

TONY MARTIN



Tony Martin (Alvin Morris) (1913-2012)

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Introduction

Tony Martin (Alvin Morris) (1913-2012) was one of the most popular male vocalists of the 20th Century. During the 1930s, Tony Martin became one of the top singers of his generation, excelling in Hollywood, radio, stage, and nightclub performances. His career paused during the Second World War for military service and resumed with further success following the war.

From 1941 to 1945 in military service, Tony Martin experienced, in sequence: humiliation, recovery, further disappointment, and finally, vindication. Along the way, he gained perspective, humility, and confidence. It was a remarkable journey. In 1943, he was a member of the Army Air Forces Training Command Orchestra, directed by Captain Glenn Miller. He is an essential part of Glenn Miller's history, and therefore the author is privileged to share the Tony Martin story.



Tony Martin and Alice Faye meet Glenn Miller
Café Rouge, Hotel Pennsylvania, New York,
January 1940

"The war and all my service-connected problems did me one good turn. I went into the Navy a real cocky kid. My cockiness was only natural. I was young, successful, making \$12,000 a week, and I figured the world was my oyster. They beat that out of me. When I came out, I was pretty humble. After the war, I was an entirely different person. I knew what suffering, mental and physical, was like. I had been chopped down to size" (Tony Martin, 1976)

Hollywood, 1941

During the fall of 1941, enjoying a contract at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) studios and a network radio commercial program, Tony Martin appeared to have recovered from divorce. His four-year marriage to 20th Century-Fox star Alice Faye had ended. During his marriage, Martin had admitted to friends that he had grown weary of being thought of as "Mr. Alice Faye." He had finished work at MGM on the recently released and critically acclaimed "Ziegfeld Girl." He was dating Lana Turner but was uncertain whether he would be added to her string of conquests or if it would be a permanent relationship. In addition to his work in films and radio, Tony Martin was successful as a solo artist on records backed by studio orchestras. Variety reported on September 19, 1941, that Tony Martin would have the singing lead opposite Eleanor Powell in Metro's 'I'll Take Manila'. He will warble three production numbers." Also scheduled to perform with the film were Tommy Dorsey and his Orchestra. Following the December 7, 1941, attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, the Philippines, and elsewhere, the title of the film was changed to "Ship Ahoy" and the plot moved to Puerto Rico.

Tony Martin would not make it to that film. "Variety" again reported November 12 that the Beverly Hills draft board had denied an appeal by Martin of his 1A draft classification. It appeared that Tony Martin would be trading in his film and broadcasting microphones for an Army rifle. While appealing his 1A draft classification, Martin conferred with his agent, Nat C. Goldstone (1903-1968), about how to try and obtain a commission as an officer, possibly in the United States Navy. Goldstone made inquiries in Washington. He discovered that the officer in charge of officer procurement and applications for the 12th Naval District in San Francisco, California, was Lt. Cdr. Maurice Nathaniel Aroff (1906-1974). In civilian life, Aroff was a successful and wealthy businessman in Southern California with ties to the entertainment industry. Martin had met Aroff socially in 1935, and Goldstone was acquainted with Aroff, a Naval Reserve officer who had been recalled to duty in 1941. During October 1941, Goldstone arranged for Martin to go to San Francisco and meet with Aroff. At Aroff's direction, Martin submitted an application for a commission as an Ensign in the Naval Reserve. Martin applied for a commission as a publicist in the Naval Aviation Cadet Selection Board. Papers forwarded by Aroff to the Bureau of Navigation in Washington described him as "a radio and movie person of national reputation whose personal appearances would have a definite influence on the type of persons sought by the Navy as aviation cadets." In his application for the Navy, Martin listed his seagoing experience as a "round trip cruise to Hawaii."

ZIEGFELD GIRL

GREATEST
MUSICAL
ENTERTAINMENT
OF ALL TIME!



STARRING
James STEWART *Judy* **GARLAND** *Hedy* **LAMARR** *Lana* **TURNER**
with **TONY MARTIN** **JACKIE COOPER** **IAN HUNTER**
CHARLES WINNINGER **EDWARD EVERETT** **HORTON**
PHILIP DORN
Directed by **ROBERT Z. LEONARD** Produced by **PANDRO S. BERNMAN**
SCREEN PLAY BY MARJORIE RABBITT AND NORMA CRAS



Tony Martin - "Ziegfeld Girl"

Meanwhile, Martin was booked for late December 1941 and early January 1942 nightclub and theatre engagements in Chicago, Philadelphia, and elsewhere before beginning work on "I'll Take Manila."

