

Supporting The War Effort

The Glenn Miller Orchestra supported the war effort through radio broadcasts, concerts, and the *Sunset Serenade* program, which ran from October 1941-May 1942.

Sunset Serenade was a morale booster and fundraiser for the troops. The two-hour show consisted of a live dance program, and a one-hour broadcast on NBC.

The radio broadcast featured a contest involving five army bases.

Each base submitted their favorite Miller tune which was played during the broadcast. The listening public voted for which tune they thought should win. The winning base received a new RCA radio-phonograph player and 50 popular music records.



"Sunset Serenade" from the Café Rouge at the Hotel Pennsylvania in New York City. Admission was donated to the USO.



Glenn and the band checking out a tune submitted by one of the army bases.

Glenn Joins The Fight

Glenn felt the need to do more, and registered for the draft in 1942. Not content to wait (and knowing he was well over draft age), Glenn secretly applied for a commission with the U.S. Naval Reserve in June of 1942, but was rejected. Undeterred, he applied for a commission with the U.S. Army in August and was quickly accepted with orders to report on 7 October 1942 to the Army Air Forces.



"I, like every American, have an obligation to fulfill. That obligation is to lend as much support as I can to winning this war. It is not enough for me to sit back and buy bonds... I sincerely feel that I owe a debt of gratitude to my country... the mere fact that I have had the privilege of exercising the rights to live and work as a free man puts me in the same position as every man in uniform, for it was the freedom and the democratic way of life we have that enabled me to make the strides in the right direction." – Glenn Miller press statement, 1942.

In The Army Now

Captain Glenn Miller, U.S. Army Air Forces, saw himself as a band-builder, a modernizer of military music, and morale-builder. He set to work organizing many Army Air Force bands, each to be trained to play marching music as well as dance-band music. He was reported to have organized 49 bands for service at Army Air Forces Technical Training Command stations throughout the U.S.

Glenn was determined to modernize military music. He wanted to take music beyond the antiquated Sousa marches of WWI and update them with swinging march arrangements of jazz tunes such as the St. Louis Blues March and marching versions of Blues in the Night and Jersey Bounce. In addition, the bands would play modern big band tunes to give the soldiers “a hunk of home.”



Playing “Retreat” at Knollwood Farm, North Carolina in 1943.

An Innovator

Glenn debuted his modernized military band on 28 July 1943 at the Yale Bowl in New Haven, Connecticut. He had replaced the marching snare and base drummers with two percussionists with complete drum sets and two bass players to provide all the rhythm. He mounted this new rhythm section onto two specially converted jeeps that rolled along with the marching band! His jazzed-up marches had the crowd of 30,000 on its feet. However, not everyone was as pleased.

Not all officers agreed with the new approach to modern military music. Captain Miller received negative feedback from older career officers who wanted to stick with the Sousa march tradition. One officer reportedly said, "Look Captain Miller. We played those Sousa marches straight in the last war and we did all right, didn't we?"



A Jeep-mounted rhythm section in action.



Glenn's Army Air Force Band playing the Yale Bowl.

Glenn is reported to have replied "You certainly did, Major. But tell me one thing: Are you still flying the same planes you flew in the last war, too?"

“Super Band”

In the spring of 1943, Captain Miller was transferred to New Jersey to be closer to several Army Air Forces basic training stations. This gave him access to musicians from the New York City area that were entering the military. Major-Generals Walter Weaver and Barton Yount were major supporters of Captain Miller and gave him carte-blanc to secure whomever he saw fit from the Army or the AAF. Glenn could pick the “cream of the crop” for his own band while using the other musicians to form bands for other bases. With both classical and big band musicians at his disposal, Miller created a “super band” that was bigger, and some felt better, than his civilian band.



The “super band” included a full section of strings, seen here playing an “I Sustain the Wings” broadcast.

What's In A Name?

