

1

00:00:00,096 --> 00:00:10,092

This series presents information based in part on theory and conjecture.

2

00:00:10,092 --> 00:00:16,690

The producer's purpose is to suggest some possible explanations, but not necessarily

3

00:00:16,690 --> 00:00:22,087

the only ones to the mysteries we will examine.

4

00:00:22,087 --> 00:00:26,886

December 15, 1944, Bedford, Sheringland.

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00:00:26,886 --> 00:00:36,882

Glenn Miller, the most popular musician in the world, is serving as commander of the Army Air Corps Band.

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00:00:36,882 --> 00:00:43,879

Determined to fly to France to prepare for a concert, he accepts an invitation to make the journey in a small plane.

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00:00:43,879 --> 00:00:47,877

Poor weather has already delayed the flight for several days.

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00:00:47,877 --> 00:00:52,876

Despite personal misgivings, he is unwilling to wait any longer.

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00:00:56,874 --> 00:01:01,872

The plane is now ready to take off.

10

00:01:01,872 --> 00:01:06,870

The plane is ready to take off.

11

00:01:06,870 --> 00:01:11,868

The plane is ready to take off.

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00:01:11,868 --> 00:01:16,866

Contact with the plane lasts only a few minutes.

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00:01:16,866 --> 00:01:22,864

Glenn Miller will never be seen again.

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00:01:22,864 --> 00:01:27,862

Long been believed the plane iced up and went down in the English Channel.

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00:01:27,862 --> 00:01:32,860

Yet recent information raises some disturbing questions.

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00:01:32,860 --> 00:01:35,859

What were the circumstances around the disappearance?

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00:01:35,859 --> 00:01:39,857

And why was there never a search made for the aircraft?

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00:01:39,857 --> 00:01:46,855

After nearly four decades, is it possible the wreck of that plane can be found today?

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00:01:53,852 --> 00:02:02,848

The Battle of Britain brought aerial warfare into the lives of every citizen of England.

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00:02:02,848 --> 00:02:13,844

For six years, countless forays were flown and always death was in the sky.

21

00:02:22,841 --> 00:02:27,839

The children's hills near London.

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00:02:27,839 --> 00:02:32,837

During World War II, pilots called their men to the ground.

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00:02:32,837 --> 00:02:37,835

The men were sent to the ground to fight for their lives.

24

00:02:37,835 --> 00:02:42,833

The men were sent to the ground to fight for their lives.

25

00:02:42,833 --> 00:02:47,831

The men were sent to the ground to fight for their lives.

26

00:02:47,831 --> 00:02:50,830

The children's hills near London.

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00:02:50,830 --> 00:02:55,828

During World War II, pilots called this area the graveyard.

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00:02:55,828 --> 00:03:01,826

Hundreds of planes shot from the skies over Great Britain crashed here.

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00:03:01,826 --> 00:03:08,823

Today, relics of those planes are being excavated.

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00:03:08,823 --> 00:03:16,820

Parts of American P-38s, British Spitfires and German Messerschmitts are found regularly.

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00:03:16,820 --> 00:03:24,817

One plane that left from this airfield is sought more than any other.

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00:03:24,817 --> 00:03:33,813

Finding the remains of this plane will explain the mystery that clouds the life of a man who stood for an era, Glenn Miller.

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00:03:33,813 --> 00:03:38,811

An entire generation grew up idolizing Glenn Miller.

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00:03:38,811 --> 00:03:51,806

America's youth danced, romanced and marched off to war to the beat of his music.

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00:03:51,806 --> 00:03:55,805

Glenn Miller was an unlikely Pied Piper.

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00:03:55,805 --> 00:03:57,804

He was a perfectionist.

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00:03:57,804 --> 00:04:05,801

Moody, a loof, a loner.

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00:04:05,801 --> 00:04:13,798

He remained a mystery man to even his closest band members.

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00:04:13,798 --> 00:04:20,795

In 1942, he shocked everyone with a fateful decision.

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00:04:20,795 --> 00:04:31,791

On September 27th, 1944, Glenn Miller was the most experienced Pied Piper.

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00:04:31,791 --> 00:04:34,790

He was a great Pied Piper.

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00:04:34,790 --> 00:04:41,787

In 1942, he shocked everyone with a fateful decision.

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00:04:41,787 --> 00:04:53,782

On September 27th, 1942, at the Central Theater in Versailles, New Jersey, Glenn Miller announced that he would disband his orchestra and volunteer for the American war effort.