Tony Martin had the misfortune of being registered for the draft in Beverly Hills, California. That local draft board had a reputation for "having it in for Hollywood types." Martin felt confident that he would be drafted, considering the slightest hint of favoritism or special treatment for anyone from the film industry or radio would bring howls of public indignation. It was known that many Hollywood celebrities, if not rank-and-file entertainment industry employees, had been "fast-tracked" by the local draft board. Martin himself was classified 1A, although he had physical issues, such as poor eyesight, that with another person might have resulted in a different classification. His peers in Hollywood were treated similarly. No one could accuse the Beverly Hills Selective Service office of letting "Hollywood types" off easily. However, Martin was eager to become part of the action, so he did not mind. He also realized that there was another side to the story of the Beverly Hills draft board. Many entertainment industry people would go to their physicians before draft physicals to get pills that would raise their blood pressure and use other ruses to obtain false deferments.

He gave the draft board Goldstone's office address when he left Los Angeles for Chicago in December 1941. Martin and Goldstone understood, perhaps incorrectly, that if called, Martin could take an induction physical on the road and the results could be sent back to his local draft board.

Martin was booked at the "Chez Paree" nightclub in Chicago. After he arrived in Chicago, Martin was startled to receive a telephone call from the local FBI office stating that an arrest warrant had been issued by the United States Attorney for Southern California on the charge of draft evasion. Martin had been called for physical induction after all, and the warrant was issued when he failed to show. Martin immediately hired a Chicago attorney to represent him. They quickly realized that his notice had been sent to Goldstone's office, and no one had thought to open it. If they had, Goldstone would have replied as to Martin's whereabouts and intention to report in Chicago. However, this was not until Martin was hauled into the FBI office in Chicago for questioning. The press discovered the mix-up almost immediately. Martin and his Chicago attorney moved quickly to clear it up, and Martin reported his induction physical in Chicago on December 30, 1941. The U. S. attorney, William Fleet Palmer, issued an unusual statement of regret on December 31, 1941, for the draft evasion charges being "mistakenly issued" and for having caused Martin "temporary discomfort." Although Martin was thus cleared, the negative publicity stuck in the public mind.

The experience made Martin determined to obtain his Navy commission. However, Lt. Cdr. Aroff got back to him with bad news. The Navy had rejected Martin's application because of a lack of college credits. Tony Martin had attended St. Mary's College, Morega, Calif., but had not graduated. However, Aroff had been able to secure Martin a rating of Chief Specialist, equivalent to Chief Petty Officer, but not a commission as an officer. The Navy determined that Martin could be of value in recruiting work.

Aroff advised Goldstone on December 31, 1941, that Martin could enter the Navy immediately as a Chief Specialist and then reapply for a commission once he was in the service.

Morton Downey took over Martin's spot at the Chez Paree in Chicago in December 31. Martin canceled his scheduled New Year's Eve appearance at the Earle Theatre in Philadelphia. A last-minute substitution brought in Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz. Martin reported to the Twelfth Naval District, San Francisco, Calif., for duty January 2, 1942.

United States Naval Reserve, 1942

Tony Martin settled into his Navy duties as Chief Specialist, reporting to Lt. Cdr. Aroff. His responsibilities included recruiting assignments and serving as a liaison with the motion picture industry. By April 1942, the press reported that several other high-profile film industry men of draft age had joined the Navy at San Francisco, including Irving Cummings, Jr., formerly a scriptwriter at 20th Century Fox, who received a commission as an Ensign stationed at Treasure Island.

Maurice Aroff kept a suite at the Clift Hotel in San Francisco while serving in the Navy. He threw big parties with many beautiful women present, whom he would introduce to his friends. Aroff appears to have become deeply resented by other reserve officers stationed in San Francisco, and innuendo was inevitable. He also soon became the focus of legitimate concerns by Naval Intelligence about his financial means, extracurricular activities, and motives. Aroff was in a sensitive position, being responsible for officer commission applications. He received such applications from not just entertainment industry professionals but also from the sons of business executives, entrepreneurs, and numerous high-level career military officers. Aroff did not always necessarily approve commissions or appointments, including some from non-Hollywood types who he thought were unqualified. So Aroff was rubbing some people the wrong way. Another factor was that Aroff was Jewish. At the time, the Navy had an unwritten but well-understood de facto quota system for officers of the Jewish faith. In May 1942, Aroff turned down a commission for the son of a prominent Washington official. At that point, his investigation accelerated. Martin was caught up in the net as Aroff's subordinate and frequent social companion. Martin was warned by others that there was trouble coming and distant himself from Aroff.