Glenn Miller's Army Air Force Band went through many name changes during the war. Here are a few of the names of the band:

- ***418th Army Air Forces Technical Training Command Band*** (Inception - July 1943)
- ***418th Army Air Forces Training Command Band*** (July 1943 - Spring 1944)
- ***Army Air Forces Band (Special)*** (Spring 1944)
- ***Band of the Army Air Forces Technical Training Command*** (May 1943- July 1944. "Technical" later dropped)
- ***American Band of the Supreme Allied Command*** (July - August 1944)
- ***American Band of the Allied Expeditionary Force*** (August 1944 - September 1945)
- ***Major Glenn Miller's Army Air Force Overseas Orchestra*** (September 1945 - Disbanded)
- ***Glenn Miller's Army Air Force Band*** (Postwar)



The Band while stationed at New Haven, Connecticut.

War Bond Rallies

An important part of the band's duties while still stationed in the U.S. was helping to raise funds for the war effort by playing concerts for War Bond drives. The band played with guests such as Bob Hope, Rita Hayworth, Jimmy Durante, Bing Crosby, and Dinah Shore. The rally concerts were a great success and held in several cities including Garden City (NY), Indianapolis, Rochester (NY), St. Louis, and Chicago. The band helped to raise more than \$10 million in War Bonds and Stamps.



I Sustain the Wings

The band's "*I Sustain the Wings*" radio broadcast was a huge success for the Army Air Forces (AAF) in recruiting and informing the public about this relatively new branch of the armed forces. The 25 minute broadcast consisted of music intermixed with dramatized stories of life in the Army Air Forces.



Over There!

Glenn requested a transfer to the European Theater of Operations (ETO). He felt the Band would have a greater impact playing overseas for the troops. The AAF, however, was reluctant to let the band go. They were already making a great impact with their War Bond concerts, and the "I Sustain the Wings" broadcasts. Glenn's initial requests were denied until he gained a valuable ally in Colonel Edward M. Kirby. Colonel Kirby was a SHAEF (Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Expeditionary Forces) officer working with the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) to set up a new allied forces radio station. Colonel Kirby suggested the Band be transferred to England to take part in the broadcasts. SHAEF testified that Miller's AAF Band was "vital to the war effort," leaving little choice but to transfer the Band to the ETO. They boarded troop transport NY8245 (a.k.a. the Queen Elizabeth) on 21 June 1944, headed for Great Britain.



Glenn Miller at a recording with Irene Manning in London, 1944.

American Band of the Supreme Allied Command

Glenn's overseas band was comprised of 62 men including musicians, arrangers, producers, and instrument mechanics, in addition to logistics officer (XO) Don Haynes and Glenn himself.

- **Trumpets:** Zeke Zarchy, Bernie Priven, Bobby Nichols, Whitey Thomas, Jack Steele
- **Trombones:** Jimmy Priddy, John Halliburton, Larry Hall, Nat Peck
- **Saxophones:** Hank Freeman, Peanuts Hucko, Vince Carbone, Jack Ferrer, Freddy Guerra, Mannie Thaler
- **French Horn:** Addison Collins, Jr.
- **Violins:** George Ockner, Harry Katzman, Carl Swanson, Dave Herman, Dave Sackson, Eugene Bergen, Phil Cogliano, Earl Cornwell, Milton Edleson, Nathan Kaproff, Ernest Kardos, Richard Motylinski, Joseph Kowalewski, and Freddy Ostrovsky
- **Violas:** Dave Schwartz, Emanuel Wishnow, Henry Brynan, Stanley Harris
- **Cellos:** Morris Bialkin, Bob Ripley
- **Rhythm:** Ray McKinley (drums), Mel Powell (piano), Trigger Alpert (bass), Carmen Mastren (guitar)
- **Reliefs:** Joe Shulman (bass), Jack Rusin (piano), Frank Ippolito (drums)
- **Singers:** Johnny Desmond, Steve Steck, Jr., Murray Kane, Artie Malvin, James Lynne Allison, Gene Steck (Ray McKinley also sang novelty and "personality" songs while Steck, Kane, Malvin, Allison, and Steck, Jr. made up The Crew Chiefs)
- **Arrangers:** Jerry Gray (chief arranger), Norman Leyden, Ralph Wilkinson
- **Copyist:** Jimmy Jackson
- **Producer & Scriptwriter:** Paul Dudley
- **Radio Director:** George Voutsas
- **Scriptwriter:** Harry Hartwick
- **Announcers:** Broderick Crawford, Paul Dubov
- **Instrument Mechanics:** "Julie" Zifferblatt, Vito Pascucci
- **Administration:** Jack Sanderson, Tommy Cochrane