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00:04:53,782 --> 00:05:01,779

Many believe that this move, more than any other, marked the beginning of the end of the big band era.

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00:05:01,779 --> 00:05:06,777

He became Major Glenn Miller, leader of the Army Air Corps Band.

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00:05:06,777 --> 00:05:14,774

He and the military were at odds over jazz innovations he wanted to make in traditional military music.

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00:05:14,774 --> 00:05:19,772

After more than a year of heated confrontations, the generals gave in.

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00:05:19,772 --> 00:05:25,770

Military music would never be the same.

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00:05:25,770 --> 00:05:29,768

By 1944, he was stationed in England.

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00:05:29,768 --> 00:05:39,764

Even the luxury of staying here at Milton Ernest Hall had paled for Miller.

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00:05:39,764 --> 00:05:49,761

On the morning of December 15th, 1944, as recreated here, he left for France with Colonel Norman Bissell.

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00:05:49,761 --> 00:05:54,759

Miller had promised American GIs a Christmas concert from Paris.

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00:05:54,759 --> 00:05:59,757

Bissell arranged for him to travel ahead of the band in a small plane.

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00:05:59,757 --> 00:06:10,752

Miller knew the flight would be hazardous. Poor weather had already delayed it for several days, and now flying conditions were marginal at best.

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00:06:10,752 --> 00:06:25,747

Miller was undergoing the worst period of his life.

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00:06:25,747 --> 00:06:31,744

During the Blitz of London, he had spent night after night huddled in air raid shelters.

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00:06:31,744 --> 00:06:37,742

His battle with the military to change air corps music had taken a toll on his health.

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00:06:37,742 --> 00:06:44,739

He had lost nearly 20 pounds. He was tired and depressed.

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00:06:44,739 --> 00:06:55,735

Friends say Miller had an exaggerated fear of flying. It's always been a mystery why he risked this particular flight.

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00:06:55,735 --> 00:07:06,731

Is it possible that his wartime experiences, his deteriorating health and constant pressure caused him to make an irrational decision?

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00:07:06,731 --> 00:07:11,729

Don Haynes, the band's administrative officer, drove Miller and Bissell to the airport.

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00:07:11,729 --> 00:07:29,722

He later reported that Miller asked, where are the parachutes? Bissell answered, what's the matter, Miller? You want to live forever?

63

00:07:29,722 --> 00:07:48,714

Haynes was to follow later that week with the band.

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00:07:48,714 --> 00:07:57,711

What happened during the next hour of flight would produce tragedy and controversy.

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00:07:57,711 --> 00:08:01,709

Military sources claim the plane went down in the English Channel.

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00:08:01,709 --> 00:08:06,708

Yet conflicting reports concerning this doomed flight continued to cause debate.

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00:08:06,708 --> 00:08:11,706

Something different had happened to Glenn. Something which was...

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00:08:11,706 --> 00:08:14,704

Herb Miller, Glenn's brother, doubts the official explanation.

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00:08:14,704 --> 00:08:24,701

I feel that we were told. I feel that we were fed a story and that we were completely misled.

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00:08:24,701 --> 00:08:30,698

I have here a missing aircraft report. All kinds of things on here are irregular.

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00:08:30,698 --> 00:08:42,694

The inquiry was not properly handled. As a matter of fact, there was no search and no officer in charge of this search.

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00:08:45,692 --> 00:08:50,690

Throughout the years, the Glenn Miller mystery has thrived on half truths and innuendo,

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00:08:50,690 --> 00:08:57,688

much of which was unwittingly brought about by a lack of effort on the part of authorities to find the plane.

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00:08:57,688 --> 00:09:01,686

Let's examine what steps were taken after it disappeared.

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00:09:01,686 --> 00:09:06,684

These previously classified papers have never been publicized before.

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00:09:06,684 --> 00:09:10,683

They are the Air Force official reports on the incident.

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00:09:10,683 --> 00:09:14,681

The most curious aspect of these papers are the dates on them.

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00:09:14,681 --> 00:09:22,678

Miller's plane was not officially confirmed as missing until the 20th of December, five days after the takeoff.

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00:09:22,678 --> 00:09:24,677

He said, Al...

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00:09:24,677 --> 00:09:31,675

Yet Alan still will. Miller's civilian valet recalls that military police didn't wait five days.

