

EDWARD BURKE COLLECTION

(Summary)



Dennis Spragg and Ed Burke, Miami, Florida, December 2009

A National Treasure

2,500 audio tapes, thousands of photographs, documents, records, transcription discs and complete sets of music and entertainment industry magazines are resident in the GMA Edward Burke Collection. Every musical artist who appeared on radio between 1930 and 1960 can be found in the Burke Collection. All of the significant musicians of the “Big Band Era” and singers of the years following the Second World War are significantly represented in the Burke Collection. This collection is a national treasure. The permanent preservation of the Burke Collection is possible because many people had the foresight and interest to make it happen. Mr. Burke, his family, the GMA and our benefactors have ensured that students, scholars and the public will have the ability to discover, understand and enjoy the artistry of 20th Century American musical talent in a comprehensive manner.



Metronome Magazine, November 1943 - Betty Grable and Harry James

As the GMA relocates with the AMRC Collections into the CU Norlin Library, the Burke Collection will be made available for researchers in a user-friendly manner with state-of-the-art listening tools and rooms. The GMA has been prioritizing, cataloging and transferring the collection from analog to digital format ... and learning much about the quality and unique character of the collection. A complete inventory of the collection is being prepared. Interested researchers can learn more by contacting the GMA.



The Ed Burke Tapes, March 2008, Fort Lauderdale, Florida

The size and scope of the Ed Burke Collection, which includes performances by every musician and entertainer who appeared on records or radio between 1930 and 1960 is enormous, and includes many thousands of hours of unique audio content. Content from every radio network is represented. Original broadcasts by Glenn Miller, as well as his contemporaries including Tommy Dorsey, Harry James, Benny Goodman and many others are contained in the collection. For completeness and continuity, the Glenn Miller Archive has also acquired the papers, records and correspondence of Ed Burke and his private commercial record businesses. There are many priceless photographs, negatives and magazines in the collection.

In 1949, Ed Burke, a Miami, Florida teenager, walked into radio station WGBS and asked if he could see what a transcription disc looked like. Over time, his interest grew into an internationally recognized leading collection of original audio discs and tapes and business. Mr. Burke founded and operated the independent record and compact discs labels Fanfare, Jazz Hour and Soundcraft.



Tommy Dorsey NBC Disc Label, 1942

The Glenn Miller Archive has a special bond with Ed Burke, having become close to him during time we jointly explored the idea of preserving the Burke Collection and then making it happen. We came to understand and treasure Mr. Burke's knowledge, kindness and wit. Coincidentally, the radio station where he started his path toward legendary status was the same radio station where Dennis Spragg of the American Music Research Center and Glenn Miller Archive later first worked during summers as a college student. Mr. Burke also once taught music at the same high school Mr. Spragg attended.