Allied Expeditionary Forces Program (AEFP)

General Dwight Eisenhower, Supreme Commander of the AEF (Allied Expeditionary Force), wanted a special radio service for the allied forces under his command. The new radio service would be a vital way of maintaining troop morale and a sense of unity among the force's various nationalities. Broadcasts would provide troops with news, information, and entertainment. The broadcast proportions were split based upon the proportions of the three main armies in the AEF, 50% US, 35% British, 15% Canadian. Captain Miller's band was selected to represent the U.S. portion of programming. The band's primary duty was to perform regular broadcasts on the AEFP. The band was assigned a heavy schedule of broadcasting, originally performing ten programs (or 3 hours, 15 minutes) a week. By the time the band left for France, they were playing seventeen radio shows a week.



Playing a broadcast with the U.S. Navy Dance Band at the Queensbury Club in London on 21 September 1944.

One Band In Many Forms

Glenn knew the heavy broadcast schedule would cause the full orchestra to run out of new material and force it into repeats. He developed smaller units from the main orchestra to cover different parts of the broadcast schedule. This Miller innovation kept repetition to a minimum.

Versions of Glenn's AAF Band that played on the AAFP:

- ***Full Orchestra*** directed by Glenn Miller- (40 members)
- ***The American Dance Band*** directed by Ray McKinley- (brass, sax, and rhythm sections.)The program, "*The Swing Shift*," featured big band swing music, and signing by Johnny Desmond, Ray McKinley, and The Crew Chiefs.
- ***The Swing Sextet*** lead by Mel Powell- (small jazz band) The program featured improvised solos with opening and closing ensemble choruses, along with songs by Johnny Desmond and The Crew Chiefs.
- ***Strings With Wings*** conducted by George Ockner- (string section)
The program featured light classical and popular mood music.
- ***Johnny Desmond*** backed by the AAF Band-The program, variously called "*Sergeant Johnny Sings*," "*A Soldier And A Song*," and "*Sergeant Johnny Desmond*" featured songs by Desmond, and an instrumental by the band.

For The Troops

The Band performed live concerts for the troops in between their regular radio broadcasts. Their first concert, held on 14 July 1944 at Thurleigh USAAF base, was a huge success and just the morale building effort that Glenn had wanted to provide.



"... the American Band of the AEF mounted a makeshift stage inside a giant steel hangar. 3500 men of the Eighth Air Force sat on the dirt floor, on the wings of planes and on the lofty beams overhead. As the opening theme "Moonlight Serenade" pumped the psychological life blood of American music back in to those youthful, homesick hearts Captain Miller walked out on to the stage and an eerie yell of welcome swelled from the audience: a happy cry, yet filled with the weird wildness of a torrential spill of suddenly released frustrations. Colonel Kirby, whose efforts had transported the Band to the ETO, stood proudly listening at the far end of the hangar. After the show, Glenn walked straight to him to say, "Colonel, making all the money in the music business could never have made feel this rich." - Sgt. Paul Dudley

