Gene Lees Ad Libitum &

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The Glenn Miller Years IV

In March of 1938, with the moral and financial support of the Shribmans, Glenn went into the Haven Studios on West 54th Street to begin rehearsing his new band. He signed a contract with the Bluebird label — RCA Victor's economy-priced subsidiary — and made his first recordings for the company on August 27 1938, all three tunes arranged by Glenn: *My Reverie*, based on Debussy's *Reverie*, with a corny lyric by Larry Clinton, *By the Waters of the Minnetonka*, and Jelly Roll Morton's *King Porter Stomp*.

With the signing of the RCA Bluebird contract, Glenn added a new member to his team. He was born Howard S. Richmond in Brooklyn to Maurice Richmond, of Boston, who had been before the turn of the twentieth century what used to be called a "music man." He traveled in Connecticut and Massachusetts, setting up sheet music sales in stores for a publisher of marches. Thus Howie grew up with a table-talk knowledge of music publishing.

He put in two years at the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania, but like so many of America's young people he had a fervent love of the big bands. He thought he might want to be a writer and took a course in public relations. Returning to New York at Christmas, 1937, he looked for a job in a publicity office. Larry Clinton became one of his clients, then Gene Krupa and Woody Herman.

At this point, RCA Victor gave Glenn a 21-page questionnaire whose answer would be used for publicity purposes. Glenn answered the questions in a hand-printed letters. He skipped some of the questions, but the answers he did give are interesting, anything but arrogant, and at times even poignant. Indeed, the document has a curiously lonely quality. It also reflects an unpretentious literacy. Some of the questions are silly, some of them are intrusive, and some seem irrelevant. Yet collectively, the questions and Glenn's answers give a more rounded picture of the man than any newspaper or magazine interview of the time.

Howie Richmond kept a copy of it. It provides an interesting insight into Glenn's image of himself at that time.

Name, as used in recording and other professional work: *Glenn Miller.*
Type of professional work: *Orchestra Leader.*
Full name in private life: *Alton Glenn Miller.*
Address: *3760 88th St, Jackson Heights L.I, N.Y.* Phone number: *Havemeyer 6-0671.*
Your instrument, if any; or if vocal, what voice: *Trombone + Arranger.*
How long have you been a Victor or Bluebird recording artist: *1 month.*
Name of your personal manager, if any: *Cy Shribman.*
His address: *Little Building, Boston, Mass*His phone number: *Hancock 8128.*
Name of private press agent, if any: *Howard Richmond.*
His address: *799 Seventh Ave. N.Y.C.* [The address, famous in the business at that time, is that of the building that housed Columbia Records.]
Month, day and year of birth: *March 1st, 1908.*
City and state (or country) of birth: *Clarinda, Iowa.*
Father's name: *Lewis Elmer Miller.* Father's occupation: *Building Contractor.* [This is something of a euphemism.]
Mother's name: *Marry Lou Cavender.*
Was either parent talented, musically or otherwise? (If so, please give details.) *No.*
Are you related to or descended from anyone of particular prominence in any field? *No.*
What was your childhood ambition? *Professional Baseball Player.*
Who was your childhood hero (A) in fiction? *Horatio Alger.* (B) in real life? *Teddy Roosevelt.* [When Glenn was born, Roosevelt was still in office as 26th president of the United States. He died when Glenn was eleven.]
Did your parents ever object to any of your vocational ambitions? *My trombone playing often drove my father to quieter haunts away from home.*
Did you ever run away from home? *No.*
What was the first stage play you remember having seen? *The Last Mile with Spencer Tracy.*
The first concert or recital? *Hansel and Gretel Chicago*

Opera.