Lt. Cdr. Maurice Aroff swears in Tony Martin, San Francisco, January 1942
(Collection of the Author)

When Tony Martin joined the Navy, he owned three automobiles, one of which was a Studebaker that he did not use; it had been given to him as a prize for a Studebaker-sponsored radio program. At some point, Martin either gave or sold the automobile to Aroff. As time passed, it became clear Aroff was being investigated. Martin and others sympathetic to Aroff advised him to lower his profile and moderate his lifestyle. Unfortunately, Aroff had lived a high-profile lifestyle that led to jealousy and suspicion; he was brutally honest about appointments, did not automatically approve commissions for the sons of high-level Navy and civilian figures, and he happened to be Jewish. Tony Martin had made the error of being seen too often socially with Aroff, despite Martin not being an officer. Thus, a predictable drama with consequences was about to unfold.

While away on a recruiting trip, Martin read in the Los Angeles and San Francisco newspapers that Aroff had been relieved of duty pending an investigation and that he, Martin, was implicated. The Navy formally accused Aroff of accepting a bribe of an automobile (the Studebaker) to secure a commission for Tony Martin in the U.S. Naval Reserve. Aroff was to be court-martialed, and Martin was held incommunicado as a material witness. The potential problems with the charge were that Martin had never received a commission, and the automobile was reportedly sold for a price at a later date. But the damage had been done to Tony Martin's reputation. He had gone into the Navy upon Aroff's recommendation to Washington, and now Aroff was facing charges.

Martin recalled that in 1976, Naval Intelligence interrogated him. Martin remembered that an effort was made to turn him into a witness against Aroff and to have him admit to what was not valid. He was also asked to expose Aroff's sexual activities or if Aroff had procured women for favors. Upon the advice of Naval officers, Martin had not put down any religion when he applied for officer's training school after coming into the Navy as a Chief Specialist. The Naval Intelligence officers were unaware that Martin was Jewish. They may have thought they could turn Martin against Aroff, "the Jew," because they mistook him for a Roman Catholic of Italian heritage. Martin did not cooperate but was ultimately worn down. He signed a statement that he claimed later to have never read. That statement remained sealed in Navy records.

The Navy brought seven counts against Aroff of allegedly accepting bribes to facilitate appointments in the Navy. One of the cases involved Ensign Cummings, and another involved Chief Specialist Martin. Starting July 28, 1942, the press reported the progress and testimony of the court-martial proceedings. During the proceedings, Martin was assigned to Treasure Island and ordered him to be silent. The national media covered the trial. One of the even counts against Aroff was the acceptance of Martin's Studebaker as consideration for a commission. The defense sought to prove that Aroff had accepted the Studebaker from Martin as a temporary vehicle while Aroff sought to buy a Cadillac. The prosecution accused Aroff of receiving the Studebaker from Martin on January 3, 1942, which was the day after Martin was sworn into the Navy. Lt. Cdr. Ray Robinson, defense attorney, said Martin and Aroff were old friends. When Aroff could not find a Cadillac in San Francisco after Martin had already joined the Navy, Martin offered Aroff the use of his Studebaker. "Aroff could not accept this gesture, and we have this on record," Robinson said. The defense attorney went on to say that Aroff arranged to pay Martin on a time basis, then turned around and sold the Studebaker for cash, using the proceeds to buy a Cadillac he had finally located. Robinson added that Aroff sent Martin a war bond with a \$375 war bond cash value as part payment. Lt. Irving Klein, chief prosecutor, announced that Martin would be called a prosecution witness. Lt. Klein reviewed Martin's records starting with the application for a commission. Klein said there was no attempt by the prosecution to prove the records were out of order but that he merely wished to place them "on the record." A defense motion to strike the records was denied.