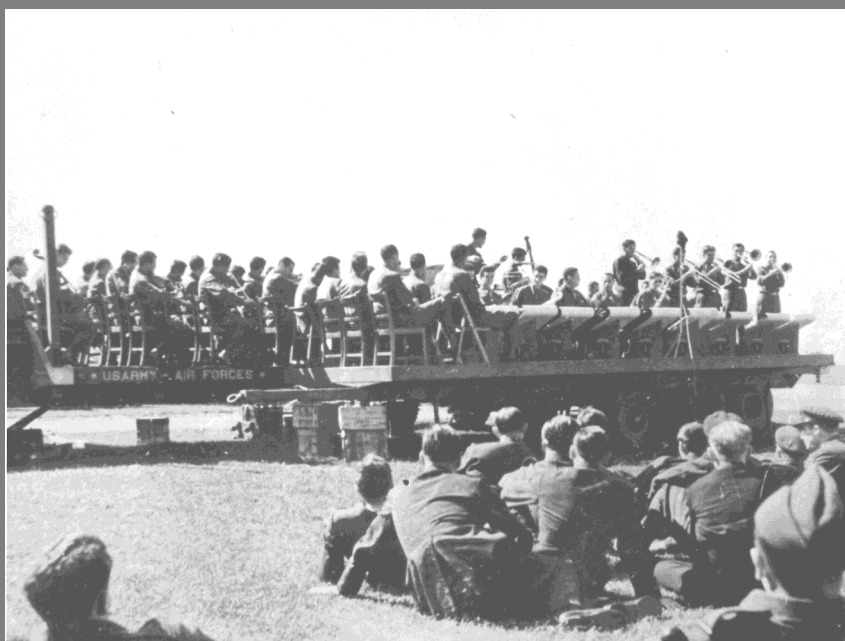
A Hectic Schedule

The Band kept up a hectic schedule in between broadcasts, with little time off. They travelled all over England performing live concerts at airbases, hospitals, and concert halls, many times playing two or three venues in one day.



Cirencester Hosp. 7 Aug 1944. credit LTC Ken-

They were greeted by enthusiastic crowds wherever they went. Glenn described his reaction to these crowds, writing, *“The most important sound that can possibly come out of such concerts- the sound of thousands of G.I.’s reacting with an ear-splitting, almost hysterical happy yell after each number.”*



Twinwood Farms Air Base, 24 August 1944.

Paris

Glenn wanted to bring the music of the AAF Band to the frontline troops, and pushed to take the band to Paris for a series of concerts. However, the BBC was reluctant to let them go because they wouldn't be able to complete their AEFP broadcast schedule. A compromise was finally reached that allowed Major Miller (promoted in August 1944) to take the Band to Paris on the condition that six-weeks-worth of AEFP broadcasts were pre-recorded before they departed. The highlight of the six week trip was to be a Christmas Day concert for the troops, broadcast live to England and America.



Playing for troops at a B17 base in England on 23 August 1944. Glenn hoped to do the same for the troops on the Continent.

The Heavy Work Begins

The Band needed to record thirty hours (six weeks) of programs in twenty days, while keeping to their regular broadcasting and concert schedules. This was a heavy load, and Glenn put it to a vote of the band members if they wanted to go. They all agreed and finished the recordings two days early. They had recorded eight weeks of programming (the required six weeks plus an additional two) while maintaining their regular broadcasting schedule, a total of 115 broadcast programs recorded in just eighteen days! It was now time to head to Paris.



15 December 1944

Glenn had changed the original orders calling for Don Haynes to fly to Paris ahead of the band. Instead, he would fly over first with the band following a few days later. However, bad weather had grounded all flights for several days. Anxious to get to Paris, Glenn accepted an offer to ride in a small Norseman C-64 leaving on 15 December.

The poor weather continued on the 15th, but the pilot stated the weather was clearing over the Channel. Major Miller, Colonel Norman Baessell, and Flight Officer John Morgan departed at 1:45 p.m. from Twinwood Farms Air Base near Bedford.



