Glen Dill Collection: A Collection Guide

Nelson Poynter Memorial Library. Special Collections and University Archives.

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The Glen Dill Collection

Glen Dill at St. Petersburg’s WTSP Radio during His Morning “Sun Dial” Program

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Cartoon of Glen Dill by noted columnist Dick Bothwell of the St. Petersburg Times

Introduction to the Collection and Biographical Information

Special Collections and Archives received a donation of nearly a dozen scrapbooks from the Pasco-Hernando Community College library in New Port Richey through Douglas A. Butler, associate director of libraries. These materials document the life of Glen Dill, a popular radio personality, local historian, and newspaper columnist. Dill (1910-1993) was the first voice many radio listeners heard in the morning when they tuned into WTSP-AM, a St. Petersburg radio station, from 1942 until 1957. Dill later worked as a disc-jockey and general manager at other local radio stations, including WILZ and WGUL. He also wrote more than one thousand newspaper columns for the Suncoast News and other papers, most with a focus on local history that later became the basis for his 1986 book, The Suncoast Past. The bulk of this collection focuses on Dill's radio days in St. Petersburg during the postwar years, and includes letters, photographs, postcards, and clippings.

Preservation Note

While preservation measures may slow the physical deterioration of items in this collection, these steps cannot prevent damage from occurring. Please report any tears or other damage so that library staff may take appropriate preservation or conservation measures. Protective gloves should be worn when handling all photographs and brittle documents. Many newspaper clippings show signs of deterioration due to age and their former presence in scrapbooks. Staff has removed many items from scrapbooks with acidic paper; in some cases, patrons may notice glue residue or evidence of other adhesives on some materials. While no restrictions limit access to this collection, library staff will evaluate photocopying or digitization requests on an individual basis to ensure the long-term preservation of this unique collection. Patrons using this collection must adhere to copyright and fair-use guidelines and provide proper citation of sources appearing in their research.

Provenance of the Glen Dill Collection

This collection falls under the Local and Regional History provenance of the Special Collections and Archives department, Nelson Poynter Memorial Library, USF St. Petersburg.
A busy day fishing along the Gulf Coast, 1950s.

Scope and Contents

The contents occupy one photographic album, three scrapbooks, five boxes, and two film containers and include photographs (including many with autographs), correspondence, postcards, press releases, newspaper clippings, and various ephemera. The bulk of the collection covers the period from 1940 through 1979, though there are a few items from earlier and later periods.

Collection Guide

Series: Photographic Album
Extent: 1 album

Series Note:
Glen Dill’s photo album opens with a 1943 Treasury certificate recognizing his participation in the World War II War Savings program. The pages that follow offer an incredible glimpse at ordinary citizens throughout Florida and the United States in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The pages are packed with photographs and letters from fans of all ages: young men and women, families, newborns, and older couples. Letters are predominantly from the central Florida region; however there are letters and pictures from soldiers based in Hawaii, a family in Segreganset, Massachusetts, fans from California, and other locations throughout the U.S. Interspersed with correspondence from fans are pictures, some autographed, of actresses, such as Lizabeth Scott and Irish McCalla “Queen of the Jungle,” and musical talents such as Ralph Flanagan, The Modernaires, and Spike Jones of Spike Jones and the City Slickers. Other novelties include a signed picture of Grady Stiles Jr., the “Lobster Boy;” an autographed copy of the lyrics for “On the shores of Boca Ciega” by Grace Snyder; a photo of Artie Wayne singing on the radio with Rita Hayworth; and a handwritten postcard from Fred and Fae of the “Fred & Fae” TV show.
Series: Scrapbooks
Extent: 3 Items (1 Oversize; 1 General; 1 Made from a Ledger Book)

