC NETWORK TO PROMOTE A FUTURE AAF network program to be broadcast by the Bluestone unit. But as it came to pass, that would be *I Sustain the Wings*. Meanwhile, in another housekeeping move, the AAF reclassified radio production units on April 1, 1944. The formal name of the elite Miller unit became the 2001st AAF Base Unit (Radio Production)

Across the Pond



Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower

Events across the Atlantic Ocean were about to change the course of world history. Moreover, the future of Capt. Glenn Miller and the Second AAF Radio Production Unit. Although he did not yet know it, Glenn was about to be summoned to the summit achievement of his brilliant career. In 1943, Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower of Abilene, Kansas, assumed command of Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF). From his London headquarters, Eisenhower was enormously responsible for planning and leading an Allied invasion of Northern Europe. Millions of people were preparing for the monumental crusade. At the recommendation of his aide, U. S. Navy Capt., Harry Butcher, Gen. Eisenhower made plans to establish a combined SHAEF British and American broadcasting service. Butcher, a former CBS executive, and Iowa State College graduate asked the War Department to send over Col. Edward Kirby, formerly of WSM, Nashville, Tennessee, to help launch the new service, which neither the BBC nor AFRS initially wanted. Presently serving as Pentagon radio chief, Kirby had launched the AFRS *Command Performance* and popular NBC *Army Hour* programs. Earlier, Kirby had famously launched the career of singer Dinah Shore. On April 29, 1944, Col. Kirby traveled to New York to attend the *I Sustain the Wings* broadcasts and to meet with Capt. Miller and T/Sgt. Paul Dudley regarding the new allied radio service.



I Sustain the Wings, NBC Vanderbilt Theater, May 1944



Col. Edward M. Kirby

Kirby outlined ideas that Butcher brought directly to Eisenhower, which led to the decision to launch an Allied radio service. Although he had privately tipped off longtime friend Dudley about his real intention, Kirby explained to Glenn that he was seeking advice about musicians for the new service. Miller asked, "What's wrong with my band?" Kirby replied, "Nothing, but getting a sixty-four-man unit shipped with military priority when only combat-ready troops and supplies are going over there will be a challenge." Miller replied, "I know nothing about that, but I want to be there when the second front is open, along with the men fighting. That is where I belong, not back here selling bonds or recruiting. I don't want to play this war by remote control or on transcriptions." Miller said the AAF would only allow him to go if Eisenhower or someone of his stature ordered it. He asked Kirby for Eisenhower's endorsement because he did not want to be turned down.

On May 1, Col. Kirby got back to Capt. Miller with an affirmative answer. Glenn had to consider his health. He also had to consider his son and a second child he and Helen had decided to adopt. Calculating whether to go overseas, he did not hesitate momentarily, although he knew there were roadblocks. He was not qualified for overseas service because of his eyesight, although he could have overcome this with a waiver. Ultimately, Helen was the only one who could prevent Glenn from going overseas, and he persuaded her. However, the risk inherent in his decision understandably added stress to their marriage. On April 30, Col. Raymond Reeves at New Haven recommended Miller's promotion to Major, and Gen. Yount approved it on May 28.

Capt. Miller traveled to Washington on May 8 and 9 to meet with Kirby. The conference's stated purpose was to discuss the overseas distribution of radio programs. The confidential purpose was to confirm the shipment of Miller's unit to the United Kingdom. T/Sgt. Paul Dudley joined Miller and Kirby on May 9 and met separately with Kirby the next day. Kirby departed for London shortly after he met with Miller and Dudley and set events in motion. From May 10 through June 1, Glenn took the leave of absence customary for officers about to be sent overseas. Glenn and Helen traveled to California and Colorado to settle business matters and visit their families. The trade press suspected a health issue and speculated that Miller was preparing to leave the military when he visited 20th Century-Fox to sign a long-term motion picture agreement. This forced the AAF to announce that Miller was being promoted to Major and sent overseas.

On May 24, Gen. Eisenhower formally requested Washington to transfer the Second AAF Radio Production Unit to the United Kingdom. The AAF agreed, provided that the organization remained AAF property. Following significant negotiation, plans were confirmed for the newly established Army Air Forces Band (Special) to deploy to the European Theater of Operations. Priority and space were made for their transfer. Capt. Miller returned to New York and rejoined the unit for their June 2-3 recording and broadcasting work. On June 6, 1944, allied forces landed in Normandy on D-Day, and the Allied Expeditionary Forces Programme of the BBC (AEFP) started broadcasting.

Bon Voyage

The Second AAF Radio Production Unit embarked on its first War Bond Tour to the Midwest. Following an appearance in St. Louis, Missouri, the men arrived in Chicago, Illinois, where formal word of their transfer came through. On June 10, *I Sustain the Wings* broadcast from the Chicago Servicemen's Center, Capt. Miller announced that M/Sgt. Harry Bluestone's unit "was taking over" *I Sustain the Wings* on June 17. Joined by bandleader and impresario Paul Whiteman, the Bluestone unit would complete the Midwestern War Bond Tour instead of the Miller unit. They would likewise fulfill the forthcoming Southeastern tour. The Miller unit returned to New Haven to prepare for embarkation. Capt. Miller and T/Sgt. Dudley flew ahead. On June 19, they boarded an Air Transport Command C-54 airplane at LaGuardia Field, New York, and flew to Prestwick, Scotland, via Newfoundland and Iceland. At Prestwick, they connected via C-47 transport to London. They reported to the BBC and started work on broadcast and logistical planning there. On June 22, Lt. Haynes and the men boarded the troopship NY 8245, the peacetime RMS *Queen Elizabeth*. When they arrived at Firth of Clyde, Gourock, Scotland, on June 28, Capt. Miller was there to meet them.



I Sustain the Wings, Chicago, June 10, 1944

Over Here

When Capt. Miller arrived in London two weeks after D-Day, the terrifying V-1 flying bomb assault was underway. During the Blitz of 1940 and 1941, when the BBC recognized the threat of Luftwaffe attacks to reliable broadcasting, four hundred musicians, staff, and engineers moved fifty miles north of London to the relative safety of Bedford. Sir Adrian Boult and his BBC Symphony Orchestra broadcast the first public concerts from the Corn Exchange in September 1941. Alarmed by the V-1 menace, Miller thought it prudent to station his unit in Bedford. Indeed, when the AAF Band (Special) disembarked from their overnight train at seven on June 29, 1944, they received an abrupt welcome at London's Euston Station. As they exited the station, sirens went off as a V-1 drone overhead. While other people ran for cover, the new arrivals just stood and watched as the flying bomb engine cut out. Within seconds, there was an explosion nearby. From Euston Station, Army trucks fetched the band to their billet, a block of flats at Sloane Court, Chelsea.