Please describe any earlier experience in entertaining audiences (including participation in concerts, recitals, choirs, amateur theatrical, student shows, etc.) *In high school & college I would gladly play trombone, any time and anywhere. Appeared in the usual high school plays.*

Were any present-day prominent artists among your early acquaintances or classmates, and if so, who? *Benny Goodman, Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey were early music associates.*

What are you most conscious of as the chief influence of your childhood, (A) Family? (B) Friends? (C) Phonograph? (D) Radio? (E) Books? (F) Teachers? (G) Your own experience? (In order of importance): *Experience, phonograph.*

Were you encouraged or discouraged in the development of your talent by your family or friends? How? *Encouraged by my mother, discouraged by college associates.*

What is the fondest memory of your early days. *The small band I played with at school.*

What is the saddest memory of your early days? *None.*

Where were you educated? *North Platte, Nebraska.*

High School: *Fort Morgan, Colorado.*

College: *University of Colorado at Boulder.*

Special instruction: *Musical instructions with Dr. Joseph Schillinger in New York.*

Were you considered a good student? *Fair.*

What subject(s) did you most enjoy? *Mathematics.* Most dislike? *History.*

Were you ever expelled or suspended from a school or college and, if so, why? *No.*

Did you support yourself in whole or in part while in school or college and, if so, how? *In college by playing in a jazz band.*

In what sports did you engage at school or college? *Football & baseball in high school. Fear of injury to my mouth kept me out of college football.*

Did you excel in any sport? *High school football.*

Did you participate in any extracurricular activities? *Played in all available bands and orchestras.*

Were you an officer of any campus organizations? *No.*

Did you belong to any college fraternity, and, if so, which one? *Sigma Nu.*

How long, if at all, did you study voice, music or dramatics? *Studied arranging two years.*

If so, where and under whom? *Dr. Joseph Schillinger N.Y.C.*

Are you still studying? *No.*

When and where did you make your professional debut? *With Boyd Senter Orchestra in Denver, Colorado.*

At what age? *17*

Remember any special sensations or incidents which occurred? *I remember following a man, with a trombone under his arm, until he went into a night club, and thinking my ambitions would be realized if I were good enough to work in that club.*

Are you performing for radio now? Give details: *My band is broadcast weekly on Columbia, Mutual, and National chains, from 7-12 times weekly.*

What one person has particularly aided you in your work? *Tommy Dorsey.*

What was the first job of any kind you ever held and what, if you don't mind telling, was the salary? *Milking a cow. Salary $1.00 per week.*

At what age? *About seven.*

How about your recording career — tell us anything that has interested or amused you about that: *Have been making recordings in New York for the past 8 years.*

In addition to or outside of your musical career, trace briefly what other work you have done. *Soda jerk while going to high school. Worked in a sugar factory while going to high school.*

Did you ever have "mike fright"? *Yes.* Do you still have it? *Yes at times.*

If so, please describe: *Drying of the mouth, shaking of the knees, blankness of the mind.*

If you have over it, did it drop away naturally as you became experienced or did you adopt some specific device to get rid of it? *I have practically overcome it by developing confidence in myself and my band. Deep abdominal breathing is helpful.*

What do you consider the turning point in your career? *Forming my own band.*

Are you married? *Yes.* If so, to whom? *To Mrs. Miller.*

Where did you meet? *In college.*

Names and ages of children, if any: *None.*

If you are not a professional composer, have you ever composed music? Please mention any selections which were published. *My theme Moonlight Serenade, Doin' the Jive, Sold American, Sometime.*

Do you speak foreign languages? *No.*

What form of travel do you most enjoy? *Train.*

What sports (to play) *Tennis, touch football, softball.* (To watch) *Baseball, football, tennis, hockey and all others.*

Do you own a car? *Yes.* If so what make? *Oldsmobiles and Ford truck.*

Have you ever flown a plane? *No.* If not, have you ever wished to? *Yes.*

What pets, if any, have you? *Dog.*

If you had complete freedom of choice, where would you prefer to live? Why? *New York. Most everything desirable is available in New York.*