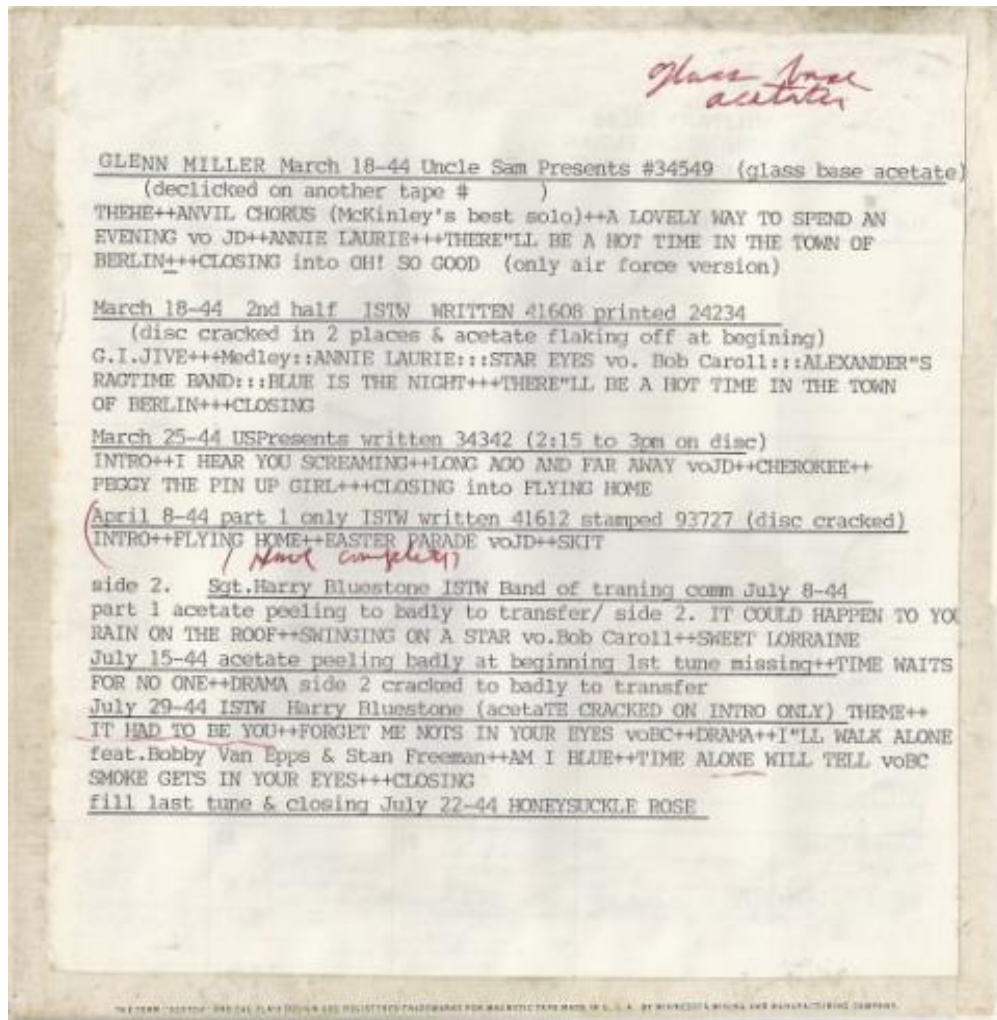


Kay Kyser - Autographed Publicity Photo

Examples of original programs from the Burke Collection have been shared with the public on the weekly "The Star Spangled Radio Hour" broadcasts produced by the GMA with KEZW, Denver, Studio 1430. The program is broadcast worldwide every Saturday evening at 6:00 p.m. MST/MDT (GMT -7/-6) and available streaming online at: www.kezw.com and www.studio1430.com

About The Recordings

The audio recordings contained in the Burke Collection are of great cultural and historical significance. The recordings contain entire radio broadcasts. There are recordings in the collection that are unique and do not exist elsewhere. Although portions of the Burke Collection are in existence elsewhere, the fragile nature of audiovisual materials make the collection a valuable preservation resource. The collection was maintained at Mr. Burke's home and later studio in South Florida. Dr. Doug Boyd, Director of the Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, The University of Kentucky, gave us a scientific analysis of the collection following an on-site visit in Florida with Ed Burke and accompanied by AMRC Chairman Prof. Tom Riis and Dennis Spragg. The following description of the Burke Tapes quotes in part from Dr. Boyd's report.



Tape B-59, Edward Burke Collection

Although the climate of South Florida is a challenge for preservation due to heat and humidity, Dr. Boyd found the collection to generally be in surprisingly excellent condition. However, it was essential that the collection be moved to a safer and climate-controlled location to save the tapes from near-term and eventual damage. The dry climate and altitude of Boulder, Colorado and the climate-controlled GMA storage facilities were a perfect match.

Mr. Burke made professional transfers of high quality transcription discs obtained directly from recording companies and radio stations of performances generally dating from the 1930s through the 1950s. Most of the tapes are 7 inch reels recorded at 7 ½ ips. The tapes are recorded in both 2-sided and 4-sided formats. The latter contain up to 120 minutes of recording. Mr. Burke maintained his equipment and recordings very well. The collection was organized by performer, date of performance and venue, with exceptions for variety programs such as the Armed Forces Radio Service “Command Performance”, for example, where the tapes were arranged by program title. The individual artists most prominently represented in the collection are Glenn Miller, Tommy Dorsey, Duke Ellington, Benny Goodman, Harry James, Stan Kenton, Kay Kyser, Woody Herman and Louis Armstrong, among others. Flat transfers were made by Mr. Burke to tape from the original discs. Flaws can be enhanced by professional digital optimization during the restoration process. There is little evidence of “print-through” where the recorded signal on one tape “bleeds” over to adjacent tape windings. As is common for these types of recordings, there can be occasional “hiss” and “rumble”. Very few examples of “wow” and “flutter” exist. Mr. Burke made meticulous and conscientious transfers.

Dr. Boyd found that “Mr. Burke is responsible for the preservation of an extraordinary cultural resource. These tapes contain rare recordings representing vital components of musical and cultural history.” The GMA is following Dr. Boyd’s specific recommendations regarding timely digitization and eventual public access to this resource.

The Ed Burke Legacy

The GMA salutes Ed Burke and his lifetime achievements by preserving, restoring and communicating the importance of his collection. His legacy lives alongside the legacies of the artists that he worked hard to present to the public with love and admiration. There could be no better tribute to Mr. Burke and honor for his children, grandchildren and friends.



The Home of the GMA Edward Burke Collection