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00:09:31,675 --> 00:09:41,671

It might have been one day, two days, but two security officers came and put strap in over his belongings and sealed it.

82

00:09:41,671 --> 00:09:49,668

And then they were transported away. And that was the last I saw or heard of anything of him.

83

00:09:51,667 --> 00:09:56,665

Investigators have always been puzzled by this move.

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00:09:56,665 --> 00:10:04,662

Officials claim this action was taken to protect Miller's belongings, yet his family reports never receiving them.

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00:10:04,662 --> 00:10:09,660

Nor as often happens in wartime where they shared amongst his comrades.

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00:10:09,660 --> 00:10:19,656

It was certainly against normal practice to remove a man's personal effects before his death was confirmed or before he had been missing a full week.

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00:10:19,656 --> 00:10:25,654

This incident led some to believe the military was holding back information.

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00:10:26,653 --> 00:10:34,650

Official aircrew reports would have been compiled within 48 hours of the time an aircrew member was reported missing.

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00:10:34,650 --> 00:10:42,647

Yet this report was not completed till the 23rd of December, eight days after the doomed flight.

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00:10:42,647 --> 00:10:45,646

Why the delay?

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00:10:45,646 --> 00:10:49,644

Other questions are left unanswered by the report.

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00:10:49,644 --> 00:10:58,641

Why wasn't there an extensive search for the plane, especially when the disappearance concerned a world famous celebrity?

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00:10:58,641 --> 00:11:06,638

Radar antennas that searched the skies over the English Channel never detected the plane.

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00:11:06,638 --> 00:11:13,635

Many of the rumors surrounding the disappearance of Glenn Miller's plane could have been silenced by the findings of a court of inquiry.

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00:11:13,635 --> 00:11:17,634

Yet no official investigation was ever made.

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00:11:17,634 --> 00:11:21,632

The question is, why?

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00:11:21,632 --> 00:11:37,626

December 15, 1944. In search of examines the circumstances of that day, what we do know for sure is that Glenn Miller's plane took off and was never seen again.

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00:11:37,626 --> 00:11:46,622

Any thorough investigation of a Miller mystery must start with the military and its lack of effort to search for the plane.

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00:11:46,622 --> 00:11:50,621

We have assembled participants as well as investigators.

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00:11:50,621 --> 00:11:57,618

Royal Fry, curator of the United States Air Force Museum, Wright Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio.

101

00:11:57,618 --> 00:12:03,616

You know, much has been made of this in the past, the idea of having a military court of inquiry.

102

00:12:03,616 --> 00:12:07,614

But we had fellows who disappeared on flights every day.

103

00:12:07,614 --> 00:12:11,613

I had a very good friend disappear on a flight out of my squad and we were flying fighters.

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00:12:11,613 --> 00:12:17,610

I remember another instance where we had a major take off on a flight five minutes after the squadron had headed out.

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00:12:17,610 --> 00:12:20,609

He should have done it, he disappeared, never came back.

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00:12:20,609 --> 00:12:27,606

At that time, the Battle of the Bulge had just started, or started a couple of days afterwards.

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00:12:27,606 --> 00:12:31,605

The Germans were marching through Western Europe. We had to worry about that.

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00:12:31,605 --> 00:12:34,604

Every day that we sent missions out there were Americans who didn't come back.

109

00:12:34,604 --> 00:12:37,603

Every bomber that went down had ten Americans on board.

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00:12:37,603 --> 00:12:43,600

And although I don't personally believe this, you know, I don't feel this in my own heart because I've always been a Miller buff.

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00:12:43,600 --> 00:12:48,598

But let's face it realistically, that airplane disappeared with three men on board.

112

00:12:48,598 --> 00:12:55,596

A flight officer who was the lowest ranking pilot you could have, a Lieutenant Colonel who was not a pilot, we call them ground pounders,

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00:12:55,596 --> 00:13:01,593

how valuable he was to the war effort, I don't know, and a third fellow on there, a major who played a drum bone.

114

00:13:01,593 --> 00:13:06,591

Now that's cold-blooded, but you have to look at it in the context of the time.

115

00:13:06,591 --> 00:13:13,589

I don't imagine they sent out search aircraft. I imagine the search consisted of checking with air bases and checking with grounded Dervet cores,

116

00:13:13,589 --> 00:13:18,587

checking with radar sites, checking with possible places they may have landed and failed to report in.

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00:13:18,587 --> 00:13:24,584

But I don't think they launched any sort of a large search like they did for a Milgaerhardt back in the mid-1930s.