Where would you like to spend your summers? *Colorado.* To

do what? *Outdoor life.*
In order of preference, what were your early hobbies? *Baseball.*
What are your current hobbies? *Tennis.*
Do you believe in "breaks" or fortune? *Yes.*
Will you describe any that you believe shaped your career? *The interest Ben Pollack showed in me when he hired me to play and arrange for the band.*
Would you like to work in other fields? *No.*
Do you like grand opera? Dislike it? (If you are an opera singer, skip these.) *Dislike it.*
Do you attend opera regularly? *No.* What are your favorites? *No.*
Do you like to dance? *No.*
Do you like crowds? *Yes.*
Are you even-tempered? Or do you run to extremes of depression and elation? *Yes, fairly even tempered.*
Do you envy people who possess temperaments opposite to your own? If so, why? *I envy perfectly controlled tempers.*
Have you confidence in your own ability and judgment? *Yes.*
Or do you depend a great deal upon the encouragement and advice of friends? *Good advice is often very helpful.*
Do you prefer life in the city or the country? Why? *City. Everything I'm interested in, in a business way, must be in the city.*
Does your professional work absorb most of your interest? *Yes.*
Do you like to write letters? *No.* If not, why not? *Can't think of anything to write. Disliked to relate details.*
Do you believe in sudden intuitions or hunches? *No.*
Have you ever acted upon them, or achieved definite results through obeying a sudden hunch? If so, give details. *No.*
Eat between meals? *No.*
How do you usually spend your days off? *Arranging.*
What time do you usually retire? *4 A.M.* Rise? *12 noon.*
Do you depend upon an alarm clock to awaken you in the morning? *Yes.*
Do you ever nap during the day? *Yes .*
Do you favor any particular type of attire such as sports, business, or formal wear? *Sports.*
Any eccentricities of dress? *No.*
Are you mechanically inclined? *Yes.*
Have you ever been the victim of a serious injury or illness? *No.*
Do you like to cook? *No.*
What recording artist do you most admire? *Tommy Dorsey.*
What particular record of your own do you like best? *By the Waters of the Minnetonka.*
What is your favorite popular song? *You Go to My Head.*
What is your favorite classical selection? *Ravel's Spanish Rhapsody.*
If yours is the popular field, do you enjoy classical music? *Yes.*
Was there a time when you didn't? *Yes.*
Are you an avid newspaper reader? *Yes.*
And what magazines, please?*Esquire, Readers Digest, Time.*
Please list your favorite authors in order of preference. *Damon Runyon.*
What do you consider the three greatest books ever written? *The Bible.*
Do you like poetry? *No.*
And what are your favorite quotations? *It Don't Mean a Thing if It Ain't Got That Swing.*
Who was your favorite actor among the very early movies stars? *Wallace Reid.* Actress? *Irene Rich.*
Who is your favorite movie actor today? *Spencer Tracy.* Actress? *Olivia de Havilland.*
Who is your favorite actor on the stage today? *Walter Huston.* Actress? *Helen Hayes.*
Who is your favorite comedian today? *Jack Benny.*
Do you favor any kind of cooking, French, Italian, etc.? *Meat and potatoes.*
Any favorite dishes? *Good chicken chow mein.*
What is your favorite flower? *Rose.* Jewel? *Diamonds.*
What are your pet hates? NOTE: We'll allow you plenty of room to answer this one?

Bad swing music.
Early morning telephone calls.
The phrase "Goodbye now."

Do your correspondents ever misspell your name? *Yes.*
If so, what have been some amusing variations? *Glen Mueller, Glen(n) Milner, Clem Mueller.*
Have any of your correspondents ever tried to identify you as a long-lost relative? *No.*
NOTE: just some odds and ends of information that newspapers and columnists always want to know. And we do too. Won't you take a deep breath and bound down the home stretch with the information we'd like to have? Thank you.
Your weight: *185.* Height: *6 ft.* Color of hair: *Brown.* Color of eyes: *Brown.* What was the most you ever weighed? *200.*
Did you ever miss a recording through any unusual circumstances? If so, give details. *After 5 years of punctuality in making recording dates, Tommy Dorsey phoned me late one evening to do a date the next day. About a week later I saw him, and he asked me why I hadn't made the date. That was the first time I remembered his call.*
Did you ever perform any feats which might be termed heroic? *No.* Were you in the war? *No.*

If you were able, would you retire for the rest of your life? *No.*
What is the most valuable thing you own? *My knowledge of music.*
Do you own anything which, although it has little or no intrinsic worth, you would hesitate to part with? *My dog.*
If you had a million dollars, what would you do with it? Let's say your lottery ticket dropped a million in your lap all of a sudden, what would you do? *I'd have the best band in the world.*

Someone suggested to Woody Herman that he too get in touch with the Shribman brothers, who booked rising bands into hotels and ballrooms that didn't pay them enough to survive but which had network broadcasting connections. The Shribmans would underwrite these engagements out of their own money, even paying for the air time. The Shribmans decided to help Woody, and the band settled in Boston to do what musicians call "run-outs" — trips from a central location to engagements in the area. The band soon was playing throughout New England.