Series Note:
Glen Dill’s dedication to the St. Petersburg community is revealed by the numerous newspaper clippings detailing his local services. From participation in the first St. Petersburg Little League team to emceeing numerous local beauty pageants and high school sports events, Dill was the community’s voice and spirit. Also apparent is the devotion of his fans, who sent a record number of postcards, Christmas cards, and other correspondence—many of which are preserved in this scrapbook. In addition, St. Petersburg and surrounding communities in the fifties and early sixties are brilliantly illuminated through area photos and postcards, unusual certificates such as the Homosassa Springs “Gator Baiter” certificate, programs from local events such as the Third Annual Adventurers Clinic sponsored by the Women’s Advertising Club of St. Petersburg, and correspondence from community leaders. Finally, the respect the entertainment world had for Dill can be seen by the many autographs and correspondence Dill collected throughout the years. Some of the highlights include a letter written by pop star Tommy Sands when he was fifteen years old and promoting his first RCA recording, a Christmas card from vocalist Dinah Shore, autographed photos from Doris Day and Eddy Arnold, and autographs from jazz greats Duke Ellington, Count Basie, and Tommy Dorsey, among others.

PHOTOGRAPHS INCLUDE (Incomplete list)
- Family
- Eddy Arnold, autographed
- The Three Suns, autographed
- Doris Day, autographed
- Patrice Munsel, autographed
- Gene Austin, autographed
- Betty Hutchinson, autographed
- Lauritz Melchior, autographed
- Ralph Flanagan
- Don Haynes, autographed
- Dill with early Little League teams in St Pete
- Dill eating spaghetti
- June Cabot
- Herb Smith
- Tom Harris, St. Petersburg Times
- Marion Mann, autographed
- Hildegarde, autographed
- John W Woods
- R Woodruff Tatlock, autographed
- Willis Bros., The Oklahoma Wranglers, autographed
- George Rock, autographed
- Doodles Weaver, autographed
- Golfers: Leo Driegel, Walter Hagen, Ossie Carlton, Les Frisinger, George Fisher

AUTOGRAPHS ON CORRESPONDENCE INCLUDE:
- David Rubinoff, violinist
- Tommy Dorsey
- Pat Rooney Sr.
- Buddy Rich
- Dinah Washington
- Count Basie
Other notable items include an unsigned greeting or Christmas cards from Burt Ives, the Ames Brothers, and Bing Crosby. One of the scrapbooks once served as a ledger, perhaps for one of the radio stations, with account information from the late 1950s and early 1960s.

**Series: Articles and Clippings from the Suncoast News**

**Extent: 1 box (formerly 1 scrapbook)**

**Series Note:**

This series includes articles that appeared in the *Suncoast News* from 1975 through 1979. Each article focuses on a successful entrepreneur, business manager, or professional from the “Upper Suncoast,” a geographical area that included Pasco and Hernando counties as well as parts of Citrus, Pinellas, and Hillsborough counties. Communities commonly mentioned included Tarpon Springs, New Port Richey, and a variety of locales along U.S. Highway 19. The articles possess a uniform content and style. After stating the individuals’ names and occupations, Dill generally described their backgrounds, their place of birth, where they have lived, educational and work careers, who their married, what their hobbies are, and similar biographical vignettes.

The dominant themes in these articles are what one might expect from a 20th century locale along coastal Florida. As the name suggests, the Suncoast is renowned for sunshine and beaches. Dill characterizes the Upper Suncoast as a comfortable last resort, an escape from the “rat race” of cities like New York or Miami (and perhaps nearby urban areas such as Tampa and St. Petersburg), where the traffic alone can be overwhelming. Dill often used his favorite expression, “sand in their shoes”, as a euphemism describing visitors who return to their home state only to discover they would rather be back in Florida. The stereotypical allure of Florida is demonstrated in a man who falls for the Suncoast after watching the sun set on the Gulf. Another woman is drawn by the slogan, “Clearwater: the Springtime City.”

The Suncoast was a newly developing area, with Pan-Atlantic settlement not taking hold until the mid-to-late 1800s. Initially, a few cities sprouted along the coast and the Orange Belt Railroad in the late 1800s. The introduction of highways and automobiles led to a population explosion in many parts of Florida, with growth spilling into the Upper Suncoast by the 1960s and 1970s. With intense growth stemming largely from migration, these inhabitants exhibited a character of “rootlessness.” Most of the people Dill profiled cannot trace their Florida ancestry more than one generation. One newcomer from a military family had moved roughly ten times before coming to Florida. Even within Florida, in-state migration is prevalent, with one resident moving at least seven times within Florida.

