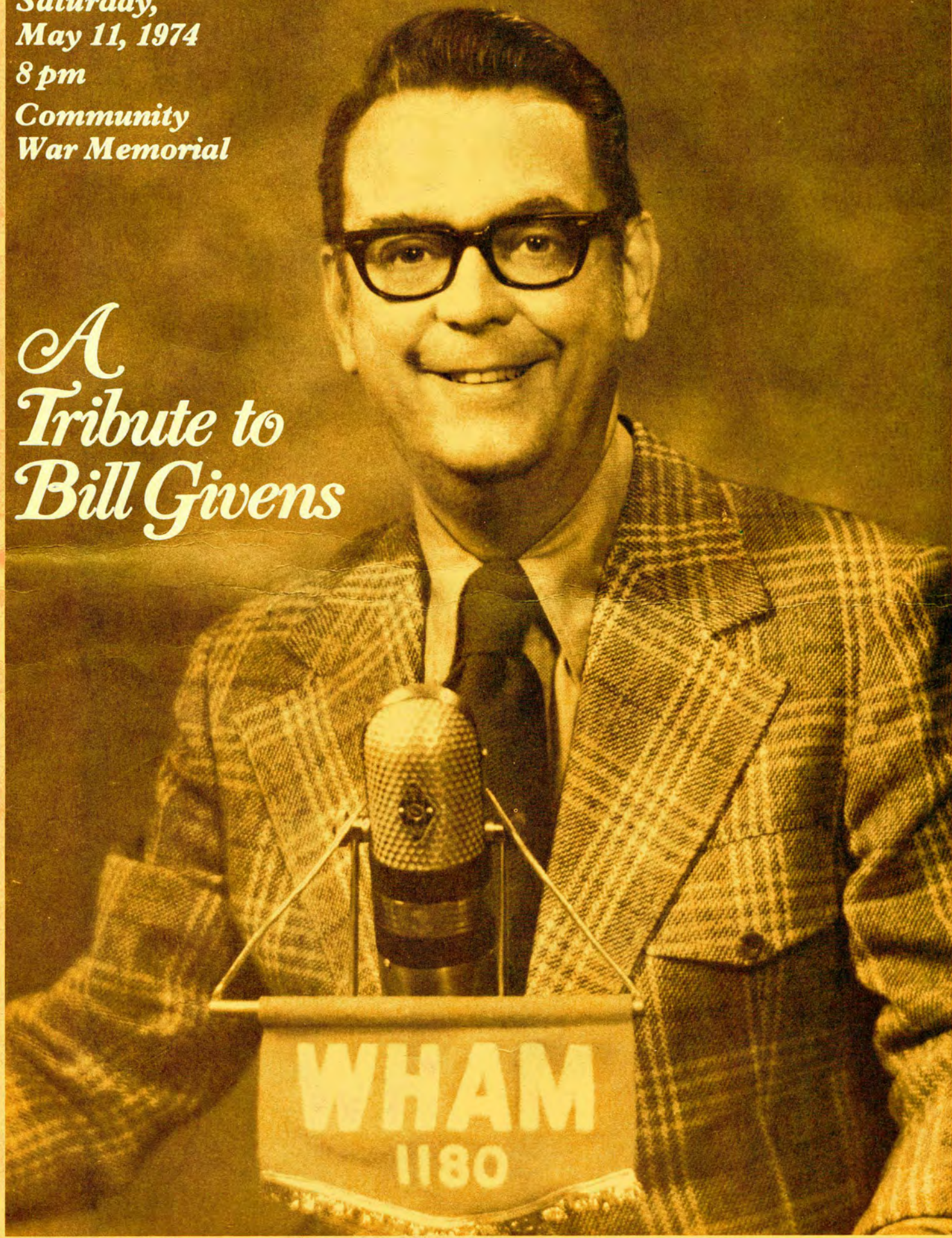


*Saturday,  
May 11, 1974*

*8 pm*

*Community  
War Memorial*

*A  
Tribute to  
Bill Givens*



# Bill Givens



***“I’ve been a very fortunate man because I’ve never been able to separate my work from my hobbies. They are the same thing.”***

***Bill Givens,  
November 1966***

In that simple statement which Bill Givens made to a reporter several years ago, he revealed his whole approach to the beautiful life that was his.