"People fought desperately to get hotel locations," Woody explained, "because you'd be on the air coast to coast on one of the networks or another. That way, when you came out and went on the road, your audience was bigger, and you'd start to do business.

"Without the Shribmans, I don't think the whole era could have happened . . . . . After a few weeks that air time would make the audience aware of you and, when you went on the road, you started to earn some money on percentages, getting X amount of dollars as a guarantee and then maybe 50 or 60 percent of the gross.

"The Shribman brothers started way back with some of the earliest bands. In their stable at one time or another were people like Artie Shaw and Glenn Miller. They helped Tommy Dorsey in the beginning, they helped us, and any new band that had any potential at all." They also helped Duke Ellington.

George Simon recalled: "I knew Cy better than Charlie, because he was always on the scene. Charlie Shribman was the quieter of the two, a kindly sort of guy. Cy was sort of a big gruff guy. He would just barge ahead and do what he thought was right. He apparently had a tremendous instinct to do the right thing. The guys told me that he would go around at night to the various places in the Boston area, collecting money for bookings. His pockets would be bulging with cash. Then he'd take what he got in one place and use it to pay a band in another place. It was unbelievable."

Bandleaders were even willing to lose money to get "remote" broadcasts. Woody said, "The band became more important via records, and then all of a sudden we started to get much better air time and a lot more. That's when we started playing major hotels in New York or whatever, and if we had to lose $2,000 or $3,000 a week, it didn't matter because we were getting the right kind of air time."

Sometimes the Shribmans would have the men of two or three bands living at the Avery Hotel in Copley Square at the same time, several musicians to a room. Phil Young, the manager of the hotel, Woody said, was a man of enormous tolerance who would even lend the bands gasoline money to get to engagements. In this permissive atmosphere, some wild parties occurred, one of them by the combined personnel of the Woody Herman and Glenn Miller bands.

One winter night, the Miller and Herman bands were at the Avery. Woody and Glenn were both depressed about their prospects. Those prospects were about to change, but they could hardly foresee it.

Woody recounted:

"Glenn had made a pact with his wife that he was through drinking. He couldn't drink, and he knew it. He would turn crazy. While he was on the wagon, breaking in his band around Boston, he and I got into drinking that night, and pretty soon some of the guys started wandering in. It got to be a real roaring party. We locked one of my guys out on the fire escape in his underwear, and it was snowing like hell. We were doing numbers like that.

"Anyway, everybody just passed out or went to bed. And someone rang Glenn very early to remind him that he had to go three hundred miles in this snowstorm to play a one-nighter. So he was damn mad. He got up and started beating on everybody's door. Then he came to my room with a bellman who was carrying a big tray of ice and a bottle of booze. Glenn slapped me awake. Then he handed me the bottle of booze and said, 'Either you drink the booze or I give you the ice.'

"I just lay there drunk and helpless and said, 'Give me the ice, man.' And he poured it over me and stomped out. I was covered with ice, but after the night we had, it felt good."

"Glenn," Woody reflected, "was an excellent arranger and was one of the people that I respected and admired, along with a lot of other guys, because he had written for the Ben Pollack band, which was a great band. He had this innate ability. And a lot of times he was called in on a jazz date, by Red Nichols or somebody, because there might be something to fix where there wouldn't be any charts.

"Consequently, he got in on dates where he otherwise might not have been; his prowess on trombone was not too

heavy."

Red Norvo, one of those whom the brothers helped, told me that the Shribmans owned a large share of the Glenn Miller band, in consequence of their investment and efforts. "But Glenn cut them 'way down," Red said, "which I didn't think was fair."

Glenn could probably have joined the Tommy Dorsey band, but he didn't want to do it. And again, we have to consider his trepidation about his own trombone playing.

Tommy always admired other trombone players, especially of course Jack Teagarden, but there were others. Paul Weston, who was Dorsey's chief arranger, told me he hired Les Jenkins and would stand at the side of the stage, beaming with smiles when Jenkins played hot trombone solos.

Dorsey was another of Glenn's backers. Paul Weston said: "Tommy used to send $100 a week to keep Glenn's band alive when Glenn was so broke he couldn't pay the band. Then the Chesterfield Show came up, and Glenn got it and Tommy didn't, and boy . . . then we didn't mention Glenn's name around Tommy."