The records show that Hollywood figures, including Louis B. Mayer and Darryl F. Zanuck, were involved. Zanuck, studio executives, and Jerome Kern, composer, were listed by Martin as character references in his application. By July 30, 1942, Ens. Cummings had testified for three days, and Martin was next to testify. Although Chief Prosecutor Klein was quoted in the press as saying he considered Martin's testimony to be less involved and might only take one day, it actually took two days. Martin took the stand on August 3, 1942. He denied having given the Studebaker to Aroff as a gift. According to the Associated Press wire story:

"Handsome Tony Martin, screen and radio singer, told a gold-braided naval court today the involved story of his enlistment in the Navy and how Lt. Cdr. Maurice N. Aroff helped him. Aroff is accused of asking and accepting a \$950 automobile from Martin in exchange for facilitating his enrollment as a chief specialist. The 28-year-old singer said he was referred to Aroff last fall when Martin had been classified for 1A in the draft. He stated that he had known the officer for over five years. 'I saw him many times in Hollywood and vicinity,' Martin said, 'it is a small community, and one meets most anyone there.' 'During the process of getting into the Navy,' Martin said, 'Aroff's kindness and being from Hollywood was very touching to me.' Martin, wearing the insignia of a chief boatswain's mate on his sleeve, continually referred to the former assistant naval procurement officer as 'Maury' until the court advised him to speak of the officer as 'Lieutenant Commander Aroff'."

Following Martin, other witnesses were involved in the various charges against Aroff. Several officers, including Lt. (jg) Richard C. Bergen and Lt. B. E. Burchfiel, testified that Aroff had told them about accepting favors, including the automobile, from Martin. Their testimony was such that, upon the advice of defense counsel, Martin retook the stand on August 5, 1942. He altered his previous testimony and now remembered a conversation he had on January 3, 1942, with Aroff regarding the automobile. Martin testified that this was not a gift and Aroff intended to pay for it. Defense counsel Lt. Robinson also said in court that Aroff had an understanding with agent Goldstone and Martin for the payment.

Aroff took the stand in his defense on August 6, 1942. He denied that he gave preferential treatment to Tony Martin in recommending Martin for an appointment to the Naval Reserve and confirmed that he had made payment arrangements with Martin and Goldstone (who was then called to the stand himself by the prosecution). Some observers thought Aroff was being railroaded. The Navy went so far as to call Tony Martin's mother to testify. She did so defiantly and in staunch support of her son. At one point, the judges said to the defense and the prosecution that they saw no evidence of serious wrongdoing, perhaps only slight misconduct, and asked if both sides would agree to a dismissal with a simple reprimand. The defense was agreeable. The prosecution refused. Ironically, Chief Prosecutor Klein was himself a Jew. The court-martial continued.

The press had a field day with what they had termed “The Tony Martin Case.” Many anti-Roosevelt Administration leaders in Congress believed that too many Hollywood celebrities were entering the armed services “the easy way.” This created a ripe environment for emotional statements even on the floor of the House of Representatives and in the Senate. On the other hand, celebrities who volunteered for more hazardous military duties were applauded.

The publicity only worsened for Martin when the press reported in September 1942 that the Federal Government was pursuing him for additional income taxes on his 1941 earnings.

The decision of the court-martial was made on November 12, 1942. The inconclusive proceeding had finally ended in a deal when Aroff agreed to resign his commission with honor. Lt. Marvin McCarthy, naval public affairs officer, announced the decision at a Treasure Island press briefing. However, the Navy declined to provide any additional information about the dismissal action or to disclose the court-martial's disposition of the seven specific charges.

Tony Martin was called into headquarters on December 1, 1942, told he was “undesirable and unfit” and dismissed from the Navy with orders to report to his local draft board in Beverly Hills. Navy officials stressed that the dismissal “does not carry any degradation and should not be construed as a dishonorable discharge.” Regardless, the press eagerly announced Martin’s dismissal. He could not bear to face his friends in Hollywood. A humiliated Martin traveled home inconspicuously wearing civilian clothes and dark sunglasses on a bus from Oakland to Los Angeles.

