

Glenn Miller: Missing, Presumed Murdered ?

By
Martin Bowman

Editor's note: The disappearance of Glenn Miller continues to be a mystery. A Glenn Miller story appeared in the summer-fall 1990 issue of the Torretta Flyer (No 19) page 26. In that version it was reported that a RAF Lancaster salvaged a bomb load into the English Channel destroying a small plane flying below, presumably the one carrying Glenn Miller. Now Martin Bowman has come up with a new theory suggesting that Miller might have been involved in espionage activities. The contents of what follows is neither confirmed nor denied, but reprinted without editing from the original. Read on.



Lawrence via Martin Bowman

Last known photograph of Glenn Miller taken on the night of December 13, 1944

When the European war was over in June 1945 the last of the Carpetbaggers (a Special AAF Unit) had departed the shores of England. Much post-war rebuilding work was needed: rationing continued and Britain looked to the fortitude and resolve of its people. In Bedfordshire, life went on much as it always had, although there remained a few outstanding problems that the wartime occupation had produced, particularly at Milton Ernest Hall.

At the war's end an American unit completely 'cleansed' the hall and the grounds of any vestiges of military occupation. They were so thorough that the task took a month. The Bailey bridge was dismantled and huts were removed. Even the conduits to the radio aerials were dug up and taken away. Local Bedfordshire journalist Charles Davies recalls: "The place suffered a great deal of damage and after the war there was a long legal wrangle as to who was responsible for the damage caused. It ended with the American authorities having to make good the damage when the owner, Captain Starey, and his wife went back there to live."

To help guide Britain and America through the dark days of the Cold War, rationing and shortages, the old wartime hits continued to be played. Among them were the tunes made popular by Glenn Miller and his orchestra. Although attempts were made, unsuccessfully as it turned out, to prolong the life of his great band, the Glenn Miller magic lived on. No-one had time to question the events leading to his death. It was assumed Miller was just another wartime casualty and his Norseman was just another aircraft that had succumbed to the elements. Officially, the aircraft had gone down in the Channel. It was the fortunes of war.

However, many people, like Miller enthusiast Dennis Cottam, believe that perhaps the true reason for his disappearance has been covered up. In 1947, while on leave from the Army, Cottam was invited by some friends to meet in London for a drink at 'Shepherds' in Shepherds' Market. He recalls: "We discussed several things and the subject got around to Glenn Miller. They said what do you think happened? I said, "If it takes me all my life I will find out."

"I was aware that there was a tall gentleman, nicely dressed in a dark suit, leaning over backwards listening to us talking. He suddenly turned around and said, "Excuse me, I did notice what you said about Glenn Miller. I am glad you appreciate his music and by all means listen to it but don't probe into it if you take my advice." He was an American and I came to the conclusion he was from the American Embassy, which is just around the corner."

Later, when Dennis Cottam was staying with his sister another odd thing happened. "A great friend of my sister worked in the library at the BBC. I asked if there were any Miller recordings. She looked, and found all his wartime broadcasts. About six months later I returned and to my utter amazement she said that somebody had taken them and destroyed them all."

"I later met a producer who worked for both the BBC and ITV and told him about Miller and the mystery. He was usually a man who got to the bottom of things. A few weeks later he ignored me and told me he had been warned to leave the material alone. He said, "In fact you have put my whole career in jeopardy over this. I've been sent for by high up." He refused to say more. Something must have frightened him very much."

In August 1982 Ray Shields, a modern day bandleader who specialized in playing in the Miller style, publicly made astonishing claims of an international cover-up surrounding the death of Glenn Miller and a brain-washing technique which he said the British government were involved in both during and after the war. Known as subliminal or 'message under the music' technique, it is a method of putting a hidden message through to a person's subconscious without the conscious mind being aware.

We know Glenn Miller's music was broadcast to the German Army on the 'Wehrmacht Hour' to help undermine morale but this and any 'musical messages' supplied via the airwaves to Allied agents is hardly unconventional. All Miller's musical scores had been written before the war so there was no obvious intent. However, wartime arrangers could have been appointed to convert it for a more sinister purpose; possibly for use by the Psychological Warfare Division.

These techniques would certainly have been consistent with the security in force at Milton Ernest. Putting his music to this use would have placed Miller under more pressure than his already overburdened body and mind could take.

Certainly, Glenn Miller was under great stress in the days leading up to that fateful day in December 1944. One man who noticed a great change in the major was the British bandleader, Geraldo. Dennis Cottam interviewed him at his offices in New Bond Street shortly before the bandleader's death in 1975. Cottam recalls: "Geraldo said that a lot of the Americans came to England from very quiet places in the States and were very apprehensive. But as soon as they realized most of the British