It was a life made even fuller than the statement seems to suggest because of his total involvement with people.

Bill cared about people. He cared so deeply for his fellow human beings that it’s the one quality which people remember most about him, no matter who they are.

Even as far back as the early 1940s and 50s, when he was just starting out in radio, Bill already had become the unselfish, concerned gentleman with the smooth, deep voice whose “caring” could sometimes even be felt right through the radio over the airwaves.

While he was working at KYW Radio in Philadelphia from 1951 to 1956, he journeyed every Monday to the city’s Veterans Administration Hospital, lugging his tapes and tape recorders with him, to present his four-hour Big Band “special tribute” programs to the patients. He brought Philadelphia Phillies baseball stars to the hospital. He recorded interviews with sports figures and, with the help of the VA, distributed them to more than 170 VA hospitals throughout the country.

In 1954, he received an award—the Veterans of Foreign Wars award—which honored him as the “individual contributing most to Disabled American War Veterans through Radio...” But he shrugged it off, along with nine other national awards he received in the 12-year period from 1949 to 1961, as simply his small contribution to the “public service phase” of the radio industry.

In 1956, he took a year’s “leave of absence” from his job at KYW to return to his hometown station in Elmira because “the station was in trouble and for purely sentimental and personal reasons, I chose to respond to an old friend’s request for help.”

He did many things for “purely personal reasons,” as he put it. Many people learned that this little phrase covered a multitude of caring.

From the time he joined WHAM in 1962, he consistently refused to accept announcer’s talent fees (usually about \$50) for hosting local big band shows. He also refused the money for the countless hours during the last eight years which he spent as “The Voice of the Amerks” narrating the play-by-play of Rochester Americans hockey games over WHAM.

It was all a labor of love for him, he said. “I do these things as my contribution to the business. I just happen to believe that, for me, it’s the right thing to do. A man can’t go on taking things out of his profession. He’s got to put something back now and then.”

Bill loved to tell the story about how he got his start in radio—at the tender age of 11 as the voice of a talking Scottie dog for a Ford Motor Co. commercial. His father

was promotion manager for station WENY in Elmira and encouraged his young son to audition for the dog’s role.

“I got the part,” Bill once laughingly recalled to a friend. “Of course, my voice has changed a little since then, but it got me started. By the time I was 15, I had graduated to the status of ‘junior announcer,’” a job that involved a lot of “running out for sandwiches for the boss.” But it also meant 25 hours a week on the air with record programs.

His passion since the age of 12 was the Big Bands. He spent much of his radio earnings on records and visits to dance halls to hear his idols play. But it wasn’t until 1953, when he and the late Jack Pyle of KYW presented their first “Saturday Night Dance Party,” that he got his chance to pay tribute to the men and women of music he so greatly admired.

His love affair with the big bands grew and grew. His programs became more and more specialized, as he moved first to WBZ and later to WORL in Boston. He became a recognized expert throughout the country on the sounds of the 30s and 40s. Nothing pleased him more.

He counted many of the big band leaders among his friends—Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey, Artie Shaw, Woody Herman, Glen Gray. He was mentioned in George T. Simon’s excellent book, “The Big Bands,” for broadcasting a 6½-hour marathon show over WHAM in 1966 featuring nothing but 102 theme songs of the big bands.

He used to joke that he married his wife, Connie, “for her Glenn Miller collection.” Connie, Bill and their son, Bill, 26, shared many good times together.

Young Bill relished having such a famous father. “It was a very heady feeling being his son,” he said. “I knew right away I could never settle on a normal ‘nine-to-five’ existence after being exposed to all the fantastic experiences he offered me. Of course, I never thought of him as anything but my father... he was a super father.”

Bill’s life and influence touched hundreds of Rochesterians in an unforgettable way. Rochester Americans coach Don Cherry attributes his return to hockey after a 2-year retirement entirely to Bill.

“Bill was instrumental in persuading me to come back,” Cherry said. “He told me, ‘Cut out this nonsense and let’s get back into this game.’ I listened to him and it changed my whole life.”