The BBC handled transmission, production, and engineering for the new AEFB, which was known internally as the BBC Violet Network. Maurice Gorham, formerly the North American director of the BBC, was the director of the new AEFB. American Col. Ed Kirby assisted him as SHAEF broadcasting director, and British Lt. Col. David Niven, the former actor, was Kirby's deputy. The BBC's Cecil Madden was AEFB programming chief.

After the band arrived in London, Niven drove Miller, Haynes, Dudley, and BBC engineer Teddy Gower to Bedford. They met Gorham there, inspected BBC facilities, and decided to locate the AAF Band (Special) in Bedfordshire. The band could broadcast from the Corn Exchange, then home to the BBC Symphony, and rehearse and record at the renovated Co-Partners Hall. The band would soon nickname the Corn Exchange "Lombardo Hall" and Co-Partners Hall "8-H" after the expansive NBC Symphony studio at NBC Radio City. The AAF Band (Special) was formally assigned to the Headquarters Squadron of the Eighth Air Force Service Command at nearby Milton Ernest Hall for food and housing.

SHAEF and the BBC decided to identify the Army Air Forces Band (Special) as the American Band of the Supreme Allied Command for radio broadcasting. However, for official purposes, they retained their formal title. Within weeks, their title changed to the American Band of the Allied Expeditionary Forces (AEF). The Miller unit was one of three AEFB orchestras. The others in the all-Allied service were the British Band of the AEF, directed by Regimental Sergeant Major George Melachrino, and the Canadian Band of the AEF, directed by Capt. Robert Farnon.

On Saturday, July 2, the AAF Band (Special) left Sloane Court for Bedford. The next day, a V-1 crashed into the street in front of Sloane Court, killing about 100 American personnel, including many members of a WAC detachment.



Corn Exchange, Bedford, July 8, 1944

Britain Falls In Love

Everyone at the BBC was immediately impressed by the size and competence of Miller's organization. Gorham observed the orchestra was "a band money could not have bought, thick with bandleaders in their own right ... and a string section of twenty drawn from the best American symphony orchestras, who would never have been playing in a swing band at all if they had not been in the Army." Gorham further recalled, "Miller arrived knowing nothing much about our set-up and thinking he was going to direct a program instead of merely supplying a band. Then we made the mistake of trying to integrate his programs to give them an inter-allied flavor. We gave him the best soloists Britain had, thinking it would appeal to everybody to hear Vera Lynn or Anne Shelton singing with his band. We found he did not want them. He had his formula and found it hard to fit them in."

Nevertheless, the American Band of the AEF would appear on a weekly broadcast of the same name on the BBC, as well as on the AEFP, as a summer replacement series. The AEFP signal was readily available throughout southern England. Much of the British public and all of London could hear the music of Capt. Glenn Miller. Although many had listened to his American records, the AAF Band (Special) was an astonishing revelation. No American bands had been in the UK for years. Everything from the full orchestra and their lush arrangements to the jazz groups with their modern music thrilled listeners. During July, the unit established itself in Bedford with its initial broadcasts. They traveled to London, where they appeared at their first personal appearances, including a charity event at the July 27 premiere of Bing Crosby's new film *Going My Way*. Simply put, Britain fell in love with Glenn Miller, and that love and appreciation have never faded. On July 23, when HRH Queen Elizabeth visited Bedford, she told Lt. Haynes, Sgt. Harry Katzman and sixteen members of the string section that her daughter Princess Elizabeth was immensely enjoying their broadcasts.

Broadcasting Schedule

The American Band of the AEF launched its broadcasting schedule on July 8 from the Corn Exchange in Bedford. In addition to the main orchestra, subgroups handled multiple programs to fill out an ambitious daily broadcasting schedule. T/Sgt. Ray McKinley (promoted in January 1944) led the Swing Shift, or *The American Jazz Band*, with an 18-piece band without the string section. The program was modeled after *Wings for Tomorrow*. Sgt. Mel Powell hosted *Uptown Hall*, or the *Swing Sextette*, featuring exceptional small group jazz with occasional guest vocalists. S/Sgt. George Ockner, concertmaster of the strings, led *Strings with Wings*, which was developed under the same name in New Haven. Sgt. Johnny Desmond had his own *Songs By Sgt. Johnny Desmond*, or *A Soldier and a Song*, with vocals and the full orchestra. M/Sgt Norman Leyden, a GMBS Festival regular and a member of the Glenn Miller Collections Hall of Fame, conducted the Desmond programs. Pvt. Jack Rusin and Sgt. Powell appeared on *Piano Parade*, or *Keyboard Contrasts*. Beginning in October, SHAEF loaned the orchestra to the OWI's Voice of America for German-language broadcasts over the American Broadcasting Station in Europe (ABSIE).



Maj. Glenn Miller, T/Sgt. Ray McKinley and Sgt. Mel Powell



S/Sgt. George Ockner, Cecil Madden, and T/Sgt. Paul Dudley



Sgt. George Ockner - Strings With Wings



Sgt. Johnny Desmond - A Soldier And A Song

Next To A Letter From Home

Although the primary mission of the AAF Band (Special) was radio broadcasting, the orchestra embarked on a series of personal appearances for military personnel, primarily the many wartime Eighth Air Force bases across Britain. From bomber and fighter groups to air service depots, the AAF Band (Special) flew and rode to often two or even three bases a day. The number of personal appearances combined with their broadcasting schedule was backbreaking, however, as Capt. Miller described to Col. Kirby that the look on the faces of the audience made it all worthwhile. Glenn said, "All the money I could ever make in civilian life was nothing compared to the feeling I get from these men and women." Every appearance is carefully documented, and the Glenn Miller Collections and GMBS preserve many photos of the concerts. The AAF Band (Special) traveled to dozens of bases in the UK from July 14 at Thurleigh through October 3 at Kingscliffe, when cold weather curtailed further appearances in hangars and outdoors.

On July 29, the AAF Band (Special) appeared at the Eighth Air Force Headquarters, Wycombe Abbey. VIII AF commander Lt. Gen James Doolittle and his staff were in attendance, including his deputy commander for operations, Maj. Gen. Orvil Anderson, who was married to Glenn's cousin Maude Miller Anderson. At that appearance for a War Bond rally, Doolittle exclaimed, "Capt. Miller, next to a letter from home, your band is the greatest morale booster in the European Theater." The order promoting Glenn Miller to the rank of major finally caught up with him between concerts on August 14, 1944, and his men threw a party for him.

Along the way on broadcast and at personal appearances, a succession of British singers accompanied the AAF Band (Special), including Dame Vera Lynn, Dorothy Carless, Anne Shelton, Beryl Davis, Margaret Lockwood, Gloria Brent, Sally Douglas, Paula Green, Bertha Wilmott and Doreen Villers. British celebrities and bandleaders, including RSM George Melachrino, Jack Hylton, Bruce Trent, Joe Loss, Victor Feldman, and RAF Sgt, also appeared with the band. Jimmy Miller, Hal Monty, Harry Roy, Peter Sinclair and Victor Sylvester. Future bandleader Ted Heath hosted the band at the October 1944 Jazz Jamboree in London. Sir Adrian Boult enjoyed conducting *Strings With Wings* on November 6, 1944.

