

## **‘Too Little Time’ At The Glenn Miller Festival**

It's not everyday that the phone rings and the voice the other end says, "Our 1<sup>st</sup> trombonist Jack Rowly can't do Clarinda this year as his wife is too ill to travel, would you like to go in his place? 1-2-3-4 seconds later I said, " Yes, I'd love to go".

You readers may be wondering where Clarinda is but all Glenn Miller fans will know exactly. Clarinda, is the birth place of the most famous bandleader ever, Glenn Miller, yes folks I was being asked by the famous Dutch bandleader Bill Baker to play at the Glenn Miller Festival in Iowa USA.

In recent years Big Band Buddies magazine has written several articles about my career which was cut short a few years back when I fell off the back of a stage when playing lead, and as I hit the ground my trombone smashed into my mouth. When I came around in the hospital I knew my career was over.

After an operation and with a determination to play again I went back to basics attempting to play my trombone again, but it took me a long time to just find five notes and this allowed me to play tunes like 'Teddy Bears Picnic' and other nursery rhymes busking, at least it was a start for me to earn some money again.

It has taken me many years to arrive back with the confidence to once again stand as lead trombonist, which I have done now for a year or two as well as MD to two local bands.

Big Band Buddies has made it possible for me to make contact with some very important people in my life as you will have read about, but recently the call from Bill Baker would turn out to be one fantastic adventure, and one that took an amazing twist and had me in front of the stage in Clarinda wondering how I came to be playing with probably the most valuable trombone in the world.

It is now three weeks since that phone call and I find myself packing to go to Rijnwijk in Holland where I was to meet up with Bill Baker to do my first rehearsal with his band. During this rehearsal I met up with Jack Rowley the man I was to replace on this trip to the States, who said that he was sad not to be going but wished me luck and after hearing me play said that he thought his chair was in good hands, for which I thanked him. My fellow sliders were Arjan Van Zuuk, Eric Dekkers and Bram Monnier.

Bill had planned that I would play a very special solo at the end of the second set. This worried me because of the amount of playing I had to do through the concert and then to finish off with an important trombone solo, so I practiced this piece many times before we left for Holland but wondered if after a full session on the day I would get through it and not let everyone down.

On Monday 8<sup>th</sup> of June we left for the USA with loaded trailer and taxi and we were off to Schiphol airport in Amsterdam. Our first stop would be Minneapolis USA, then on to Kansas City, (minus 1 suitcase) then on a bus for the final part of the journey to Clarinda, nearly 21 hours travelling and we were all exhausted by the time we

arrived.

We pulled in to Clarinda High school where our host Ron & Ammo McCunne and their Daughter Kristine picked us up and took us to our accommodation, which had been arranged by the Glenn Miller Birth Place Society. We shared the accommodation with Abram Klop (Tpt) Bram Monnier (tbn) Bert Reuyl ( Trp) and his wife Nicole.

The next morning Tuesday June 9<sup>th</sup> we had rehearsals at 10.00 am on the stage in the High School gymnasium to where the first evidence of where we were revealed itself, as standing by the main doors, was a statue in bronze of the man himself, Glenn Miller.

The whole of the foyer was decked out with flags leaving no doubt we were not only in America but also the home of the man in whose honour the festival was held.

At 6pm we attended a special 'Meet and Greet' party for all the hosts and their guests where everyone locally brought a different local dish, and this was our first taste of Bison steaks, they tasted delicious.

At 4pm we were invited to a very special ceremony the historic ground breaking of the soil where the new 'Glenn Miller Museum' is going to be built, and there a large poster saying "YOU BUILD IT AND THEY WILL COME".

5.00pm was a picnic at the Academy in Clarinda, and low and behold who was standing in line just behind me but none other than Ray Eberle's son and daughter Jan Eberle and Ray Eberle jnr.

We enjoyed some excellent beef and refreshment at this event the beef supplied by local company Taylor & co. and then it was off to the concert hall for our first concert of the week.

During the interval of the concert a lady by the name Pat McAndrews came up to the table where Anne my promotions manager was selling Bill Bakers programmes and my CD's and laid a trombone case on the table. She looked at me and said, "Miller's trombone". I looked at her with an enquiring and puzzled expression and said, "What did you say?" She replied, "Glenn Miller's trombone".