Even with warm sunshine, the Suncoast would not be complete without modern goods and services provided by the kinds of people Dill profiles. Among prominent trades are freight
services, chain stores, interior decorating, appliance sales and repair, automobiles and automotive parts, home improvement, tourist services such as bus tours, a “Real Estate Supermarket,” cocktail lounges and exterminators. Articles paint a picture of the growing presence of the elderly as a target market as Dill describes a driving school tailored to retirees from Northern cities who never had to drive until they moved to Florida, not to mention the availability of hearing aids and other assistive devices. Other products and services suggest a complex mix of imports and home-grown items. Many products are distinctly Floridian. A seafood company boasts a freezer and cooler which combined can hold a total of 650,000 lbs. of domestic and imported seafood. Other businesses are offshoots from Northern and Midwestern businesses, including McDonalds, which had a mere ten fast-food establishments in the area, as well as an ambitious tire dealer from Akron, Ohio, who planned to sell 1,000 tires on his first day of business.

Perhaps the ultimate culmination of imported technology and domestic ingenuity mentioned in these articles was the speedboat, which local shops were crafting to travel at 85 mph. One man, an interior decorator by trade, exceeded 100 mph in his speedboat. Given the diversity of consumer demands, several entrepreneurs opted to diversify their businesses. For example, an automotive parts store offered GE appliances and Zenith home entertainment products to customers who ventured into the building. Likewise, a tire store included storage facilities. Diversification can even be traced back to the area’s earliest bank, where patrons could once order firewood.

As for the people who Dill profiles, they are predominately hard-working men and a few women with a clear vision. Most of them hailed from elsewhere and settled in Florida. Hence, they learned their trades in other parts of the country. Many of the businessmen started their enterprises after serving in the armed forces. A few became involved with Diversified Cooperative Training (DCT), which Dill credited for with providing quality vocational training to adults in the area for more than twenty-five years. Most of them worked on or near US 19, and nearly all of them enjoyed the benefits of living near to a warm, sunny beach.

**Container Listing**

| Box 1, Folder 1:        | Scrapbook 14 [World]: Postcards from Binder |
| Box 1, Folder 2:        | Scrapbook 14 [World]: 1975 Articles         |
| Box 1, Folder 3:        | Scrapbook 14 [World]: 1976 Articles         |
| Box 1, Folder 4:        | Scrapbook 14 [World]: 1977 Articles         |
| Box 1, Folder 5:        | Scrapbook 14 [World]: 1978 Articles         |
| Box 1, Folder 6:        | Scrapbook 14 [World]: 1979 Articles         |

**Series: Correspondence with Oddities**

**Extent:** 1 box (formerly 1 scrapbook)

**Series Note:**

Materials in this series showcase a variety of letters and postcards that would confuse high-tech postal sorters and deliverers today. Includes correspondence with unique elements, such as postcards mailed to him (that he received) that did not have a mailing address, or just had his name (or a play of his name, such as a card addressed to "Mrs. Dill Pickle" with no city or street address). Also cards/letters with "postage due." Some of the letters in folder 3 include envelopes with funny comments. One was addressed to "Professor Glenny Dilly" at W.T.S.P. with clarification that the call letters meant "We Torment Stupid People"; another fan sent the letter to "My Daddy Glenn Dill." A letter addressed to "The Man with a Smile in His Voice." One listener
sent a piece of paper with nothing but the word "Corn" typed in rows. Includes some greeting cards and cartoons. Also of interest are some of the postcards that once graced the cover of the binder, including a postcard of Gibbs High School (St. Petersburg's only high school for African Americans) from the early 1950s.

**Container Listing**

**Box 2, Folder 1:** Scrapbook 17 [Odd]: Postcards from Binder  
**Box 2, Folder 2:** Scrapbook 17 [Odd]: Guide, Postcard Oddities, Letters  
**Box 2, Folder 3:** Scrapbook 17 [Odd]: Postcards and Letters  
**Box 2, Folder 4:** Scrapbook 17 [Odd]: Postcards and Letters

**Series: Jokes and Greeting Cards**  
**Extent:** 2 boxes (formerly 3 scrapbooks)

**Series Note:**  
Includes his folders that contained jokes and funny stories used during his radio broadcasts. Some are handwritten or typed, while others were borrowed from other sources. Includes some cartoons.