“Bill was completely in love with the game of hockey,” Cherry recalled. “I suppose next to Big Band music, you could call hockey his first love. If we win the Calder Cup this year, I’d like to dedicate it to Bill Givens. Everything we’ve done this year has seemed kind of empty without him.”

That emptiness is there in the studios of WHAM. “Bill was one of the most dedicated men I’ve ever worked with. He was my right arm,” said station general manager Bob Luther. “He was probably one

of the most unselfish men I've ever known. He never stopped giving of himself. You just don't replace people like that."

Bill's presence is missed by Walter Dixon, WHAM's production manager, who occupied the office next to Bill's for more than 10 years.

"They say that a person's immortality lies in the people he touches," Dixon said. "If that's so, then Bill Givens is very far from dead. He was able to present the music he loved, and to share the love he had for that music, with hundreds of thousands of people—to present it as a living entity. And his listeners accepted it as such.

"Anyone who listens to Glenn Miller or Benny Goodman today will know that Bill Givens still lives in that music."

Probably his closest friend outside the station was Frank Argento, whose similar love for Big Band music brought the two men together. Frank spent many weekend hours taping his friend's Big Band salutes for posterity.

"Bill was a caring human being," Frank said. "He cared as much for his friends and their well-being as any man I've ever met.

"The image he projected through the microphone was not a false image. It was really the man. Frankly, I miss him."

In September, 1973, a month before his death, Bill served as master of ceremonies at a concert and dance featuring singer Bob Eberly and the Jimmy Dorsey orchestra at the Monroe County Fairgrounds.

During the intermission, he told a friend he wanted to arrange "just one more" live Big Band tribute, this time to his favorite band, Glenn Miller.

"Then," he said, "I'll be happy to call it quits."



Bill and fellow KYW disc-jockey Jack Pyle shared a passion for Big Bands, and put it to good use with their "Saturday Night Dance Party," beginning in 1953. Bill wrote all the scripts and rounded up all the records for the four-hour shows.



Recognize that man on the left? None other than Rochester's own Mitch Miller, sitting in with Bill during a WORL broadcast in Boston in the late 1950s.

# Turning a Dream Into Reality



Father Charles J. Lavery, Fisher President.

In 1949, the St. John Fisher College campus was a large, vacant plot of land at the corner of East Avenue and Fairport Road in Pittsford.

Today, that plot has become a handsome and lively campus of 10 buildings for more than 1400 students on a spacious, 125-acre setting.

Later this year, an eleventh building at the center of the campus will be completed—the new \$2.6 million Fisher library, with room to accommodate 200,000 volumes plus facilities for film and television viewing, tape recording and computer technology.

In June, 1973, when Bishop James E. Kearney dug the first spadeful of earth for the new, ultra-modern library, it marked another milestone in Fisher's continuing saga of turning dreams into reality.

"As the college approaches its 25th anniversary celebration in 1976," said Fisher President, the Rev. Charles J. Lavery, "the new library will stand as a tribute to the many friends, both personal and corporate, who were committed to the dream of St. John Fisher College and who now witness the reality of a fine educational institution."

The new library is only the latest example of Fisher's growth in the last quarter century. In 1951, the first entering class numbered 110 men. Today, enrollment stands at 1,505 men and women, with the addition of the first Fisher coeds in 1971. Coeds now number 300, with 75 in residence on the campus. More than 500 Fisher men also live on campus.

In July, 1972, the Kresge Foundation of Detroit, Michigan, made a challenge grant of \$250,000 toward the construction of the

library, followed in October by an additional \$250,000 from the Eastman Kodak Co. In addition, throughout the past year, many companies and foundations in the Greater Rochester area have been generous in extending their support to the building of the new facility.

The 57,000-square-foot library will be constructed of tan brick and exposed concrete finishes, in harmony with other campus buildings. Its design, by Louis Rossetti of Detroit, assisted by Frazer Poole of the Library of Congress as consultant, will accommodate growth patterns to the year 2000. It will be air-conditioned and carpeted throughout, with seating space for 525 students.