Now totally bewildered I said, "And what would you like me to do with it? She replied with a smile on her face saying, "We'd like you to play 'Too Little Time' on it". I gulped in surprise and stuttering my words said, "B, b, but I'll need time to blow it, and get the feel of it, and grease the slide, before I can just go on a play a tune on it". Well after

a little while I managed to persuaded Marvin Negley, who is the president of the Glenn Miller Birthplace Society, and protector of this treasured trombone, to allowed me to play the whole of the second set using Glenn's own trombone so I could get a handle on the way it played.

This trombone was one that Glenn had given to Jimmy Priddy just before Glenn went overseas. Later Jimmy Priddy had donated it to the GMBS Museum.

The concert was being filmed at the time not only by Anne my assistant but also by a Japanese television crew courtesy of Hidiomi Aoki, the president of the Japanese Glenn Miller Society, so it looked like everyone wanted to make sure there was a

record of me playing the hallowed instrument of the great man. It became even more pressure for me now as I did not want to let myself down, or Glenn Miller.

The concert was going really well with everyone was enjoying themselves and the audience loving it. During the interval I was handed Glenn's trombone and in the second half of the concert was able to play a couple of numbers before I was called on to step out front to play a solo of Henry Mancini's Theme from the film 'The Glenn Miller Story', which was called '**Too Little Time**'.

My unexpected and most thrilling moment had arrived as I put the mouth piece to my lips and began to play that haunting tune on this most famous and valuable trombone. As the piece came to an end and I heard the applause I felt I had done well. I held the trombone up as many had never seen Glenn's trombone before and everyone went wild. Bill Baker and the MD Egbert Kemner appeared at the front of the stage where I was standing to shake my hand, and the band cheered my performance. Once again I felt good that I was doing a good job for the Bill Baker Big Band and Jack Rowly who we left back in Holland.

A rare special moment for me, and at the end of the concert I was followed out of the concert hall by many fans patting me on the back as I returned the very special instrument to it's case.

Once again many thanks to Marvin Negley and his hard working team for making another dream come true for me!

The rest of the week was taken up with shows on the back of trucks touring the town, a sing-along in a coffee bar with singers Margareet and Annelis, the girl singers in Bill's band, who with Egbert Kemner our MD sang a delightful rendition of "Sentimental Journey" which received loud applause from the patrons.

I did a couple of numbers with Oleg "I left my Heart in San Francisco" being one. We then returned to catch up with the 312<sup>th</sup> US Army band. They were meant to be playing in the open air but the rains had come so they were forced to play in the school hall.

We had the Big Band Breakfast at 7.00am, dancing and eating pancakes, maple syrup, potatoes & waffles all this to wonderful backdrop and the glorious sound of the Tom Daugherty Orchestra and his singers I managed time some off to get to see the official Glenn Miller Band directed by Larry O'Brien's and they were an outstanding outfit. Larry played "Stairway to the Stars" I wonder if he gives trombone lessons?

At the same time I had a chance meeting with Hideomi Aoki (Japanese President of the Glenn Miller Society in Tokyo) who said he so enjoyed my performance of 'Too Little Time' on Glenn's trombone and as a thank you he presented me with two books written by Paul Tanner, which he signed with his son interpreting what I was saying. Hideomi also promised me the footage of the concert filmed by his TV crew.

Sunday there was a Flight club breakfast and air show.....Wonderful! Then later that morning Bert Reuyl (Bills lead trumpet) and I was off to play at a morning service at St. John's Lutheran church. This was organised by Evelyn Herzberg a fantastic lady who is very involved with the Glenn Miller happenings over in Clarinda.

More shows followed but fatigue was now setting in on a few of the members of the band, including me.

Our last day found us packing ready to return to the UK the next day, but before we left a local company, 'The Pork Producers' sponsored a farewell picnic at the academy.

This Picnic was followed by a Boulevard show right in the middle of the street for the best part of four hours, and by the end of it we were absolutely shattered. We had played seven concerts in 4 days. Monday the bus home and lots of e-mails to answer from people who had seen me playing the trombone of the Legendary Glenn Miller.

I would not have experienced this trip if it had not been for Pete King who sent my Cd's to Paul Tanner and introduced me to Bill Baker. Paul Tanner sent me an original copy of his book 'Practice With the Experts' which I had used when I first started learning to play the trombone and which I had lost several years ago after lending it to someone. Paul sent me one of only three remaining copies he had which were published many years ago.

I can't thank Bill Baker enough for the wonderful trip, his kindness and faith in me, and overall friendship. A special thanks for the wonderful hospitality extended to us by all in Clarinda especially Ron, Amm & their daughter Kristine.

To "Big Band Buddies" for making all these contacts possible.

Marcus Reynolds.