**Container Listing**

**Box 3, Folder 1:** Scrapbook 32 [Jokes]: Postcards from Binder  
**Box 3, Folder 2:** Scrapbook 32 [Jokes]: A-F  
**Box 3, Folder 3:** Scrapbook 32 [Jokes]: G-M  
**Box 3, Folder 4:** Scrapbook 32 [Jokes]: N-T  
**Box 3, Folder 5:** Scrapbook 32 [Jokes]: U-Z  
**Box 3, Folder 6:** Scrapbook 32 [Jokes]: Correspondence and Clippings  
**Box 4, Folder 1:** Scrapbook 33 [Jokes]: Postcards from Binder  
**Box 4, Folder 2:** Scrapbook 33 [Jokes]: B-C  
**Box 4, Folder 3:** Scrapbook 33 [Jokes]: E, F, Other  
**Box 4, Folder 4:** Scrapbook 33 [Jokes]: H, I, Human Interest  
**Box 4, Folder 5:** Scrapbook 33 [Jokes]: J-P  
**Box 4, Folder 6:** Scrapbook 33 [Jokes]: Quotations  
**Box 4, Folder 7:** Scrapbook 33 [Jokes]: Signs, Slogans  
**Box 4, Folder 8:** Scrapbook 33 [Jokes]: T, W-Z  
**Box 4, Folder 9:** Scrapbook 40 [Greeting Cards]: Postcards from Binder  
**Box 4, Folder 10:** Scrapbook 40 [Greeting Cards]

**Series: Bicentennial Celebration in Hernando**  
**Extent:** 1 box (formerly 2 scrapbooks)

**Series Note:**  
This collection focuses on the events leading up to the Bicentennial celebration in Hernando County in July 1976. The contents, previously glued into acidic scrapbooks, include newspaper articles, photographs and other materials dated from December 1973 to December 1976. Most of the items in this collection are news articles from The Sun-Journal of Brooksville, the Independent Press, the Tangerine Guide, the Tampa Tribune, and the St. Petersburg Times.
Major planning began in 1974, with ideas and community involvement getting larger in scope and more complex in organization. Government agents were appointed to facilitate and organize the festivities. Lt. Governor Tom Adams was the chairman of Florida’s Bicentennial commission. The central figure in Hernando was Thomas J. Deen, who in December 1973 was appointed Executive Chairman of the Hernando County Action ‘76 Steering committee for the American Revolution Bicentennial.

One of Deen’s first tasks was to create a logo for the celebration. A contest was quickly organized in which a $100 prize would go to the best artist. Charles B. Morgan, a Junior High guidance counselor from Brooksville, was the winner. His design featured Hernando DeSoto, a map of Florida, and an orange branch. Second place went to Patti Gresham, whose logo entitled, “A United Mankind,” featured 2 rings, one red and one blue, linked together. Her original entry is in this collection.

Community involvement in the following months and years included schools, businesses, civic organizations (such as Kiwanis and Lion’s Club), women’s groups, and local scout troops. On April 19, 1975 at Ridge Manor West, Kiwanis celebrated the Bicentennial of Lexington and Concord. The celebration featured USAF Major Glendon W. Perkins, a Vietnam POW as well as the Longwood Elementary School Drum and Fife Corps. The Bicentennial fueled a stronger awareness of the importance of elections. On December 13, 1975, the Hernando Democratic Executive Committee contributed by holding a “Meet Your Elected Officials Day,” in which citizens could mingle with their elected officials. A Christmas parade was a huge hit. A “Miss Hernando” beauty pageant sponsored by the Lion’s Club was also part of the build-up.

With the calendar loaded with Bicentennial events, Hernando County quickly gained recognition for its efforts. In January 1975, the American Revolution Bicentennial Committee deemed Hernando to be an official Bicentennial community. The title did not include funding, but the Committee’s logo “and numerous other ‘theme’ material” was sold and posted around Hernando. Commemorative flags went to participating schools, county buildings, and Boy Scout troop 303. With so much going on, Deen foresaw scheduling conflicts on several events in the upcoming years. In May 1975, the Sun-Journal paraphrased Deen: “there are so many projects and enthusiasm shown throughout the county, it’s hard to keep track of all the activities planned.”