Jo Stafford, who sang with Dorsey alongside Frank Sinatra and later married Weston, said: "The falling out between Tommy Dorsey and Glenn Miller had to do more with Tom Rockwell, who was head of the GAC talent agency. Tommy and Glenn were both his clients. And Tom Rockwell had led Dorsey to believe that he was going to get the fifteen-minute radio show for Chesterfield cigarettes. Tommy thought he had it. In the end — I don't remember the details of what happened — Glenn Miller got the show. So Tommy," she said, laughing, "decided that he hated both Tom Rockwell and Glenn Miller. And that was about it.

"Tommy financially supported Glenn in the beginning."

Still another version of the falling out between the two is that Glenn considered the moneys Tommy sent him were loans, not investment, and when he paid it all back, Tommy was furious. Whatever the details, they became estranged.

When Glenn broke up the band, tenor saxophonist Jerry Jerome went with Red Norvo. When Glenn decided to form a new band, Glenn offered a three-way split with himself and Chummy MacGregor. Jerome turned it down.

The relationship with MacGregor is curious. He was not an outstanding pianist, and other musicians in the band lamented that he dragged the time. And they weren't thrilled by Moe Purtill either. When the movie *The Glenn Miller Story* was in pre-production, MacGregor somehow became its technical adviser and vastly exaggerated his own importance in the band and in Glenn's life. The picture, with Harry Morgan as Chummy, made them out to be close friends almost from the beginning, when in fact they never met until after the time with Pollack. And the movie portrayed Chummy as the strong figure, with Glenn the slightly dithery one. As George Simon put it, "It's difficult to know which portrait is the more inaccurate."

In life, MacGregor was more useful as an assistant than as a player. He wrote arrangements that no one liked, did some of the copying work, kept financial records, and drove one of the band's cars, all without additional compensation — one of those worshipers Miller knew how to use. After Miller was gone, he seemed to have no idea what to do with himself. He turned to music publishing. Once, when he was in his cups, he went to the Miller house and derogated Glenn's memory over some matter of a few dollars. Helen asked him to leave, and her friendship with him cooled. During his last years, Simon said, "Chummy MacGregor led a quiet and at times distressingly lonely life."

Depressed though Miller was, his band had not been a failure. It was, in essence, an experiment, a workshop in which he worked out the style and format of his orchestra.

He recognized that every band of the period, whether one of the more commercial bands or one tinged with or devoted to jazz, such as the Jean Goldkette band (which never got to record its best material), the Casa Loma band under Glen Gray which specialized in jazz and arrangements by Gene Gifford (and which Artie Shaw insisted was the first true "swing" band), the gimmicky rippling rhythm of Shep Fields (who hated it and later failed in an effort to launch a real jazz band), Guy Lombardo, who ran what was essentially a 1920s dance band frozen in time (he too failed in an effort to set up a jazz band), the Kay Kyser band (which could and did play creditable jazz at times), or the corny band of Sammy Kaye, who was Glenn's friend and sometime golfing partner.

Paul Weston said, "Tommy went through his life regretting that he wasn't Jack Teagarden." So when Glenn and Tommy met, they could have and perhaps did commiserate with each other about their intimidation. Glenn could not have been the trombonist of his self-deprecation or Tommy, who never suffered fools gladly and was acutely choosy about the quality of musicians, would never have hired him.

Glenn continued to look for a "sound" — not something of almost mystical overtone, as in the movie, but one that would identify and distinguish *his* band from all others. In an article published in *Metronome* in May 1939 with his byline (although it is probable that it was dictated to and shaped by George Simon), he said:

"It's pretty much of an accepted fact that if you want to have a successful dance band, you've got to have something

that's different. There's a danger in the theory, though. That's making your style too stiff. And that's why so many of these styled bands have such a short life.

"By a stiff style, I mean constructing all your arrangements so much alike that the public gets fed up on them. You'll notice that today some bands use the same trick on every introduction; others repeat the same musical phrase as a modulation into the vocal. They may be effective as identifying features but after a while they get mighty monotonous. And even worse than that, they hamper you terribly when making arrangements.