Americans in Britain famously appeared with the AAF Band (Special) and its subgroups, including, as we will see, the aforementioned Bing Crosby and Dinah Shore, but also Fred and Adele Astaire and Irene Manning. M1C Sam Donahue and the U.S. Navy Dance Band of the Allied Liberation Forces appeared as guests on the *American Band of the AEF* program on September 21, 1944. Many others would appear with the orchestra in 1945.

On the air and in person, the Army Air Forces Band (Special) made a profound impression on allied service personnel and the British public. They were also poised to make a further impression upon the people of Europe in general and the German armed forces in particular.



High Wycombe - Eighth Air Force HQ - July 29, 1944



Thorpe Abbots - 100th Bomb Group - September 1, 1944



Wattisham - 479th Fighter Group - July 24, 1944



Halesworth - 489th Bomb Group - August 6, 1944

Der Bingle and Diva Dinah

Musical royalty from America descended upon Britain and connected with Maj. Miller and the orchestra during August and September. First, Dinah Shore arrived. Col. Kirby naturally brought her straight to Bedford and insisted on bumping British singer Beryl Davis from the August 3 ABAEF broadcast favoring "Captain Dinah," as Maj. Miller described Ms. Shore on the air. Glenn did not have time to rehearse the men with the music Dinah brought with her, so he gave her Sgt. Johnny Desmond's parts to sing. Following pre-recordings with Sgt. Powell for Uptown Hall, Dinah, and her entourage departed for France. When they returned in September, Col. Kirby hatched a plan for Dinah to join the Miller unit to make commercial HMV records at the famous EMI Abbey Road Studios in London. By this time, Glenn had been sidelined with pneumonia, the effects of which are apparent in the photos that show his resulting weight loss. Nevertheless, Glenn rallied to conduct the recording session with Dinah, and the results were superb. However, Ma. Gen. Ray Barker, SHAEF G-1 (Administration) to whom Col. Kirby reported, ordered "kill it, we are not in this business" following the session. Meanwhile, Dinah went on to perform with T/Sgt. Ray McKinley and the full orchestra at a 200th Mission Party that Maj. Miller, back in bed, could not attend. When Ray reported to Glenn that Dinah had put her troupe in front and relegated the AAF Band (Special) to a supporting role, he replied in so many words (expletives deleted) that he never wanted her to appear with his unit ever again and that he was glad she would soon return to the USA. For her part, Dinah soon used the arrangements that Miller's team had written for her in the UK on her radio programs, including a beautiful treatment of *Star Dust*.

In a somewhat different experience, Bing Crosby arrived to great fanfare in London in late August, when he made a beeline straight for Bedford to be reunited with an old friend. This was before Glenn's pneumonia and Maj. Miller was pleased to welcome Bing. Glenn assigned Pvt. Jack Rusin to accompany Bing all around the UK as a pianist. Bing and his USO troupe were scheduled to tour the front lines in France, but not before making programs for the Voice of America's American Broadcasting Station in Europe (ABSIE) and the AEF. Bing was a guest on RSM Melachrino's British Band of the AEF program, and Maj. Miller's August 31 American Band of the AEF broadcast. German listeners nicknamed Crosby "Der Bingle." Actor and dancer Fred Astaire was also in the UK and joined Bing on the French tour. At the time, Fred's sister Adele was actively hosting the American Red Cross Club in London and was a regular on several AEF programs. When Bing and Fred returned to the United States, Bing told the media and his Kraft Music Hall listeners that Maj. Miller's orchestra was the most incredible group of musicians he had ever had the privilege to perform with. The tour of the front lines also had a profound impact on Der Bingle.



Bing Crosby, S/Sgt. Jerry Gray and Maj. Glenn Miller - Bedford, August 30, 1944



Maj. Glenn Miller and Dinah Shore - Abbey Road Studios, September 16, 1944

Music For The Wehrmacht

At the end of September, Col. Kirby returned to Washington. Lt. Col. Niven succeeded him as SHAEF broadcasting director, and thus, Maj. Miller's commanding officer. In turn, Niven served as Gorham's AEFP deputy. At SHAEF, Niven reported to Col. Robert Furber of Gen. Barker's staff. Niven and Furber were directly involved with Maj. Miller daily. When Kirby departed, Lt. Col. John Hayes took over Niven's former role with SHAEF broadcasting and his ongoing responsibility as chief of the American Forces Network (AFN). Hayes reported to Col. Tom Lewis at AFRS in Los Angeles, who, like the BBC Director, William Haley, had initially opposed the creation of the AEFP. AFN rebroadcast all of the AEFP AAF band (Special) programs courtesy of the BBC discs recorded for each episode.

During World War II, the OWI's Voice of America European Service was located in London and identified as the American Broadcasting Station in Europe (ABSIE). In seven languages, ABSIE furnished about 50% of its original programming and broadcast the rest directly from the VOA in New York. The German Service was staffed by many American citizens of German descent, including Sgt. Golo Mann, political commentator and son of exiled German poet laureate Thomas Mann. Actress Marlene Dietrich, under a Nazi death sentence, relished her opportunity to broadcast via ABSIE. Most of ABSIE's staff were civilians, but some were military personnel on loan from SHAEF. The many ABSIE programs included the *Music For The Wehrmacht*, featuring news and American popular music. Soon, Maj. Miller and the AAF Band (Special) would become the most popular feature on ABSIE and *Music For The Wehrmacht*, broadcasting, as the title implied, directly to the German armed forces. The programs were light on messaging and heavy on quality music. Studies among prisoners and later in postwar Germany revealed how famous the orchestra was among the troops.

Many ABSIE announcers and staff used pseudonyms rather than their real identities to protect relatives in Germany; *Music For The Wehrmacht* featured a friendly German female host identified as Ilse, who was, in reality, Gloria Wagner. Between October 31 and December 6, Maj. Miller and the orchestra recorded musical and voice parts for the ABSIE series. Eight episodes were recorded and assembled for broadcast before the band's other duties and movements curtailed their famous appearances on *Music For The Wehrmacht*. The format of the broadcasts was built around Ilse giving Miller lessons in the German language. Like Bing Crosby, Miller spoke from a script designed by ABSIE in what producers called "phonetic German." Miller was unconvincing as a German speaker, but Sgt. Johnny Desmond would sing in beautifully elegant German. The music was excellently recorded at Abbey Road Studios. The voice parts were recorded at ABSIE's much smaller Wardour Street basement studios in London. Some recordings escaped EMI and American custody on bootleg labels between the 1950s and 1990s. As they had with the *Secret Broadcasts* that contained OWI recordings, BMG ultimately issued a legitimate release, *Lost Broadcasts*, with many of the ABSIE musical elements and some of the voice parts.