Funding was provided by a variety of sources. The Florida legislature offered financial support to local communities, statewide. A report indicates that counties requested $8 million in grants, with actual Florida statewide appropriations at a comparably modest $260,000. Hernando County sold bonds and solicited sponsors to offset the costs of its ceremony. On May 3, 1975, A.H. Alison, 100 years old at the time, bought the first $1000 bond. A store was opened in Brooksville which sold promotional materials and informational calendars. Volunteers and donations from the community were also significant contributors.

The celebration became an opportunity to develop new and existing cultural institutions. The festivities certainly spurred an interest in local history. As early as March 1974, the Hernando County Historical Commission sought to build a historical museum building. In February 1975, a Brooksville house at the intersection of US 98 and SR 50 originally built in the 1800s was proposed as the site. By May 1975, a request for a $5,000 state grant had been submitted. By September 1975, the committee asked for $100,000 to launch a museum on the Pasco-Hernando Community College campus. By June of 1976, the Florida State Bicentennial Commission approved a $7000 matching grant. With the celebration forthcoming, Deen temporarily shelved the project so he could focus on the festivities.
Along with the museum, Hernando officials sought the production of a respectable historical monograph of the county. By November 1974, Hernando had received $2500 grant for the drafting of the book. Local historian James H. Jones was commissioned to draft the history. Jones had already been working on a narrative for more than ten years, so the Bicentennial created added impetus for Jones to complete the project by July 4, 1975. At one point, the book was expected to cost $10,000 to $12,000. The county expected to reap $7,000 to $9,000 in sales, with Jones receiving 40 percent of all sales exceeding $1,000. By May, 1975, the County had received a state grant for the history.

Something apparently went wrong with Jones’ history. In a news report on the Bicentennial’s progress, the history is said to be “nearing completion.” However, on September 18, 1975, the Tampa Tribune reported that Richard Stanaback had taken over the project. Stanaback, a political science and history instructor at Pinellas-Hernando Community College, had previously published scholarly works in the Florida Historical Quarterly. Stanaback started fresh on compiling the history, scrambling to meet a March 4, 1976 deadline on a $1500 plus an expense budget. By February 28, Stanaback had completed a rough draft that was being edited by the Action ’76 Committee. A committee member explained that it was necessary that “the content of the book put an emphasis on the past rather than with people who are living or lived in recent years. The idea is to enable readers to get to know persons who founded the area.”

Searching for materials from Hernando’s pioneer history, Stanaback searched primarily in the P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History at the University of Florida in Gainesville. There, Stanaback found an 1885 Real Estate Agency publication entitled, “Florida, Resources and Advantages of Hernando County.” Stanaback’s finds from this publication were printed in newspapers. The following excerpt appeared in an article by Debbie Webber in the Tampa Tribune, Hernando Citrus Edition, March 4, 1976:

“Until the last 18 months, our merchants had to have their goods hauled here by wagon from Wildwood, a distance of 40 miles, and parties visiting Brooksville had to come over the same distance by stage.” The publication indicated that three classes were invited to Hernando, “the capitalist”, “the man of moderate means,” and “the man of little or no means, who wants a fortune and is willing to work for it.”

Copies of Stanaback’s history were sold in advance of the book’s release, with a $10 cap on the price. Like the museum, the outcome of Stanaback’s history is not revealed in this collection, though Stanaback and officials were confident he would complete the project on schedule.

In addition to the museum and monograph, pageants and multimedia displays of Hernando’s past were also created. There was also a renewed appreciation in old traditions such as home-spun clothing, especially at the Festival of Arts in January 1976. On February 2, 1976, the Bicentennial Wagon Train passed through Brooksville on its way to Valley Forge, Pa., loaded with scrolls “on which thousands of Floridians have re-pledged their commitment to the principles on which the nation was founded.” During a June 2, 1976 ceremony, Hernando sent Pasco a copy of the law that created Pasco County on June 2, 1887. The message was sent via Pony Express.