"We're fortunate in that our style doesn't limit us to stereotyped intros, modulations, first choruses, ending or even trick rhythms. The fifth sax, playing clarinet most of the time, lets you know whose band you're listening to. And that's about all there is to it."

He did it, too, and "the sound" was widely imitated and for that matter still is. He experimented with punchy ostinato figures that lent rhythmic emphasis, with use of metal derby hats waved over the bells of the trombone section to create a closed-and-open oo-wah effect, and especially with the voicing of the saxophone section, a sound that grew out of the presence in the band of the idiosyncratic clarinetist Irving Fazola.

Invented about 1840 by the Belgian Adolphe Sax, the saxophone is not often used in classical music. There are six saxophones in registers ranging from the bass up to the sopranino, but in jazz only the alto, tenor, and baritone have been in general use, and certainly in ensemble work. The instrument came into jazz largely on the influence of Sidney Bechet's soprano saxophone solos and later tenor solos by the great Coleman Hawkins. Saxophone sections in bands sometimes comprised three, and then four — two altos and two tenors, the configuration used into the 1930s until the baritone was added to make the section much richer and darker. Duke Ellington had been using baritone since the late 1920s. The melody lead on the saxophone section was almost invariably assigned to one of the alto players.

Saxophone players in bands were expected to double on clarinet, and occasionally four clarinets would be heard in very pretty ballad passages. Glenn experimented with the reed section, sometimes having five musicians playing very high on the clarinets in up-tempo tunes. But he didn't know what to do with Irving Fazola, who played poor saxophone. He valued him for his beautiful solos, but much of the time he sat there doing nothing. Bassist Rolly Bundock recounted that Glenn got an idea: let Fazola play the lead on the saxophone section. But he used this sound only occasionally.

It was at this time that Glenn seemed to lose some of his timidity about his trombone playing and began doing it more. And somewhere along the line, he met Joseph Schillinger, the Ukrainian-born composer and musical theorist who taught Robert Emmett Dolan, Leith Stevens, Lynn Murray, Paul Lavalle, and many other Broadway and Hollywood composers. None seems to have applied his mathematical theories rigidly, which some found restrictive, although George Gershwin used it in composing *Porgy and Bess*. Schillinger died in 1943, and his "system" if indeed that's what it is, still has not been fully codified. Three friends of that period studied with him: Tommy Dorsey, Benny Goodman, and Glenn Miller, who wrote *Moonlight Serenade* as an exercise for Schillinger. It would, of course, become his theme song.

In 1945, Hal McIntyre reminisced on radio station WAAT:

"After the first band broke up, I took all the equipment up to our farm in Cromwell, Connecticut, and got a job in a factory and played with my own band at night. I used to call up Glenn every Sunday afternoon at one and try to argue him into starting the band again. But he'd always say, 'Nothing doing,' and that he had gone through $18,000 too fast to want to go back into the band business.

"Well, one afternoon he was driving through Cromwell and he called me from a diner. I went over to see him and we talked for a while and I brought up the subject of starting the band again. At first he said, 'No,' but I sort of detected a lessening of resistance, and I kept working and working and working on him until he finally said, 'OK, we start rehearsals at the Haven Studio next week."

He said he had backing from Helen's family.

He also wanted Jerry Jerome in the new band, and made him an offer of co-ownership (with Chummy MacGregor). "But I wasn't interested," Jerome told Simon, "because I didn't feel like returning to that rigid, routine discipline. I was much too free-blowing a jazz player, and I needed more freedom. But, after he did start his band again, I'd go up to the Haven Studio and help him rehearse the saxes."

It was one thing to put a band together, and Glenn had now done it several times, for himself and for others. It was another thing to get engagements. He began to realize that the clarinet-lead sound on the sax section just might be the distinguishing sound he was looking for.

George Simon, as before, helped Glenn put together the band, which soon included besides McIntyre another altoist, Wilbur (Willie) Schwartz. Simon found him; Glenn first heard him during a gig with the band of Julie Wintz at Roseland. Willie later told Simon:

"He was a father figure to me. He had already been where I wanted to be. I felt our future was in his hands. I remember how hard he worked with us. The blend of the saxes wasn't

good at all for quite a long time, maybe for five or six months, but he always kept encouraging us. He treated us — all of us in the band — as a team. Every bit of success we had he was responsible for. Just being a member of that band gave you such confidence. I remember later when we were at the Café Rouge that feeling of *being* somebody as I walked across the floor up to the bandstand. Six months earlier I would have walked around the perimeter of a ballroom to get to the stand.