Robert J. Gullo, Fisher library director, said the new library "will incorporate the most recent technical advances in communications sciences. There will be facilities for film and television viewing, with 150 electrified individual study carrels for TV monitoring and viewing of all types of films and slides, plus facilities for listening to tape recordings of poetry, lectures and music.

"In addition," Mr. Gullo said, "the library will be equipped so that its many services will be available to the people of the community and to the librarians of the Rochester Regional Resource Committee."

Special rooms in the new facility will include student group study rooms, seminar and typing areas, the Bill Givens Multi-Media Center (see page 6), and a special Rochester-Genesee Country Room featuring early artifacts and primary source materials detailing Rochester's history from the earliest days of the Seneca Indian set-



Rendering of the new St. John Fisher library, to be completed later this year.

tlements and Jesuit Missions of the 1600s through the rise of the Rochester area as a business and manufacturing center.

Father Lavery emphasized the new library's great accessibility to the Rochester community. "Since 80 per cent of Fisher graduates live and work in the Greater Rochester area, and since almost two thirds of our present students are commuters," he said, "Fisher feels it has an even greater commitment to offer the library as a resource to the community.

"Fisher was established to provide a liberal arts education primarily to Monroe County residents—and we want to include all residents in that category, not just our full-time students.

"We want the entire community to feel that the Fisher library is theirs to use whenever they wish," he said. "We see our new facility as a significant contribution to be shared by all the area educational institutions as well as by the Greater Rochester community."



(Left): Bishop James E. Kearney turns the first sod for Fisher's new library on June 22. Looking on is Fisher's President Rev. Charles J. Lavery, C.S.B., Bishop Joseph Hogan, Bishop Raphael Ndingi '69, and Mr. John Maloney.



Above photo shows construction of the new Fisher library.

# *Bill Givens Multi-Media Center A Living Memorial*

When the new St. John Fisher College library opens later this year, it will offer students and residents of the Greater Rochester area a unique way of appreciating the performing arts with the Bill Givens Multi-Media Center.

The concept for the Bill Givens Multi-Media Center grew out of the Givens family's interest in St. John Fisher College and their long-time friendship with the Rev. Charles J. Lavery, president of Fisher. In addition, the Givens family is committed to sharing the rich resources of the record collection with the entire community.

The Givens Center, located in the college's new \$2.6 million library, will include a listening room and control room with the latest in electronic recording and playback facilities plus a lecture hall. It will contain Givens' entire record collection, transferred to high-fidelity tape for safe handling, plus selected actual scripts that he wrote for use on his weekend shows on WHAM. Another long-time friend of Givens, Frank Argento, a Fisher alumnus and a member of the College Board of Trustees, is donating his own collection of tapes of Givens' weekend broadcasts on WHAM so that students can experience the total process of broadcast feature journalism—from concept to conclusion.

"To duplicate a collection like this would take at least 10 years," said Robert J. Gullo, Fisher library director. "It's a thrill to have something like this for the new Center. Here we have a segment of music important to the 20th century, a unique period in music history, on which we can build, with music and literature both before and after that period."

Father Lavery sees the new Multi-Media Center as a unique way to "offer students, as well as the entire Rochester community, the opportunity for study and appreciation of a recent era of the performing arts as one facet of the college's liberal arts program."

Father Lavery added: "Fisher is interested in enhancing this phase of its academic program—appreciation of music and arts—as well as providing the opportunity to study all phases of communications skills relevant to the 1970s and beyond as part of its increasing focus on communications and journalism."



Frank Argento, a Fisher alumnus and member of the college's board of trustees, presents Fisher President Father Charles J. Lavery, with some of the tapes Argento made of Bill Givens' weekend Big Band shows on WHAM, for use in the new Bill Givens Multi-Media Center.

Father Lavery continued: "It is interesting to note that the fine collection in the Fisher library—remarkable for a small, private college—was initiated, nearly 25 years ago, through the generous gift of 25,000 volumes by the late Father Bernard J. Gefell, pastor of St. Jerome's Church, East Rochester. Since then, a number of benefactors have added to the college collections; the creation of the Givens Multi-Media Center is the most recent, and one of the most significant, gifts in this tradition.