Perhaps the most festive and unifying event of 1976 was the beard-growing contest. In 1975, Joseph Johnston was named the chairman of the “beard committee.” The St. Petersburg Times reported: “several styles are acceptable, such as the mutton chop, goatee, Van Dyke, Burnsides,
ring, Abe Lincoln, moustache, full beards and connected beards.” For months, the fervor of male enthusiasts could be measured by the length of their beards.

Besides serving as an identifying mark of community spirit, the beards served as a clever fund-raising ploy. Johnson declared that “all county men not growing beards after April 15, 1976 may be subject to a $5 fine, which will be donated to the park board. Permits excusing a citizen from having a beard may be purchased for $7.50.” In May, 1976, Sheriff Melvin Kelly and First National Bank President Earl Patterson served 30 minutes of ‘jail-time’ for showing their faces at the county courthouse “without a crop of facial hair.”

The beards became the subject of local humor. The editor of the Sun-Journal had high hopes for his beard. “I was hoping to look like a savant, but appear so far as a goat man or the goatish minstrel God Pan. […] I just asked one grandson how I looked, like the Mad Scientist or the Bull o’ the Woods. He said ‘Kentucky Fried Chicken,’ I translated this to mean Colonel Sanders. A symbol of good food is not to bad [sic].”

With beards reaching incredible lengths, the July 3-4 weekend finally arrived. In January, 1976, Deen had expected 25,000 to attend. Later, that estimate was pared back to 10,000. In the end, more than 10,000 enthusiasts arrived, which made quite a spectacle in what was typically a quiet part of the county. The throng created traffic jams and “an unscheduled tractor pull demonstration that came about when several cars got stuck in the mud.” The beard-growing contest remained a focal point, with Ray Elliott taking home the prize for the longest beard, one that measured 8 ½ inches.

On Monday, July 5, there was an attempt to form a “Unity Line” human chain from Pinellas to Hernando across Pasco, but by then the star of the Bicentennial was fading. Approximately 5000 showed, but the Unity Line needed 22,000. Nevertheless, newspapers marveled at the success of the Bicentennial celebration, with reports filling the pages for a week afterwards. In this time of reflection, reporters marveled at how the event brought together families, interest groups, and communities. “Communities that haven’t worked together in years were working side by side, sweaty and muddy, for the enjoyment of countians as a whole and in honor of our great America.” Senator Lawton Chiles sent his congratulations for the celebration’s success, and Gerald Ford issued a signed “Bicentennial Message” to Hernando (shelved separately), honoring the County for “playing a special part in this great National Celebration.”

The patriotic spirit persisted in Hernando, and for this the county would continue to be garner national recognition. In December, Governor Reubin Askew informed Hernando High School that its marching band had been selected above all other Florida marching bands “to perform at the inauguration day parade in honor of President-elect Jimmy Carter.” Director Steve Manuel’s band was even given a prominent place in the parade, given that Carter “considered the Sunshine State a prime mover in his campaign.”

**Container Listing**

**Box 5, Folder 1:** Clippings, 1973-1974
**Box 5, Folder 2:** Clippings, January 1975-September 1975
**Box 5, Folder 3:** Clippings, October 1975-November 1975
**Box 5, Folder 4:** Clippings, December 1975
**Box 5, Folder 5:** Clippings, January 1976
**Box 5, Folder 6:** Clippings, February 1976
**Box 5, Folder 7:** Clippings, March 1976
Box 5, Folder 8: Clippings, April 1976
Box 5, Folder 9: Clippings, May 1976
Box 5, Folder 10: Clippings, June 1976
Box 5, Folder 11: Clippings, July 1976
Box 5, Folder 12: Clippings, August 1976-December 1976
Box 5, Folder 13: Clippings, Miscellaneous and Undated
Box 5, Folder 14: Clippings, Weeki Wachee

Series: Films
Extent: 2 reels, 16mm movie film

Series Note:
Each film was created for Weeki Wachee: “According to Snowball,” black and white, 7:58; “Littlest Mermaid,” black and white, 7:30.