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00:13:24,584 --> 00:13:31,582

Again, they had a war to fight, and every airplane and boat they used for search was one they didn't use to fight the Germans.

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00:13:31,582 --> 00:13:38,579

What did happen to Glenn Miller? The more we uncovered, the more complex his story became.

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00:13:38,579 --> 00:13:43,577

Some friends claim that after Miller joined the service, he became fatalistic.

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00:13:43,577 --> 00:13:54,573

Legendary tenor sax man and vocalist for Miller's civilian band, Tex Benikey, explains what England was like when Miller arrived in 1944.

122

00:13:54,573 --> 00:14:04,569

And this was about the time that the Germans were throwing so many of those buzzbombs at London and cities all around that he was scared.

123

00:14:04,569 --> 00:14:13,565

He was scared to death of those V-bombs. But he did get the band out of Bedford, England just a day before the whole town was obliterated.

124

00:14:13,565 --> 00:14:20,563

And he actually felt at that time, according to some of the boys that were with him, that he would never get back.

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00:14:21,562 --> 00:14:27,560

One chilling indication of Miller's fatalism was sent to his brother.

126

00:14:27,560 --> 00:14:32,558

Two weeks or so before he disappeared, he wrote a letter to his brother, Herb, in California.

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00:14:32,558 --> 00:14:37,556

And on the back page of that two-page letter, he wrote,

128

00:14:38,556 --> 00:14:46,553

By the time you receive this, we shall all be in Paris, barring, of course, a nosedive into the channel.

129

00:14:46,553 --> 00:14:52,550

And it almost brings the hair up in the nape of your neck to stand there and read that letter.

130

00:14:52,550 --> 00:14:59,548

And realize this was written by the great Glenn Miller, and he apparently did nosedive into the channel.

131

00:14:59,548 --> 00:15:06,545

Finding the remains of the aircraft would begin to answer some of the questions surrounding the Glenn Miller mystery.

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00:15:07,545 --> 00:15:13,542

Two key participants in the flight itself were never even questioned by the military.

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00:15:13,542 --> 00:15:20,539

Arnold Bruns was the aircraft's maintenance crew chief on that day in December 1944.

134

00:15:20,539 --> 00:15:25,538

In search of found Bruns living today in Manawa, Wisconsin,

135

00:15:25,538 --> 00:15:30,536

he recalls pre-flighting Miller's aircraft with its pilot, John Morgan.

136

00:15:31,535 --> 00:15:38,533

Mr. Morgan and I went over the maintenance forms on the aircraft, we pre-fired the aircraft,

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00:15:38,533 --> 00:15:46,529

we found everything to be very much tip-top as far as the maintenance portion of the aircraft was concerned.

138

00:15:46,529 --> 00:15:50,528

We checked out the anti-icing and de-icing equipment to the best of my knowledge,

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00:15:50,528 --> 00:15:54,526

and it was well equipped with that phase of equipment.

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00:15:54,526 --> 00:16:04,522

And I'm sure that had the aircraft encountered icing, the capabilities of Mr. Morgan

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00:16:04,522 --> 00:16:08,521

were such that he definitely would have taken evasive action immediately,

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00:16:08,521 --> 00:16:14,519

or had he started to cross the channel under icing conditions and found that they did exist,

143

00:16:14,519 --> 00:16:17,517

he definitely would have turned back to base.

144

00:16:17,517 --> 00:16:23,515

Despite Mr. Bruns' claim, some officials say the plane was not equipped with de-icing gear.

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00:16:23,515 --> 00:16:29,513

Until the plane is found, we may never know if such equipment was aboard.

146

00:16:29,513 --> 00:16:36,510

Dixie Clerk was the radio operator at Twin Woods Field who cleared Miller's plane for take-off.

147

00:16:36,510 --> 00:16:40,508

She now resides in Surrey, British Columbia.

148

00:16:40,508 --> 00:16:47,506

Mrs. Clerk remembers that shortly after the plane took off, it was not responding to radio calls from the airfield.

149

00:16:47,506 --> 00:16:51,504

I forget at the time, well, there has to be one or two things.

150

00:16:51,504 --> 00:16:56,502

Either the radio's gone out, or they've gone down.

151

00:16:56,502 --> 00:17:03,500

But generally, well, if the radio had gone out, the pilot wouldn't continue not to go over the drink

152

00:17:03,500 --> 00:17:08,498

with such an important person as well on it.