"We are honored to have this priceless collection of records, tapes, and scripts on campus and to be able to fulfill the family's desire to provide community access to these resources through our new library."

# *WHAM Presents...*



*Harry Abraham*



*Tom Badger*



*Dick DeMeco*



*Tom Gallagher*



*Ed Grimsley*



*Hal Field*



*George Haefner*



*Ed Hasbrouck*



*Bill Kimble*



*Mike Morgan*



*David A. Sennett*



*Jack Slattery*

# Bill Givens: Close Up



The date was July 12, 1947, the wedding day of young Bill Givens and his bride, Connie Mowchan. The two met at Elmira radio station WENY, where Bill began his radio career and Connie worked as "the boss's secretary."



It was also at KYW that Bill, with the help of d.j. Jack Pyle, began producing tributes to the Big Bands, with the first "Saturday Night Dance Party" aired in October, 1953. Guests like bandleader Artie Shaw (above) made frequent visits.



This is one of the earliest publicity photos taken of Bill, at station WGY in Schenectady in the late 1940s. He served as farm broadcaster and later headed General Electric's Radio and TV Agricultural Broadcasting Department there.



Bill always treasured this autographed photo of Glenn Miller vocalist Tex Beneke, taken with the Givens family in Philadelphia. Beneke wrote: "Best wishes to Connie and Bill—Sincerely, Tex Beneke." The woman next to Connie is her aunt, Mildred Rogers.



In 1951, Bill joined Philadelphia station KYW to organize agricultural broadcasting activities for the Westinghouse Broadcasting Co. He also did a morning wake-up show, "The Morning Rovers," with fellow disc-jockey Vince Lee (above) . . . assisted by Rover, their canary, and a player piano.



Bill did hundreds of sports interviews while in Philadelphia, many of them for hospitalized soldiers in VA hospitals throughout the country. Here he talks with Philadelphia Phillies stars Curt Simmons (left) and Del Ennis.



It was a wide-eyed Billy Givens who beamed at the camera during dinner out with his parents in the Cafe Rouge of the Hotel Statler in New York City in the 1950s. Billy admitted that his early introduction into night life was a rare treat which he greatly appreciated.



In the above photo, Bill discusses Stan Kenton's album, "The Kenton Era," with the master himself.



Bill counted bandleader Woody Herman (right) among his close friends. Woody often dropped in at the KYW studios.



Remember Burr Tilstrom and Kukla, Fran and Ollie? Bill took a moment to pose with Burr and the puppets in downtown Philadelphia.



In the late 1950s, Bill joined station WBZ and later, station WORL in Boston. When bandleader Glen Gray (left) heard Bill was doing a salute to his Casa Loma orchestra on WORL, he left a golf match in nearby Plymouth—still wearing his golf clothes—to sit in with Bill and reminisce for four hours about the orchestra.



WHAM, Circa 1960s: Bill joined WHAM in 1962 and shortly afterward, this photo was taken. From left: Jack Slattery, Louise Wilson, Matt Matteo, Mike Morgan, Bill Ardis, Givens, Allen Browning, Peter Grobe, Bob Penrod, Chuck Platt and George Haefner.



From 1965 until his death, Bill handled the play-by-play for all Rochester Americans hockey games, frequently assisted by his son, Billy. Here, he reviews the teams for the radio audience, with the help of a players' roster.



In one of his last public appearances last fall, Bill served as master of ceremonies at the dedication of Hollleder (formerly Aquinas) Stadium in September. Seated, from left to right, are County Legislature President Joseph Ferrari, an unidentified Army officer, City Councilman Charles Schiano, Givens, Bishop Joseph Hogan and Former Rochester Mayor Stephen May.

# Presenting...



## **Ray McKinley:**

The friendship between Ray McKinley and Glenn Miller began in the late 1930s when both men were playing in separate orchestras across the country. McKinley, an amazing drummer who propels a swinging beat very often with a Chicago-style-Dixieland basis, spent the early part of his musical career with the Dorsey Brothers and as a bandleader with Will Bradley. He formed his own group in 1942 and recorded the famous hit, "Hard Hearted Hannah," which featured his own rhythmic vocal stylings. When he disbanded his group in 1943 to enter the service, he immediately looked up Miller who had already enlisted, and was selected for, the now famous Air Force Orchestra. When Miller was mysteriously lost over the English Channel, McKinley became the new leader of the orchestra which, in eight months in Europe, was to play for more people than any orchestra had ever done.