The last known picture of Glenn Miller, taken in December 1944 at the Queensbury Club in London. XO Don Haynes is on the right.

The Band Played On

The BBC was secretly informed of Glenn's disappearance. The shocking news was compounded by the fact that the Band's pre-recorded broadcasts still had Glenn's voice in them. The BBC would have to edit the recordings to remove his voice, and time it perfectly so that the edited broadcasts did not begin before news of Glenn's disappearance was officially released. First Lieutenant Haynes took over command of the Band, with Ray McKinley conducting, and they played the Christmas Day Concert as planned. The Band continued concerts for the troops in France, and then in Germany after the end of hostilities.



Playing a concert for troops on rest leave at the ARC Club in Nice, France. On 3 May 1945.

The End of the War

The Band's service in the ETO came to an end on 11 August 1945 when they returned to America. They had kept up a hectic pace since first arriving in the ETO almost 14 months ago, playing 956 separate musical performances (an average of about three performances per day) to more than 1,250,000 troops.

The Band played their last concert on 13 November at the Annual Dinner of the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. President Harry Truman was the guest of honor, and led the standing ovation as the Band began to play. At the conclusion of the concert, they were informed that they were being discharged.



“As a civilian he led an orchestra that for three years was the number one band in America. Now Glenn Miller could have stayed here. He could have made himself a lot of money. But he chose not to. He was an extremely patriotic man, and felt an intense obligation to serve his country. So he disbanded his orchestra and formed an even greater one. He took himself and his orchestra overseas where he felt he could do the most good for our fighting men. And now this great band is back here this evening without its most important man, Miller himself. For, as we know, he made the supreme sacrifice for his country. But he will never be forgotten, for always we will have the sound of the great music he created.” Emcee Eddie Cantor’s introduction of Glenn’s AAF Band before one of their last concerts.

“Next to a Letter From Home”

Glenn Miller’s Army Air Force Band made a significant impact as modernizers of military music, musical innovators, and morale builders. Their music gave troops a brief distraction from the horrors of war, and a sense of normalcy, which proved to be a huge morale booster. Lt. General James “Jimmy” Doolittle, 8th Air Force Commander, once remarked to Glenn that, *“Next to a letter from home, Capt. Miller, your organization is the greatest morale booster in the European Theater of War.”*

Major Miller assembled what many consider to be one of the greatest big bands ever, featuring the top musicians available. The band set a new musical standard by successfully combining classical music and jazz. The full orchestra arrangements combining “swing” music and strings to create an enjoyable jazz sound, set it apart from all others.



Playing a concert for the 56th Fighter Group on 6 Aug 1944 in Baxted, England. One of the hundreds of concerts played for the troops while stationed in the ETO. Credit: U.S. Air Force Museum

Legacy

Glenn's legacy continues in many ways. His version of the St. Louis Blues March is still played by American military bands. The Airmen of Note, the premier jazz ensemble of the United States Air Force, was created in 1950 to continue the legacy of Glenn Miller's Army Air Force Band. The nineteen member ensemble continues the work that Glenn Miller began in 1942. The Glenn Miller Orchestra and many other "modern-day" big bands continue to play the music of Glenn Miller's AAF Band. Most importantly, the men and women who served during World War II still remember the impact this great band had on their time in the service.

Sergeant Paul Dudley, perhaps, sums it up best:

"The sounds of war are better forgotten. The whine of the 88, the woosh of the flak, the death-belch of the burp-gun are all where they should be, quiet in the calm of approximate peace. But, silent among the faded noises of conflict, lies one sound which will be remembered with affection by the Yanks of the ETO. It was a warm sentimental sound that poured out of liberated radios behind the lines, spilled into youth-manned cockpits homing for the bomber and fighter bases; it was a sound that made apple-cheeked warriors feel closer to home. This was the music of Major Glenn Miller's American Band of the AEF."