

15th! Of course we knew him from previous visits with that extraordinary man Baesell, who acted as if he owned half Paris." The barman made a 'phone call. He said if I went to number so-and-so further up the road there was a lady who could tell me more. I visited her house and knocked on the door. The lady looked like a schoolmistress. She introduced me to two very nice looking twins. I soon realized that I was in a "happy house". The lady said that the barman's story was quite true. I asked how she knew and she replied, "Because one of my customers was a Captain in the military police and he claimed he had identified Miller's body." I asked why anyone should want to kill Miller. She said, "Because he knew too much." As far as I know Miller was having a drink in the bars of the Pigalle and was shot, or received a fatal blow to the back of the head in the street.'

One would think that an incident such as this would have hardly passed unnoticed. However, dead bodies were everywhere in war-ravaged Paris in 1944. The withdrawal of the German forces of occupation had given some Frenchmen and women the opportunity to settle old scores. Collaborators had been left dying on the fence around the 'Jardin des Tuileries' while others were hanging from trees.

It could have been another bar-room scuffle, a Parisian gangland killing or even the killing of another collaborator or blackmarketeer.

Normally Baesell would have had access to large quantities of scarce wartime commodities and there were always many customers willing to pay for nylons, perfumes, cigarettes, good whiskey and other luxuries, especially in the wartime capitals of Europe. Although Service Command did not stock these items, it was an Aladdin's cave for marketable items such as aircraft spares, stores, foodstuffs and drugs, that could be converted into hard currency or expensive goods on the black market. Penicillin for instance, had a street value of about 50 pounds an ounce in 1944. Baesell also had what amounted to his own private airline to run these goods to and from the continent if he so wished.

Certainly, US Postal and FBI investigations were conducted at Milton Ernest Hall and at all the Army postal facilities in the ETO. Their mission was to apprehend and court martial individuals involved in black marketeering, professional gambling and illegal currency transactions.

The safest way for US service

personnel to remit dollars to America was by means of US Postal money orders. Money orders were purchased for cash with a very low service charge at a postal facility then mailed via APO to recipients in the States. The recipient could redeem them for cash at any US Post Office. It was noted by Postal authorities that some individuals were purchasing money orders in amounts far greater than their pay (in some cases thousands of dollars more); thus the investigation.

The bandleader's knowledge of black-marketeering or blackmail then may offer reasons leading to Miller's disappearance and possible murder, either in the air or in a Paris street. On the other hand if the famous bandleader was involved in psychological warfare to a greater degree than is immediately apparent, OSS may have been involved in a botched attempt to prevent him revealing the true nature of the techniques involved. The mystery remains.

Today the few remaining people who were associated with Milton Ernest Hall refuse to talk. Just before his death in 1981 Charles Davies wrote cryptically, "There was some connection [at Milton Ernest] but I cannot divulge what it was because we were under the strictest security regulations at the time . . ." Others prefer to remain anonymous.

Edward Blackman, an RAF Intelligence Officer at Thurlough during the war, pointedly refused to answer any questions about Milton Ernest Hall. Even General Dwight D. Eisenhower, when asked about Glenn Miller in a 1964 radio interview, seemed very hesitant and circumspect about the musician's wartime achievements. This is despite the fact Ike must, at one time, have held him in high regard because he specifically asked that Miller and his musicians play for him at a specially arranged concert at SHAEF headquarters just after D-Day, which of course they did. It was as if Miller had at some point fallen from grace or had blotted his copybook in some way and Ike was saying 'remember him for his music but leave the rest alone'. It is a view that many, people from the war years in Bedfordshire offer today if pressed about Miller's wartime activities.

Some researchers into the disappearance of Glenn Miller have even resorted to mediums. A medium was handed an olive green US Army undershirt which had been worn by Glenn Miller but his identity was not revealed to the medium. She felt the wearer was 'a highly nervous, sensitive man.

The man would have tendencies with both sexes, a very nice person, very lovable, kind, but with a very brilliant brain in some capacity'. The medium detected a lot of fear on the vest as if he was afraid he couldn't do what was required of him.

The medium sensed flying in a plane with people speaking several languages. The plane was in difficulty and crashed. Poignantly, the medium questioned if the 'man' had something to do with music because he was so sensitive and to do with making people happy. She said that 'he' was also into something higher and felt that in his sensitivity there was a slight bisexuality but thought 'this was something that would never be proved'.

The medium thought the plane went down in flames but not shot down, in a desolate place, where there was nowhere to run to, and where no one would see it, miles from anywhere.

Perhaps the mysterious silver-gray haired gentleman who was driven into the grounds at Milton Ernest Hall in July 1980 in the blacked-out limousine knew the answer to one of the last great secrets of World War 2. If he did he has not shared it publicly and unless it is recorded in a top security file in a vault somewhere, he has probably taken his secret with him to the grave.

Meanwhile, one can only speculate.

#### Notes

- (1) *Failed to Return* PSL 1988
- (2) Nat Peck in a BBC Radio interview
- (3) 1981 Interview with Royal Frey, the then Curator of the Air Force Museum at Wright Patterson Air Force Base.
- (4) 1981 Interview with Royal Frey, Curator, Air Force Museum at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base.
- (5) 1981 Interview with Royal Frey, Curator, Air Force Museum at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base.
- (6) *The Special Air Service* by Philip Warner (Kimber)

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