McKinley began his own highly popular band after the war but disbanded the group in the early 1950s during the Big Band decline. In 1956, however, he was asked to reorganize a band for the Glenn Miller estate and began happily reviving the unforgettable Miller sounds of "In the Mood," "String of Pearls," "Tuxedo Junction" and scores of other Miller originals. McKinley has since shared the Miller band podium with clarinetist Buddy DeFranco, helping introduce a whole new generation of listeners to Miller Music.

## **Ray Eberle:**

Smooth-styling vocalist Ray Eberle was first introduced to Glenn Miller in 1938 by his older brother, Bob Eberly, who was singing with the Jimmy Dorsey Orchestra in New York. Miller immediately asked Ray to join the new band he was forming because, as Ray recalled, "I guess Glenn figured an Eberle by any name would sing as sweet." He remained with the Miller band until Glenn disbanded the group to join the service in 1942. During his four years with the band, Eberle made many million-selling records including "Elmer's Tune," "Serenade in Blue," "Moonlight Cocktails," and "Blue Champagne."

During the war Ray signed on with Universal Studios, then joined the Army. After his discharge, he formed his own band, playing at supper clubs, hotels and colleges. Six years ago, Ray, Tex Beneke and the Modernaires with Paula Kelly formed an orchestra backing "The Original Glenn Miller Singers," and toured successfully for several years in the U.S., Germany and the Scandinavian countries. Ray has since made recordings for Warner Brothers, Capitol and Columbia records and is preparing for an album to be recorded with RCA.





## ***The Warren Covington Orchestra and the Pied Pipers***

As a special added attraction to the Bill Givens Tribute, WHAM is proud to present Music Made Famous by Tommy Dorsey, with the Warren Covington Orchestra and the Pied Pipers. (Paula Kelly and The Modernaires, originally scheduled to appear, will not be performing due to the illness of Miss Kelly).

Tommy Dorsey was an early influence on many-talented musician Warren Covington. Warren took up trombone as a high school youth in his native Philadelphia, and after graduation, played with several local bands before going to New York City to join Mitch Ayers, and later, Horace Heidt. While serving a hitch in the U.S. Coast Guard, he toured with the "Tars and Spars" reviews, featuring stars like Sid Caesar and Victor Mature. After his discharge, he played with the Les Brown and Gene Krupa bands before joining the CBS Orchestra for 10 years, playing for the Perry Como, Ed Sullivan and Jackie Gleason shows. He assumed leadership of the Decca Record band, The Commanders, and was such a sensation that he was asked by the Dorsey estate to take over leadership of the Tommy Dorsey orchestra shortly after Dorsey's death in February, 1958. He led the orchestra for 3½ years—recording the million-seller "Tea for Two Cha Cha"—before forming his own self-styled band, the Warren Covington Orchestra. The Covington group now regularly tours the country from Canada to Mexico, performing the Dorsey hits from the past as well as current popular hits arranged by Covington.

Bill Givens often said the Tommy Dorsey band was one of the most versatile groups ever put together. The original Tommy Dorsey Orchestra was formed by Tommy in 1933, with young trombonist Glenn Miller one of the original members. For more than 20 years, the orchestra thrilled audiences with their arrangements of the Dorsey theme, "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You," and such hits as "Opus No. 1," "Sunny Side of the Street," "Marie," and their million-seller, "T.D. Boogie." Among the original vocalists with the band were Jo Stafford, a very young Frank Sinatra and the Pied Pipers. The Pipers were known for their smooth styling and natural musical ability. Even though the faces in the group have changed, the style is still there, as a perfect complement to the Dorsey sound.



*"You know, I've never lost my awe or respect for those big bands.  
Call it hero worship if you will, but I genuinely love them."*

***George William Givens***  
***1923–1973***