"Glenn never changed. He was always the same. As the band became more successful he relaxed more. He began to have much more confidence in us and often would not be there at the start of an evening. For a long time it remained exciting for me, maybe because I was young and exuberant.

"The only drag was that the band didn't really swing. Glenn always had trouble with the rhythm section. He'd keep exhorting the guys. 'Let's get a beat going,' he'd say. And then after hearing Basie, he'd ask, 'Why can't we play like that?'"

There are two reasons why that rhythm section didn't swing. One was that it included Maurice Purtill and Chummy MacGregor. And the other, according to Billy May, who would soon join the band and write for it, was that Glenn kicked off tempos too fast. The Basie rhythm section, indeed the whole band, above all was relaxed.

Schwartz said, "I remember he would get on us for not watching Purtill during his drum solos. 'Watch the drummer,' he'd say, and then he'd remind us, 'People want to be entertained.' He expected us to be entertainers as well as musicians.

"The band certainly was commercial. I'd call it the Lawrence Welk of its day. It had the same dedication to precision and showmanship. It was like a well-oiled machine. But towards the end it became a bore."

Willie vividly remembered when Gordon Beneke, born in Fort Worth, Texas, joined the band. In a radio interview, Beneke told the late broadcaster Fred Hall:

"I joined the Miller band April 16th — I remember it very well — in 1938. We rehearsed at the old Havens Studios in New York for a couple of weeks and then headed right for the New England territory. I had driven through a snow storm from Detroit right after receiving a phone call from Glenn. It seems that Gene Krupa had left the Goodman band and was forming his own first band. He was flying all over the country looking for new talent and he stopped at a ballroom one night, to hear our band. I was with this little band, Ben Young and his Orchestra out of Texas, and Gene wound up taking two or three of our boys with him back to New York. He wanted to take me but his sax section was already filled. He didn't need another tenor man.

"So, with Glenn and Gene being friends for so many years, Gene told Glenn, 'Hey Glenn, there's a tenor man I think you'd like.' And one night after I got off, on a gig in Detroit, a phone call came through and he said, 'Are you Gordon Beneke? My name is Glenn Miller. I'm starting an orchestra here in New York and you come very highly recommended by Mr. Krupa.'

"I didn't know who Glenn Miller was, nobody did then. I thought about it for a couple of seconds and I said, 'Glenn, what does the job pay?' And he said, 'Tex, everybody'll be getting the same pay, fifty dollars a week.' Which was pretty good.

"I said, 'I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll come with the band for fifty-two dollars and fifty cents a week.

"There was dead silence on the other end. Then, when he finally did come back, he called me a couple of names I can't mention right now. But he said, 'I'll give it to you.'

"So I got two-fifty a week more than anybody else, for a while."

Beneke went on his arrival in New York directly to the rehearsal, and although he told Glenn he needed some sleep, Glenn told him to get out his sax. Beneke got his horn from his car, parked down on the street. He took over Jerry Jerome's chair. In the first number they did, there was a brief vocal part. Glenn would say, "Hi there, Buck, wat'cha say?' With Beneke he said, "Hi there, Tex, what'cha say?" Beneke, who never before had been called that, bore that name for the rest of his life.

Beneke told Simon:

"Glenn was strict. Everybody knows that. He was tough on musicians, all right. He used to insist on proper haircuts, proper shines, both feet on the floor, and the same amount of white in every man's breast-pocket handkerchief. And he also used to insist on proper enunciation. We had to sing *Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree* not *Don't Sit under the Yapple Tree.*

"I loved the man. He taught me so much about playing my own sax. And I knew he liked me. I could tell by the way he'd stare at me while I was playing a solo. He'd look at me and I'd look right back at him. It didn't bother me the way it bothered some of the others. I know Johnny Best used to say, 'When he gives me the fish eye, I can't blow.' But it wasn't that way with me at all."

It was common in the bands of the 1930s and '40s that one of the players would do some singing, especially in humorous or irreverent material. Miller asked Beneke if he could sing. Beneke said he couldn't. Glenn had him do it anyway, and got hits with such songs as *I've Got a Gal in Kalamazoo* and *Chattanooga Choo Choo*. They demonstrate Miller's acuity at casting.