Army Air Forces Training Command, 1943-1944

Tony Martin was inducted into the Army on December 17, 1942, and reported for duty at Fort MacArthur, California, on December 26, 1942. He was hazed at Fort MacArthur due to the publicity surrounding his recent Navy experience. However, some Army officers and noncoms were supportive and came to his rescue. Pvt. Martin was assigned to the United States Army Air Forces (USAAF). He was sent to Sheppard Field, Wichita Falls, Texas, for basic training, where he arrived January 7, 1943. Because he had been acquainted with close-order drill in the Navy, he was made a drill instructor. He survived. After his Navy experience, Pvt. Martin just wanted to do his job and keep out of trouble. He was transferred to Chanute Field, Illinois, where he was assigned to sing with the base band. Someone in the Army Air Forces recognized him. In April 1943, he was summoned to base headquarters and told that Capt. Glenn Miller had requested him for the newly forming AAFTC Orchestra at Atlantic City, New Jersey, which was to be stationed at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut.

Martin then realized who “that someone” was. He later recalled that the news was astonishing given his recent experiences. He felt as though he “had stumbled into heaven by a side door.” For Miller, the decision was straightforward. Tony Martin was the most famous singer in the radio, film, and records industry. Miller wanted him, had the authority to get him (and any singer or musician in the AAF), and he cut the orders.

Arriving at the Army Air Forces Technical Training Center at Yale University and joining the Miller unit, Martin eagerly jumped into his duties onstage and off. The orchestra would begin testing programs of the radio series “I Sustain the Wings” over a CBS New England regional network, anchored by WEEI in Boston, in June 1943. By July 1943, officials with the Army Air Forces Training Command (AAFTC) were satisfied with the trial run. They approved the nationwide debut of the program over the entire CBS network in July 1943. Capt. Miller featured Tony Martin as the orchestra’s premiere male vocalist. In addition to a full complement of concert and jazz musicians, the unit included singers, announcers, actors, producers, and writers (please refer to “A Portrait of Glenn Miller” for additional background information). Tony Martin is seen singing and Glenn Miller conducting in this June 1943 photo:

After working with Capt. Miller and the AAFTC Orchestra for five months, and by now a Corporal, Martin was called into Miller’s office. Miller informed him that he had major plans for the AAFTC Orchestra, possibly including an overseas assignment, and that Martin was a key part of those plans. Miller felt that Martin should properly be an officer to fill the role Miller intended for him. Therefore, Miller asked Martin if he could recommend him for Officer Candidate School. Martin reminded Miller of his recent history and later recalled that Miller said to him, “I know all about that. Go ahead to O.C.S. I want you.” Martin went before an officer’s selection board, passed the exam and interviews. He was informed that the AAF was fully aware of his Navy history and that he was being recommended for OCS regardless. He left the AAFTC for Miami Beach, Florida, on September 13, 1943. It appeared that the Army Air Forces were giving Tony Martin the opportunity that the Navy had denied him. He would join thousands of men who trained for duty as officers at Miami Beach, studying, exercising, and marching to wartime music like “The Army Air Corps.”

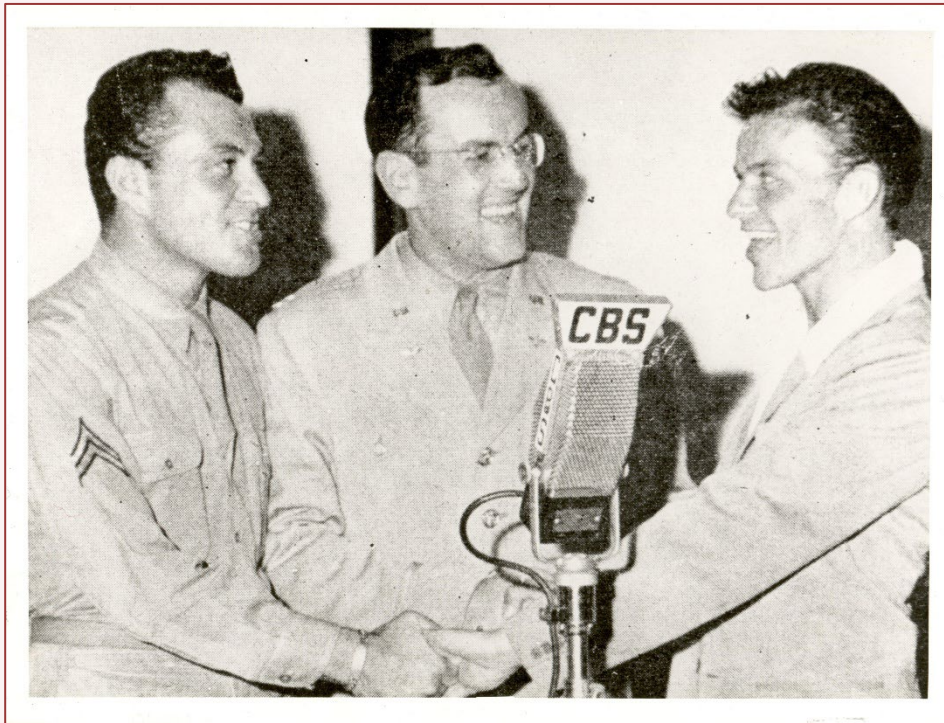
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Performing and signing autographs with Capt. Glenn Miller at the Yale Bowl.