Maj. Glenn Miller and the American Band of the AEF at Abbey Road Studios



Maj. Glenn Miller and Gloria "Ilse" Wagner at ABSIE



Jazz Jamboree, Stoll's Theatre, London, October 15, 1944

The Far Shore

While Col. Kirby was in London, Maj. Miller had a somewhat contentious relationship with the BBC, in part encouraged by the assertive Kirby. Glenn's working relationship with the BBC improved considerably in partnership with Lt. Col. David Niven. Maj. Miller and Maurice Gorham became cordial, as Glenn had been all along with Cecil Madden. This increasingly collegial arrangement allowed Miller's broadcasting team to work collaboratively and closely with the BBC. In fact, Gorham and Madden asked SHAEF to promote T/Sgt. Dudley to Warrant Officer and eventually Lieutenant so he had better access to meetings and facilities.

Moreover, Lt. Col. Niven and Lt. Col. Hayes had formed a good working relationship, and both interfaced well with Col. Furber. All of this worked for Maj. Miller's advantage leading up to an important November 14-18 conference at SHAEF to determine future plans for AEF. Leading up to this, Miller and Niven were discussing an eventual move of the ABAEF to Paris. The reason and advantages were evident. So long as SHAEF and the BBC could set up and operate reliable broadcasting facilities and transmissions from France, a move would make the ABAEF available for appearances to ground troops on leave and at the many military hospitals in the Paris region.

Following the liberation, SHAEF's senior media advisor, Col. David Sarnoff, the peacetime chairman of RCA and NBC, set out to ascertain the status of French broadcasting facilities and to rebuild them, which he accomplished. SHAEF's forward headquarters moved to Versailles. Including Gen. Barker, Col. Furber and Lt. Col. Niven. Lt. Col. Hayes remained in London. Maj. Miller was called to the November conference at Versailles along with Hayes and BBC officials. A potential move of the ABAEF to France was up for discussion, and Glenn departed London for Paris and the Far Shore on November 13.

Prior to his meetings, Maj. Miller was invited to a meeting with Lt. Gen. Walter Bedell Smith, Gen. Eisenhower's Chief of Staff. During the meeting, Smith relayed a message from Gen. George C. Marshall in Washington. Marshall offered Maj. Miller command of the U. S. Army band and a promotion to Colonel, which, to the relief of Gen. Smith and SHAEF, Glenn politely declined. However, he made a very positive impression on Smith, who messaged Gen. Barker to approve the transfer of the ABAEF to France. Barker not only did that but sent a request to the AAF in Washington to promote Glenn to Colonel. On behalf of Gen. Eisenhower, Barker also started the paperwork process to award Maj. Miller the Bronze Star for his achievements and impact in the European Theatre.

At the conference, Miller submitted a detailed plan for the Far Shore move that the leadership group approved but with one crucial caveat. The unit had to prerecord and stockpile broadcasts to ensure reliable programming, at least through January 1945. Miller returned to Bedford on November 19 and put this up for a vote among his men, to which they unanimously voted "yes."



Lt. Gen. Walter Bedell Smith



Maj. Gen. Ray Barker

Preparing To Move

Maj. Miller had stuck his neck out, committing his command to triple their workload to accommodate the requirements of the BBC. He quickly ran into trouble, calling in favors from AFN and others to scrounge the number of recording discs required by the short-handed BBC to build the prerecording stockpile. Meanwhile, BBC director general Haley, Gorham, Madden, and others were worried about the move but buoyed by Miller's recording commitment. SHAEF approved 100%. The BBC had completed renovating the Marigny Theatre in Paris and were pleased Glenn committed to using it. However, it was too small to accommodate broadcast audiences, so the U. S. Army set out to prepare the Olympia Theatre for the ABAEF. But correctly preparing it was problematic in the necessary time frame. The transmission circuit between Paris and London was still being rebuilt, and there was no clear idea if it would be fully restored by December 31. And SHAEF wanted the Miller unit to come over during mid-December, before Christmas. Niven remained optimistic and offered Miller full support with Paris preparations. Meanwhile, the band set to prerecord programs while fulfilling their regular schedule for AEF and ABSIE.

However, storm clouds ominously gathered around the AEF. British commander Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery, and the commander of the U. S. Seventh Army, Gen. Jacob Devers each pushed to have AEF broken up with a return to all-British BBC and all-American AFN services. This did not account for the Canadians, who had benefitted from AEF's existence. With the complete support of Eisenhower, Smith, and Barker, Niven and Furber rose to the occasion to fend off the challenges. Meanwhile, Maj. Miller sent Lt. Haynes to Versailles and Paris to finalize arrangements for billeting, transportation, and broadcasting facilities.

At the suggestion of Lt. Col. Norman Baessell of the Eighth Air Force Service Command headquarters at Milton Ernst, with whom he had become socially acquainted, Hayes had visited Paris on leave during October, unbeknownst to Miller and Niven. By then, Baessell was detached to the Far Shore to prepare a new Air Depot. Haynes spent his leave socializing with Baessell. Niven discovered Haynes' unofficial presence in Paris and was not pleased since SHAEF naturally frowned upon unauthorized travel from Britain to France. Apparently undeterred, when Haynes returned on official business in November, he again socialized with Baessell. And there was a flaw in Maj. Miller's expectations. Lt. Haynes ably set up billeting and transportation with U. S. Army officials. But he did not confirm broadcasting preparations. Until this time, Maj. Miller had never involved Lt. Haynes with BBC matters, delegating these to W/O Dudley and S/Sgt. Voutsas, or handling matters himself. Haynes thus returned to Britain with the broadcasting arrangements still pending, which further irritated Niven and increased Miller's already increasing impatience and possible anxiety.

The elements of a "perfect storm" were brewing.



Lt. Col. David Niven



Lt. Donald Haynes, Maj. Glenn Miller, Capt. William Koch at Milton Ernest Hall

The Colonel, Pee Wee and the Norseman

The Eighth Air Force Service Command operated Air Depots in Britain. It was the repair and maintenance division of the air force, which kept B-17, B-24, P-51, P-47 and P-38 bomber and fighter combat aircraft flying. Following the liberation of Paris, VIII AFSC occupied Villacoublay Aerodrome near Versailles, from which they flew personnel and supplies from Britain to the Far Shore and on the continent to a forward Air Depot in liberated Brussels, Belgium. Lt. Col. Baessell, formerly HQ Squadron commandant at Milton Ernest, was directed by Gen. Donald Goodrich, the ailing commander of VIII AFSC, to prepare a new Air Depot at Merville, France. To accomplish his task, Baessell was detached to U. S. Strategic Air Forces, Europe, in Paris. He thus was regularly commuting between Bedford and Paris. VIII AFSC maintained a daily courier service between Milton Ernest and Villacoublay, using their fleet of single-engine Noorduy C-64 "Norseman" utility and liaison airplanes. The C-64, built near Montreal, Quebec, was a sturdy and reliable Canadian "bush" plane, made primarily of lightweight Sitka Spruce wood. Most of its weight was in its big Pratt & Whitney engine that was mounted in front of an aluminum cockpit and cabin. The C-64 could be fitted with wheels, skis or pontoons, for operations on land, ice and in water.