153

00:17:08,498 --> 00:17:15,495

I called several bases, including Coastal Command and places like that,

154

00:17:15,495 --> 00:17:19,493

to see if any of them had heard about the aircraft, and they said no.

155

00:17:19,493 --> 00:17:28,490

And from then on in, I assumed, and I've always assumed, they went down on land.

156

00:17:28,490 --> 00:17:33,488

They had to have gone down on land. I can't see how anybody can think any different,

157

00:17:33,488 --> 00:17:37,486

because they didn't clear the circuit. They had to have gone down on land.

158

00:17:37,486 --> 00:17:41,485

Now, since then, I've learned how rugged the Tilton Hills are,

159

00:17:41,485 --> 00:17:48,482

and I've also been told that several aircraft have gone down in the Tilton Hills that they've never found.

160

00:17:48,482 --> 00:17:55,479

I forget if they have to search once, twice, three times, even a dozen times, and they don't find it.

161

00:17:55,479 --> 00:18:02,477

I still think that in the end, that's where they're going to find the aircraft.

162

00:18:02,477 --> 00:18:06,475

Could the plane lie buried somewhere in the Tilton Hills?

163

00:18:06,475 --> 00:18:09,474

There is one unconfirmed report.

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00:18:09,474 --> 00:18:22,469

A farmer in this area told officials he heard a plane crash after Miller's plane took off.

165

00:18:22,469 --> 00:18:27,467

Miller would have flown southward over this area and route to France.

166

00:18:27,467 --> 00:18:33,465

Could wreckage of the Miller aircraft still be found here?

167

00:18:33,465 --> 00:18:42,461

The children aircraft group is a body of aviation enthusiasts who spend their weekends digging up wrecks of aircraft that crashed in the hills.

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00:18:42,461 --> 00:18:44,460

Their leader is Peter Halliday.

169

00:18:44,460 --> 00:18:49,459

Around the Tilton area is a real burial ground of the crashed aircraft.

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00:18:49,459 --> 00:18:52,457

Many of them weren't recovered during the war, and were buried in the ground,

171

00:18:52,457 --> 00:18:58,455

and this is what our group is actively doing at the moment, is recovering the ones that were never recovered.

172

00:18:58,455 --> 00:19:09,451

We have a large number, I should think, the last count. We had about 120 in the Buckinghamshire area, which does cover the Tilton area.

173

00:19:09,451 --> 00:19:17,448

This one, for example, was dug up from about 16 feet into the ground after 34 years in the ground.

174

00:19:17,448 --> 00:19:23,445

It crashed in 1941.

175

00:19:23,445 --> 00:19:28,443

Every week, airplane parts are dug up in the children's.

176

00:19:28,443 --> 00:19:35,441

Pieces to puzzles that have remained unsolved for nearly four decades.

177

00:19:35,441 --> 00:19:50,435

In light of the growing belief that Miller's plane crashed on land, these airplane archaeologists may soon uncover the final fate of the great band leader.

178

00:19:50,435 --> 00:19:55,433

It's the twin woods airfield today.

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00:19:55,433 --> 00:20:03,430

The answer to the Miller mystery lies somewhere between here and Paris.

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00:20:03,430 --> 00:20:15,425

Once, this field echoed with the roar of spitfire fighters and the cadence of marching troops.

181

00:20:15,425 --> 00:20:21,423

Millions of men departed from here for the battlefields of Europe.

182

00:20:21,423 --> 00:20:37,417

Many of these men were touched by the music and the memory of a fellow soldier who never returned.

183

00:20:37,417 --> 00:20:41,415

There were millions of casualties during World War II.

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00:20:41,415 --> 00:20:45,414

Every death affected someone.

185

00:20:45,414 --> 00:20:52,411

But the disappearance of Glenn Miller affected us all.

186

00:20:52,411 --> 00:20:54,410

It ended an era.

187

00:21:41,392 --> 00:21:45,390

The crew ship Aquililaro and other terrorist acts against Americans.

188

00:21:45,390 --> 00:21:49,389

Then Weapons at War takes you into battle with combat engineers.

189

00:21:49,389 --> 00:21:54,387

And log on at veterans.com, a new website brought to you by the History Channel.

190

00:21:54,387 --> 00:22:02,384

Veterans.com, a place where veterans, their families and others can connect, share stories, and pass on the legacies of all American veterans.