Cpl. Martin at the Microphone
CBS (WEEI) Broadcast from Woolsey Hall
Yale University, June 1943



Frank Sinatra visits Cpl. Martin and Capt. Miller with Publicity Agent George Evans
 "I Sustain the Wings" – CBS New York
 Evans was also Miller's Publicity Agent

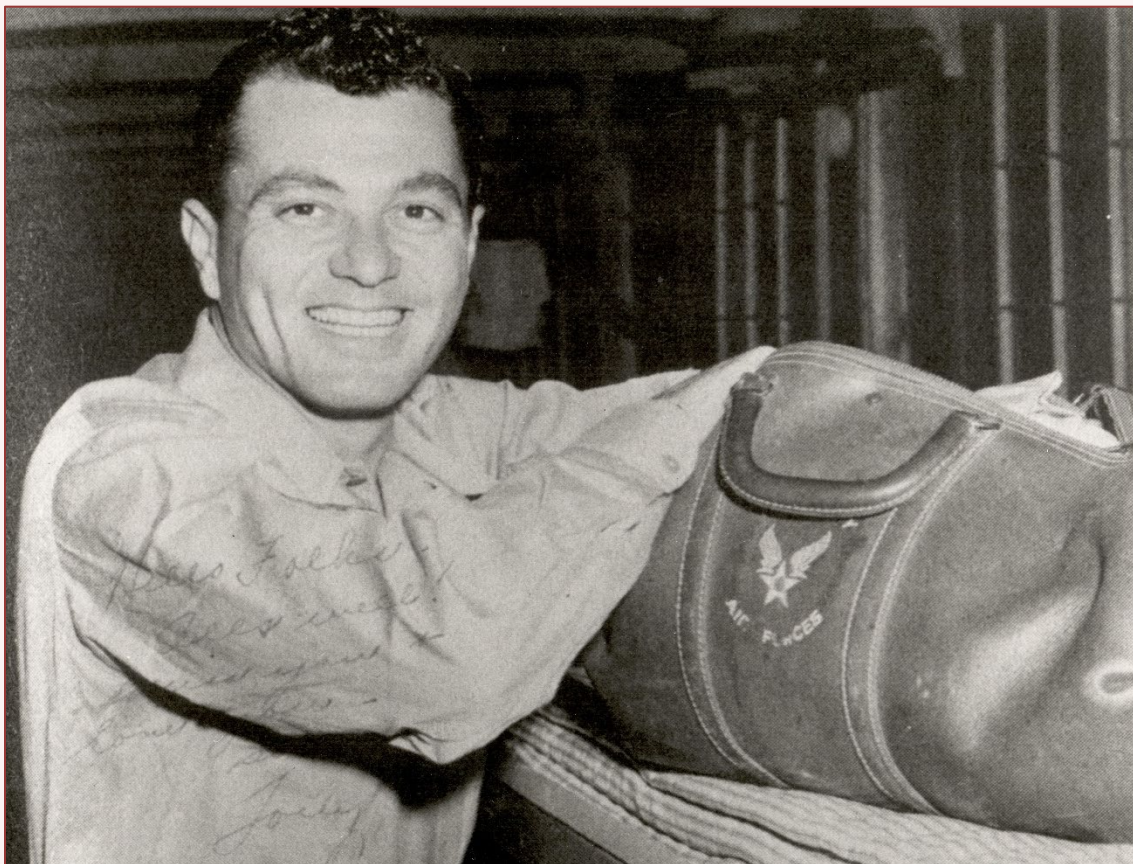


AAFTC Officer Candidate Cadets, Collins Avenue, Miami Beach, Florida

O. C. S. was a sixteen-week course. Cadet Martin was assigned to class 44-A. He was looking forward to working hard, making the grade, earning his commission and returning to the Miller musical unit. Martin would finish in the top 140 of his class of 764 officer candidates. When graduation day came, he graduated with his class. The assignments for the graduates were posted. Martin was assigned to the 201st AAF Base Unit (Radio Production). He knew exactly what that meant and was thrilled.