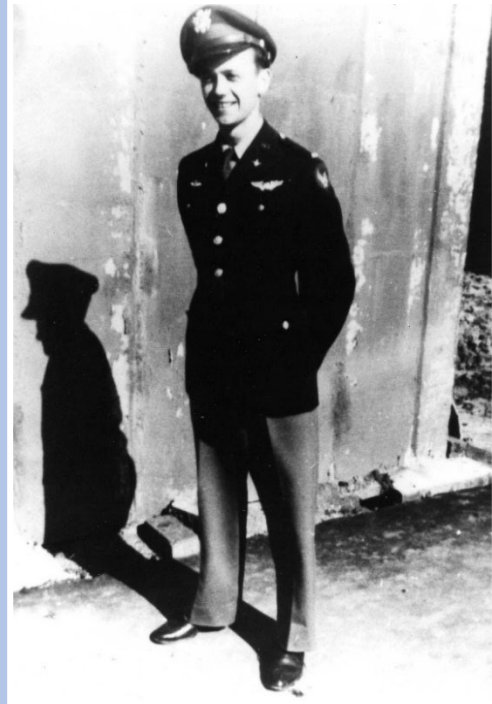
Lt. Col. Norman Francis Baessell of Washington, DC was known as a brash, "can-do" officer who observers considered to be profane, prejudiced and sexist. Because of his status serving as troubleshooter for Gen. Goodrich, Baessell had an aircraft and pilot assigned to him, and, although he was a construction engineer and not a pilot, he could authorize his own flights. The 35th Air Depot Group and Squadron at Strategic Air Depot No. 2, Abbots Ripton, adjacent to the Alconbury Air Base, eighteen miles northeast of Milton Ernest, assigned twenty-two year old F/O John Robert Stuart Morgan to be the forty-four year old Colonel's pilot. Born in Scotland and raised in Detroit, Michigan, Morgan had volunteered and served with the Royal Canadian Air Force as a Flying Sergeant before transferring to the AAF. The polite and amiable Morgan, known as Stuart to his family, was a diminutive man who his fellow pilots fondly nicknamed "Pee Wee." Challenged by instrument flying, Morgan's objective was to win promotion to lieutenant. He was as insecure as Baessell was flamboyant. This was not a good dynamic in the event of a possible confrontation about flying in inclement weather.

Baessell had become acquainted with Miller and Haynes during July at Milton Ernest Hall, where they became regular poker players. As mentioned previously, it was Haynes who became better acquainted, if not close, to Baessell. This set the table for events that no one could anticipate.

The VIII AFSC HQ at Milton Ernest Hall, just north of Bedford, was serviced by the nearby RAF Twinwood Aerodrome, or as the AAF labeled it, Twinwood Field. This was an RAF Training Base, primarily for Beaufighter air crew, and assigned as a satellite field for RAF Cranwell, which was located on the south side of Bedford. VIII AFSC C-64 airplanes transited the aerodrome with people, mail and equipment.



Lt. Col. Norman Baessell



F/O Stuart Morgan



Noorduyn C-64 Norseman

Fateful Decision

On December 6, Glenn recorded a Christmas message for Helen, in which he poignantly expressed his deep love and desire to get home to raise their children in California. He was incredibly anxious to meet their daughter Jonnie. Maj. Miller also expressed his postwar plans to colleagues and the men in his unit. Cecil Madden remembered Glenn showing him the model of his "Tuxedo Junction" ranch that band members Carl Swanson and Steve Steck made for him in Bedford. Although Glenn expressed to Cecil what Madden interpreted as fatalism about never being able to get home to see his family and the ranch, Ted Heath recalled that his impression was that this was an expression of Glenn's fear of the V-1s. However, in an ominous letter to his brother Herb, Glenn described plans to move to France "barring a nosedive into the Channel."

On December 8, SHAEF issued orders confirming the AAF Band (Special) travel arrangements to France for "on or about December 16." Three Air Transport Command or Troop Carrier Command C-47 transports were required to carry the personnel and all their gear. Initially, the musicians would travel. Arrangers, radio staff, and anyone sidelined with an illness would remain and come over in several weeks. This included M/Sgt–Norm Leyden, who was in bed with mild pneumonia.

Lt. Haynes cut orders to fly ahead of the group to prepare the transportation and billeting that he had set up with the U. S. Army. Meanwhile, the BBC reported to Niven that the broadcasting preparations had not been handled. Basil, Dean of ENSA (the British equivalent of the USO), and Glenn had agreed to employ ENSA's Marigny Theatre. Still, Haynes had not followed up to square away the specific days and times the ABAEF would use the facility. Furthermore, the Olympia Theatre and an alternate, the Palais de Glace, were facing a French workers' strike and delays in the U.S. Army Signal Corps preparations for broadcasting. Niven was also steaming that Haynes had continued socializing with Baessell in Paris rather than completing his work. Niven once remarked that Baessell reminded him of an annoying Hollywood "hanger-on." Thus, just as Lt. Haynes was preparing to go ahead, Maj. In it, Miller received a crucial message from an irritated Lt. Col. Niven. Niven ordered Miller ahead instead of Haynes to help complete arrangements. Furthermore, they must "discuss Haynes." The challenging prospect of confronting Niven and having to protect or potentially send his best friend home amplified Miller's already significant level of stress. Simply put, Glenn felt like his neck was on the line to get things ready and rescue Haynes, who Niven wanted to replace.

Therefore, Maj. Miller cut travel orders to fly to Paris aboard the authorized SHAEF transportation, aboard one of the fourteen daily Air Transport Command VIP passenger flights from Bovingdon to Paris Orly Aerodrome. His reservation was for Thursday, December 14. Glenn spoke by telephone with Niven to confirm. At the time, Niven was in Brussels and returning to Paris, where he would meet Glenn to straighten everything out.

Neither Niven nor Miller knew that American and British broadcasting engineers were almost finished and would have technical arrangements completed on time. Their sense of urgency about facilities and transmission was unnecessary.

In future years, Don Hayes would express tremendous remorse that, as he put it, "I ought to have been on that plane on December 15, 1944." Indeed, the circumstances of his casual visit to Paris in late October and official visit in late November set up the perfect storm unfolding. But, for the moment, what was about to happen could not have been anticipated or prevented.