The other tenor player in the band was Al Klink, who told Simon:

"Tex, or Cuz, as some of us called him, and I had many common interests, like model airplanes and little one-cylinder engines which we used to run in the dressing room on theater dates. There'd be grease all over the place and people would get carbon monoxide headaches from the fumes and sometimes they would even filter into the theater. Glenn would sometimes stop us if the noise interfered with the movie they were showing, but I don't recall that he ever stopped us because of the smell.

"I will say this about Tex: There is not a finer gentleman on this earth than Tex Beneke. All the guys in the band, and even Tex, would say, 'Klink, you ought to play more solos.' The arrangers would write things for me, but Glenn would cut them out."

However, Henry Mancini, who wrote for and played with the postwar Miller band led by Beneke, told me, "Tex is the best tenor player I ever worked with."

And Mancini and other musicians testified that he was the kindest and most decent of men.

In an extended interview in later years, Al Klink told of his experience in the band. He said:

"I got into Glenn's band through Legh Knowles, a trumpet player, who recommended me. We had worked together (around Danbury, Connecticut) and Legh got in Glenn's band first. . . . Legh and Glenn, who were driving back from a one-night stand somewhere in New England, stopped off at my house in Danbury. It was four o'clock in the morning. A cold winter night. And when the doorbell rang, it woke up the whole family. They came into my room and I stayed in bed while they talked to me about joining the band. I told Glenn that tenor was my horn. He kept saying he wanted me to play alto sax. I finally said okay when he promised he'd let me switch over as soon as there was an opening on tenor. And he did keep his promise.

"I guess the best one-word description I've heard was that Glenn was G.I. — and that was before he was in the service.

"I didn't get too much chance to blow. Glenn just thought that Tex was the greatest tenor player that ever lived and he didn't have room for another concept about that. It's true that some of the guys, such as Bill Finegan and Billy May and Jerry Gray would write things for me to play, but Glenn would cut them out.

"Our saxophone section was probably one of the best for its own purpose that I've ever sat in. Willie Schwartz and I of course were the two lead voices. I played the bottom tenor lead and Willie and I sat next to teach other. We got so we knew the idiosyncracies of the other's instruments. Willie knew the bad notes on my tenor and I knew the bad ones on his clarinet. And we could adjust for that. The sound we got was so robust — we were young bloods who could blow pretty good — we were sometimes too loud for the open brass. One time Glenn told us we were too loud. It was kind of a nice time.

"As things went in those days, Glenn was uncommonly careful about the way he set things up. In the early days he'd bring us in for sound checks, particularly at Glen Island and probably at the Pennsylvania Hotel, though I wouldn't want to swear to it because it's a long time ago. I had joined the band while we were at the Paradise and then did some one-nighters in New England and traveling by car. It was cold and car heaters were not nearly as good as they are today. One of our methods of keeping warm was to get a gallon jug of wine and sip.

"There were really no cliques in the band. We had a common enemy — Glenn. It sort of united us into a cliqueless group. Chummy MacGregor was about the one guy who didn't join us privates. But Tex and McIntyre, who were Glenn's favorite people, nevertheless were one of the boys.

"Drinking in the band was well-controlled. Before I was there, one or two guys were into it pretty heavily. But we really had no great boozers.

"As a matter of fact, when we were at the Meadowbrook, Glenn forbade the band to drink at all. At that time I learned to drink gin, because it looked like water in the glass. Most of us adapted to it with ice.

"We had no jugs on the stand. Glenn drank, but not often. Once in a while when he did, it wasn't good. He had a tendency to drink until he fell down. He was a mean drunk. But once a year was a lot."

Billy May, who first came to prominence for his writing for the Charlie Barnet band, later was one of the several important arranger who wrote for Miller. He was for years one of the legendary drinkers in jazz, in a class with Eddie Condon, Bunny Berigan, Zoot Sims, Al Cohn, Tommy Dorsey, and a good many more. Later he became extremely active in Alcoholics Anonymous.

Billy told me: "I think Glenn was an alcoholic. And I think he was a dry drunk. He kept it inside of him. I saw him get drunk a couple of times when I was with the band, and he went completely off his rocker."

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