The next day, an embarrassed officer abruptly informed Martin that his orders had been changed. He was being shipped out without receiving his gold bars as a Lieutenant. He and everyone else intuitively knew what had happened. The Navy had apparently insisted that it would be an insult if the AAF commissioned a man the Navy had kicked out as undesirable and unfit. Pressure had evidently been brought at the highest levels, presumably all the way from Navy chief Admiral Ernest J. King to AAF chief General H. H. Arnold. There seemed to be no other possible explanation. Martin had done everything right to redeem himself but here he was again, viciously and inexplicably penalized for simply being Tony Martin, persona non-gratia with the United States Navy. Several hundred of his fellow officer candidates signed a petition demanding that Martin receive his commission.

Someone dropped the story on Walter Winchell, who published it in his column and mentioned it on his radio program. Suddenly the AAF had a public relations problem. There was nothing the chain of command could do, including Capt. Glenn Miller. The Navy again reached out to hurt Martin. After all of his hard work, the rejection following his successful completion of officer-training almost completely broke him. Martin was sent to Seymour Johnson Field, North Carolina. The commanding officer of the base was sympathetic to Martin as were many AAF officers. They took him under their wing and bucked him up. They knew Martin had now received two raw deals. Martin was made a S/Sgt. and later became a T/Sgt. He went on to radar school at Boca Raton, Florida and then found himself on a ship headed to India.



Sgt. Tony Martin, Air Transport Command, 1944

Air Transport Command, India-China Division, 1944-1945

Tony Martin found himself assigned to the headquarters of the Air Transport Command India-China Division (ICD) located north of Calcutta. From here, inbound transport flights originating at the Miami, Florida and Morrison Field (West Palm Beach), Florida Army Air Bases arrived on C-54 transports with equipment, fuel, supplies and people for the China-Burma-India theatre of operations (CBI). The aircraft also carried Armed Forces Radio Service transcription discs and Army V-Discs that were of high morale priority. Several AFRS field radio stations were operated from this location. From there, C-46 Commando and C-47 aircraft along with C-54 aircraft flew the famed, dangerous and vital "Hump" air route from India to China over Burma and the Himalayas. In addition to the ATC, the AAF had major troop carrier, air commando, fighter and bomber operations based in eastern India to support combat operations in Burma and China.

Martin realized that he was at the end of the earth figuratively and literally. He would soon rub shoulders with Maj. Melvyn Douglas, another Hollywood refugee and Lt. Larry Clinton, the former bandleader and realize that there were very few if any entertainment types in the theatre. However, he was assigned as a radar-man to the AAF Communications Service (air traffic control) and settled in to focus on his duties.

Fate would again intervene, but this time Tony Martin would find himself of great service in his second positive military experience. It became apparent to the administration of the ATC ICD that the singer Tony Martin was assigned to them in a low-level technical job. By order of General William Tunner, Martin was transferred to Tunner's headquarters unit. Tunner was a no-nonsense leader who had turned around the "Hump" operation into a well-oiled transportation machine. He would later rescue and lead the famous Berlin Airlift operations of 1948. When Martin arrived, Tunner and his officers were dealing with the very low morale that was understandable among thousands of young men (and women) stationed in such a distant, unfamiliar, uncomfortable and dangerous part of the world. The CBI was the lowest ranking theatre in terms of global priority and the ICD was the most distant stepchild of the ATC. In terms of morale, the CBI got literally nothing. No USO troupes and only a few pickup bands or other forms of entertainment. Former bandleader Lt. Clinton was a flight instructor but led an informal band at his base. It was claimed that people were exiled to the CBI and Martin perhaps felt that way himself.



Alr Transport Command Curtiss C-46A (S/N 42-96569)
"The Hump" over the Himalayas between India and China
(United States Air Force)

Tunner wanted to pick up the morale of the ICD. Martin was assigned the job that would typically be given to an officer, to find and coordinate entertainment activities for all the CBI ICD bases in India and China. Martin was directed to utilize his influence to bring entertainment to the theatre and the ICD; then, to coordinate and schedule the movement of shows to bases; to help form base bands; to assist AFRS radio outlets with programming; and, on top of that, to participate in the shows himself. It was a truly remarkable, informal, sweeping portfolio that was handed to Martin. Perhaps it was a lose-lose proposition that no one thought Martin could accomplish.