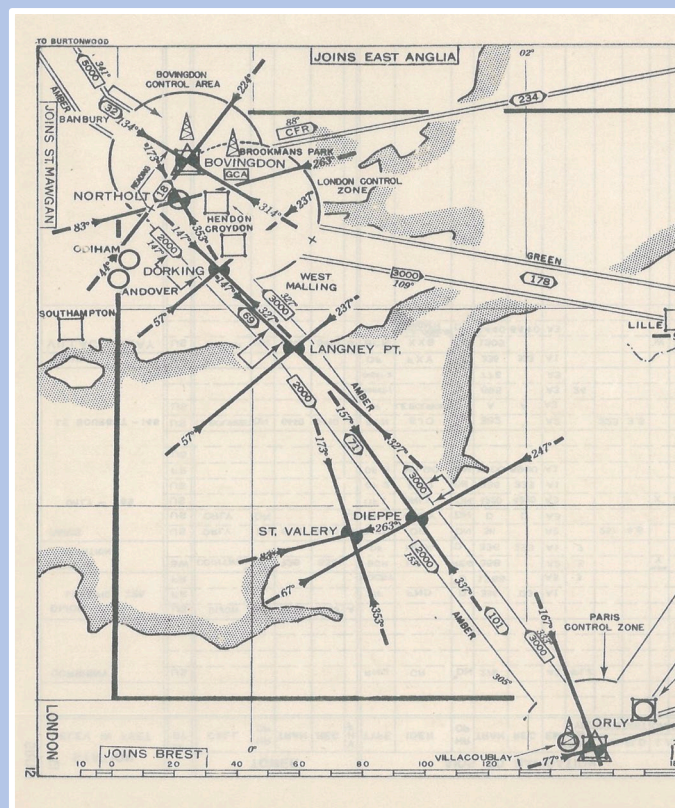
On December 12, the ABAEF completed the pre-recordings. The ABAEF and its sub-units recorded 83 programs covering 28 $\frac{3}{4}$ hours, which was a remarkable achievement. That evening, they broadcast and recorded two ABAEF programs from the Queensberry All-Services Club in London. Since August, the entire orchestra broadcast their weekly program before a live audience at the club in Soho, which the BBC had wired. On the final broadcast before departing for France, Glenn welcomed American signer Morton Downey as his guest. The Marquess of Queensberry hosted a going-away dinner for the orchestra after the performances. The club manager and Miller's friend Jack Harding touchingly presented Glenn with a book of appreciation signed by 50,000 service personnel. Others present included former Miller sideman John Best of the U. S. Navy Dance Band.

The same day at the Abbots Ripton Air Depot, C-64 line chief Sgt. Arthur Nanas, crew chief Sgt. Arnold Bruns and their maintenance team opened up the manifold housing of C-64 #44-70285 to address a parts recall and perform routine maintenance since the airplane was delayed returning to the Far Shore and was unavailable. The work was completed, and "285" was good to go. At Milton Ernest, the new VIII AFSC commander, Col. Joseph Early, met with Lt. Col. Norman Baessell with instructions to complete the Merville Air Depot by January 1, 1945. As a result, Baessell ordered F/O Stuart Morgan to return him to France. The airplane assigned to Morgan was #70285.

Capt. Miller left the Mount Royal Hotel early on Tuesday morning, December 13, and reported to the ATC Traffic Office at 22 Old Queen Street. He boarded the bus to Bovingdon, seeking a head start by standing by for an earlier flight. Unfortunately, operations were canceled due to bad weather in France. And the forecast for the rest of the week was grim. A frustrated Miller returned to the Mount Royal to await his flight the next day. That evening, he had dinner with an old friend from the 1920s, Maj. William Priestly, Paul Dudley, and John Best at Jack Hylton's club. Glenn repeated his movements the morning of December 14, and the same thing happened. This time, he was rebooked for a Sunday, December 17 flight. An exasperated Glenn called Lt. Haynes, who was in Milton Ernest and coincidentally lunching with Lt. Col. Baessell. Don told Norm about Glenn's predicament, and Norm got on the line with Glenn. Explaining that he had his plane and planned to fly over the next day, Norm offered Glenn a ride, which a grateful Miller accepted. This was a fateful decision.



Queensbury All-Services Club, London - December 5, 1944
W/O Paul Dudley, Maj. Glenn Miller, Lt. Donald Haynes



The "Amber Corridor" Designated Route Of Flight - USAAF Chart

December 15, 1944

On Thursday afternoon, Lt. Haynes drove into London to collect Maj. Miller. They returned to Milton Ernest for dinner, a poker game with Lt. Col. Baessell, and regular playing partners W/O Neil Brandywine and Capt. William Koch. Glenn usually won. This evening, he didn't. According to Don's diary, Glenn and Don returned to their rooms in Bedford and stayed up late talking about postwar plans. More probably, they were discussing current challenges. Rising early, Lt. Haynes scrounged some eggs for which he had swapped cigarettes with a farmer. And they prepared to drive to Milton Ernest to meet Lt. Col. Baessell.

It was uncertain that Norm Baessell could deliver his promise to fly Glenn to France. The weather forecast remained problematic not necessarily because of conditions in England but on the continent. A Warm front was approaching from the southwest that would keep the continent under solid overcast with abundant precipitation. Not only were allied forecasters tracking this, but German forecasters were tracking it for a different reason. They were preparing a counterattack in the Ardennes for Saturday morning, December 16, which we have come to remember as the dramatic and critical Battle of the Bulge.

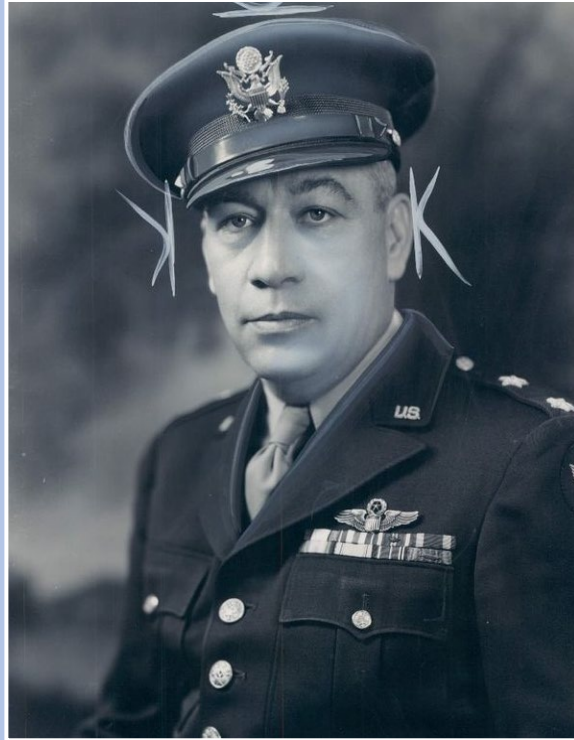
As December 15 dawned, the Eighth Air Force and RAF No. 3 Group were preparing to launch radar-guided bombing attacks over Hanover, Kassel, and Siegen, Germany. Flight crews were briefed at bomber and fighter bases across England, and ground crews prepared the airplanes. The weather over England was marginal but generally acceptable. Localized morning fogs would lift, and the overcast was mainly at or above 2,000ft. Non-essential flying, such as training courses, were curtailed, including the students and instructors at RAF Twinwood. However, the airfield remained open for transient VIII AFSC and other flights.

Before 8:00 a.m., F/O Morgan arrived at the Traffic Office at Alconbury to fill out and submit his required Form 23 flight plan for Villacoublay and ongoing intentions, which would have been Brussels or Merville. This later got mixed up in translation as Bordeaux, where Morgan had zero intention or reason to fly. All transport or non-combat flights to the Paris area had to fly west of London, over Bovingdon, to a navigation point at Maidenhead, then southeast and across the "Amber" corridor between Langney Point (Beachy Head) and St. Valéry/Dieppe. Morgan had flown the route over a dozen times but not in the weather conditions that would be present on December 15. VIII AFSC flights normally operated at 5,000ft, with instrument clearance. This morning, the traffic officer denied Morgan instrument clearance but allowed visual flight, meaning Morgan could operate by staying under the cloud ceiling and maintaining visual contact with the ground (or water). In effect, Alconbury would allow Morgan to fly over England, presumably to RAF Twinwood, and then a stop at Bovingdon to obtain updated weather for the Far Shore. The reality was that Morgan could fly safely over England, but he might encounter poor conditions over France, which would require an instrument landing. Villacoublay did not have an instrument approach, but Orly did.

Filing a visual flight plan, Morgan returned to Abbots Ripton and prepared C-64 44-70285 for departure. Meanwhile, he and an impatient Lt. Col. Baessell exchanged telephone calls, in which Baessell urged Morgan. Regardless of the acceptable weather at Abbots Ripton and Milton Ernest, Morgan would face challenging conditions over the English Channel and, worse, safely landing at Villacoublay. He could climb to 5,000ft for the clear sky; if he encountered disorienting visibility or icing conditions, he would still have to come back down through the overcast to land. Morgan packed coffee and sandwiches. Per standard procedure, the fuel tanks of 44-70285 were filled with a range of 1,200 mi. This made the lightweight C-64 heavy and hard to maneuver at low altitudes. As Morgan went through his checklist, everything appeared in order. MPs searched the airplane for contraband, as some personnel had smuggled cigarettes to France in return for wine. The VIII AFSC flights were a natural temptation for black market profit, although neither Baessell nor Morgan were ever suspected of smuggling.

As Haynes drove Miller to Milton Ernest, the ground fog was present in the Ouse River valley. They had stopped briefly at the enlisted men's quarters, where Glenn put a small package into his B-4 bag that Trigger Alpert could not fit in his gear. Besides his briefcase and B-4 bag, Glenn's gear and trombones were coming over with the unit. At Milton Ernest, Miller and Haynes joined Baessell at the Officer's Mess, where Col. Early, his staff, and others were present. Baessell and Miller's intention to travel together was, therefore, known to everyone, and no one tried to stop them. Nor did anyone at Abbots Ripton prevent Morgan from taxiing to the Alconbury runway at 1:20 p.m. to fly seventeen miles to RAF Twinwood. The pilot had not received a weather update, which indicated that the Paris area airports would be closed by late afternoon.

When Baessell told Miller and Haynes that he wanted to drive to the residence of Gen. Goodrich before heading over to RAF Twinwood, Haynes agreed to give him the lift in the ABAEF Dodge staff car. Hearing this, Col. Early offered Glenn his De Soto staff car and driver. After Baessell and Haynes headed to the Goodrich residence, Sgt. Edward McCulloch drove Miller to RAF Twinwood. Glenn paid a courtesy call to the base commander, WC Herbert Tappin, and then waited at the Watch Office. Soon, Morgan made a straight-in approach and landed. Taxiing into the tarmac, he discreetly kept his engine running. Doing this kept him on a transient flight. Shutting down meant filing a new flight plan. As this was an RAF airfield, the controllers routinely passed American airplanes along without any challenge. C-64 44-70285 was visible and heard by dozens of witnesses at the airport after LACW Anne Carroll cleared Morgan for landing. By 1:45 p.m., Sgt. John Mockbridge directed Morgan to his parking place with the engine idling. Soon, Baessell and Haynes drove up, and Miller came out of the building to join them. With hats and overcoats blowing around in the backwash of the Pratt & Whitney engine, Baessell and Miller went around to the left side door and boarded the airplane. Haynes shut and locked the door. With the passengers secure, Morgan released his brakes, taxied out to runway 23, and C-64 44-70285 was soon aloft. It was 1:55 p.m. The airplane, pilot, and passengers were never seen again.



Maj. Gen. Orvil Anderson

Search and Investigation

Flying from RAF Twinwood to Villacoublay in December 1944 was unlike flying in 2024. Morgan did not have to communicate once he took off or until he called in for landing clearance at Villacoublay. But if he had departed with the usual instrument flight plan, Flying Control at Bovingdon would have known his departure time and intentions. But Morgan's Form 23 was in an Alconbury wastebasket. Twenty-four hours after his departure, a 35th Air Depot Group clerk noticed that 44-70285 had not been reported. Regulations thus required a Missing Aircrew Report to be filed. The officer on duty, Capt. Ralph Cramer only knew that the airplane had departed, and Morgan was the pilot. He, therefore, filled out a report stating the same, with Villacoublay as the destination and, mistakenly, Bordeaux as the final destination. He then set the document aside, expecting the pilot to check in soon, which never happened. Villacoublay did not expect the incoming airplane and was silent. Nor did anyone at SHAEF know that Maj. Miller had boarded the aircraft, let alone ever intended to. Neither Miller nor Haynes had reported Miller's intentions to his chain of command. Glenn technically violated his travel orders, prohibiting "casual" travel or accepting Baessell's invitation. So Niven, knowing the scheduled flights were canceled, naturally expected Glenn to come along later with his men. SHAEF had no line of sight on Maj. Miller's whereabouts. Only VIII AFSC HQ and RAF Twinwood knew what had happened. If there had been a problem with the flight, critical time was passing to search for and save anyone if the airplane was down in the water; survival time before hypothermia set in was only twenty minutes.