AAF Air Transport Command C-54 aircraft, maintenance ramp, 1346th AAF Base Unit
Tejgaon, India (now Bangladesh), June 1945
(United States Air Force)

What Martin was able to do, with the complete support of his chain of command, was to circumvent the lack of USO shows by identifying talent within the ICD and CBI as a whole who could be brought together. Martin scrounged around and came up with a few dozen former vaudevillians, film people, concert musicians, prominent band veterans, and others. Some of the WAACs assigned to the CBI were also drafted into Martin's ad-hoc entertainment group. He organized and led what ultimately became sixteen different entertainment troupes from within the CBI to travel to all the ICD and other CBI bases, as well as to perform for service personnel stationed in Calcutta, Delhi, and Bombay. The troupes traveled to British and Commonwealth as well as American bases. CBI Commander-in-Chief Lord Louis Mountbatten – a fan - commended Martin for his work.

Tony Martin came to realize that his humiliating and horrible experiences with the Navy, and the lessons learned from them, had brought him to this point in life and had prepared him to do an essential job with determination, grace, and humility. Martin did not have time to perform himself in too many instances because he was wholly involved in his assignment of running CBI entertainment, or as he would recall, "I was the CBI booking agent." It was not an easy job. Housing, such as it was, food, transportation, equipment, and many other essentials had to be obtained, borrowed, or improvised daily.

One USO group that did visit included CBS radio maestro Andre Kostelanetz and his wife, Lily Pons. In this instance, Martin accompanied the group and performed at numerous concerts with Kostelanetz and Pons.



Gen. William Tunner awards T/Sgt. Tony Martin with the Bronze Star, 1945
(Collection of the Author)

The unit histories of the ICD airbases and the weekly ICD newsletter located in the United States Air Force records are full of references to T/Sgt. Tony Martin, his entertainment troupes, the AFRS outpost stations, and the base bands that were formed. By August 1945 and the surrender of Japan, Gen. Tunner would cite Martin for a job well done. Tony Martin was awarded the Bronze Star for his service. He had come a very long way from the Aroff court-martial.

Afterward

Although it would take him some months to win back his Hollywood friends and the general public upon his return home, Tony Martin was comfortable with himself and had the satisfaction of overcoming his own self-doubt and the humiliation he had encountered during his military service. There is no doubt that the high points were his service with the ATC ICD and the AAFTC Orchestra. It was unfair and unfortunate that the AAF did not commission Martin as an officer, despite his having certainly earned his gold bars. However, if he had been commissioned, Martin would have rejoined Glenn Miller rather than fill a significant role in the CBI. Perhaps there was a larger destiny, purpose, and duty that Tony Martin was supposed to accomplish.

Tony Martin went on to resume a successful career following the war. Most importantly, he discovered and enjoyed a storybook sixty-year marriage with his beloved soul mate, Cyd Charisse (Tula Ellice Finklea) (1922-2008).

The United States Navy sealed the records of the Aroff court-martial, and Tony Martin passed away in 2012 without ever knowing what was concluded or why he was dismissed as “undesirable and unfit” for the Naval service. Friends of Tony Martin believe that it would have been considerate and fair if the Navy had advised him in his later years why he was dismissed, and that it would be wholly appropriate for the Navy to consider exonerating him posthumously now.

For additional information:

Glenn Miller Declassified by Dennis M. Spragg
Potomac Books, University of Nebraska Press

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China-Burma-India Theatre Shoulder Patch



Air Transport Command Shoulder Patch



Tony Martin and Cyd Charisse

TONY MARTIN

Song Folio

By Warner



Including

BEAUTIFUL BROWN EYES
COME BACK TO SORRENTO
'CROSS THE WIDE MISSOURI
IRENE
LOVE SOMEBODY
OH, PROMISE ME
OLD SOLDIERS NEVER DIE
ON TOP OF OLD SMOKEY
ROSE, ROSE, I LOVE YOU
SIDEWALKS OF NEW YORK
WANDERIN'

WHEN YOU AND I WERE
YOUNG, MAGGIE

And 38 others

PRICE

75¢

IN U.S.A.



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