On Saturday morning, December 16, Lt. Haynes and the men boarded busses for Bovingdon, where 302nd Transport Wing C-47s were waiting to fly them to Orly. But lousy weather then prevented the flights on Sunday, December 17. Then, as news of the German attack came through, all hell broke loose. Communications and priorities were up in the air as SHAEF and all allied forces scrambled to react. Nevertheless, by Monday, December 18, the weather had cleared. On a bright, sunny, breezy winter day, C-47s arrived at RF Twinwood to pick up the ABAEF. Their gear flew from Bovingdon. After the weekend delays, Haynes had thoughtfully arranged for the change in plan. The ABAEF flew to Orly without incident, except perhaps turbulence in the windy skies. When they arrived at the airport, Maj. Miller, and their ground transport were uncharacteristically not there to meet them.

Contacting SHAEF Lt., Haynes learned that Maj. Miller was not there. Furthermore, no one had seen or even expected him. Alarms quickly went off. Within hours, there was apparent no sign in Paris of Maj. Miller, let alone Lt. Col. Baessell, F/O Morgan, or C-64 44-70285. When Col. Robert Furber informed Gen. Barker, the head of SHAEF G-1 exclaimed, "How the hell did we lose Glenn Miller? A furious Barker immediately called Eighth Air Force headquarters and demanded to speak to Gen. Doolittle. Finding the Tokyo Raider away at an airbase, Barker got through to Gen. Orvil Anderson. Listening to Barker and thoughtfully considering the situation, Glenn's cousin-in-law bluntly told Barker, "Under the circumstances, I am afraid they've had it." This meant that Anderson immediately and correctly surmised that the airplane was down in the English Channel and that, after seventy-two hours, there was zero chance of finding anyone alive. That said, Anderson pledged to launch an immediate and comprehensive search and a thorough investigation.

In Paris, the media attached to SHAEF realized soon enough that the ABAEF was in Paris, and Maj. Miller was missing. SHAEF put an immediate gag order on them. This did not prevent rampant rumor and speculation, leading in coming decades to various unsubstantiated and fantastic tales about what might have happened to Maj. Miller and the others. Meanwhile, Gen. Anderson and the Eighth Air Force had a significant problem. Immediately contacting Col. Early at Milton Ernest, Anderson soon discovered what had occurred leading up to the flight. In turn, VIII AFSC HQ out the heat on Capt. Cramer at Abbots Ripton will amend and file the Missing Aircrew Report, explicitly adding the names of Baessell and Miller to the document. Judge Advocate officers and military police descended upon Milton Ernest, RAF Twinwood, Abbot Ripton, Alconbury, Bedford, and the new ABAEF billet in Paris to ask questions and find answers. They impounded Maj. Miller's gear. Gen. Anderson was leaving no stone unturned in finding out what had happened.

By December 22, it was evident that the airplane had not diverted to another airfield or had gone down over land. A thorough search of the flight path on either side of the English Channel yielded nothing. Nor had anti-aircraft fire hit anything. An errant bomb jettison was reported by other airplanes, but this occurred ninety minutes before Morgan could have been anywhere near the area. It was painfully evident that Major Glenn Miller was gone.

With Maj. Miller missing, T/Sgt. Ray McKinley and S/Sgt. Jerry Gray co-directed the musical duties, while Capt. Don Hayes (promoted) took overall command. Lt. Paul Dudley (promoted) directed broadcasting, interfacing with Lt. Col. David Niven and the AEF. A forthcoming essay will provide more concerning the history of the band during 1945.

On January 20, 1945, the Eighth Air Force convened a formal court of inquiry concerning December 15, 1944. After taking detailed testimony and considering all the known facts, they concluded that C-64 44-70285 disappeared in flight over the English Channel due to a perfect storm of human error, mechanical failure, and weather. Investigators questioned the state of mind of all three individuals aboard the airplane. Detailing what led up to the flight, they noted that Lt. Col. Norman Baessell was primarily responsible for scheduling and clearing the flight on his authority. Moreover, Baessell ordered F/O Stuart Morgan to proceed and that Morgan was within his rights to refuse as a pilot in command. They noted that Maj. Glenn Miller had violated his travel orders by being present. They then confirmed the airplane's movements and the pilot's activities at Abbots Ripton and Alconbury, including how and why 44-70285 departed. It was determined that the aircraft arrived and departed RAF Twinwood and that Baessell and Miller boarded it. With a detailed analysis of the conditions present, they found the airplane in proper working order, except for a defective carburetor heater, a known issue with the C-64 fleet, which steps had been taken to correct. 44-70285 had also been written up for a hydraulic fluid leak that forced a flight to divert in September 1944, on which Baessell was a passenger.

Given the possibility that Baessell distracted him, the board concluded that Morgan had put the airplane in a position to fail over the water. Without updated weather, Morgan did not know the ceiling over the water had deteriorated and the freezing air temperature was conducive to the wing, fuselage, fuel line, and engine icing. The engine would have stalled if the carburetor heater failed or was not correctly managed. At or below 1,500ft., an engine failure would give the pilot only eight seconds to react before a heavy nose-down impact into the water at 155mph. Such an impact would be catastrophic and survivable. It was also possible that Morgan unwittingly flew the airplane into the water. The board further concluded that due to probable pilot disorientation, icing, and engine failure resulting from weather conditions, and without any evidence to the contrary, C-64 44-70285 went down into the English Channel.

As a result of the investigation, or at least following it, Col. Joseph Early was relieved of duty as VIII AFSC commander. The officers commanding the Second Air Depot and 35th Air Depot group were also reassigned. Clearance procedures and responsibility for VIII AFSC flights were changed so that a non-flying officer such as Baessell could not authorize his flights. Navigational procedures were altered to prevent ad-hoc visual flights without proper instrument clearance. There was enough blame to go around. None of it would bring back Capt. Miller. Per AAF regulations, the Inquiry was classified and sealed.



Long Ago And Far Away

Maj. Glenn Miller had performed his duty as he saw fit and paid the ultimate price for his patriotism and devotion. SHAEF and the Army Air Forces sought to honor his service and respect his family. Although his disappearance prevented his promotion, the Bronze Star award went through, and Helen Miller received the medal at a March 1945 ceremony at Glenn Miller's New York business office. Glenn Miller's legacy is alive and well and thriving eighty years since he tragically and prematurely left us. As the lyrics of the 1944 ballad say, it was perhaps "*long ago and far away, I dreamed a dream one day,*" but the music and achievements of Major Glenn Miller live forever.

Dennis M. Spragg from the Glenn Miller Collections is the author of ***Glenn Miller Declassified***, the ultimate resource about Glenn Miller's military service and the details of December 15, 1944. The details contained in this report are sourced from *Glenn Miller Declassified*. For further information about the events, people, and organizations described in the 2024 GMBS, please see *Glenn Miller Declassified* or the detailed day-to-day documentation in ***I Sustain the Wings - Sustineo Alas*** by **Edward F. Polic**.

The 2024 GMBS presentation and essay from the Glenn Miller Collections is dedicated to the memory of Edward F. Polic, 1935-2024.