The John H. Glenn, Jr.
Oral History Project

Oral History Interview 8

with
Senator John Glenn, Jr.

in his office
in the Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C.

April 7, 1997

Brien R. Williams
Interviewer

[Begin Interview 8, Tape 1, Side A]

Williams: This is the eighth interview with Senator John Glenn. It's April 7, 1997. We're in the Senator's office in the Hart Office Building. I'm Brien Williams. Since we last talked, Senator, you gave your address in Ohio announcing your retirement. Can you give me a little background on that?

Sen. Glenn: Yes. The last time I ran for the Senate, Annie and I talked long and hard about whether I should run again or not back then, and decided I would. There were a lot of things I wanted to do yet, and we didn't have the presidential [campaign] debt cleared up yet, and there were a lot of things that fed into that decision, plus I felt there were a lot of good things I could still do in the Senate at that time. I've been particularly concerned about some items, not necessarily that the press looks

at as great items, but these items of efficiency of government, Chief Financial Officer Act, Inspector General Act, new procurement regulations, acquisition regulations, things that nobody seems to pick up on, that I had taken on sort of as a chore back in those days. I think we've done a lot of good in those areas. I think we literally are in the process of saving the government billions and billions of dollars off what we've done through the years. I had a lot of work I wanted to do on those things, back at the time before last, or the last time that I ran. So there was that impetus to run the last time, but while Annie did not extract any promise out of me not to run this time, I certainly knew what her views were and what she would rather have me do.

Plus this time around, in considering whether to run next year, in 1998, there was a major factor that weighed in, that sort of overshadowed everything else, and that was the fact that I'm seventy-five now, and will be seventy-seven years of age when this term is finished. Presuming that I would get another term or get a fifth term, which is unprecedented in Ohio—in fact, the four terms that I have served is the longest continuous time anyone has ever served Ohio in the Senate—but I would be eighty-three years of age at the end of the next term, presuming I was re-elected, and I think that's getting a little beyond where people should serve.

You certainly do start going down in productivity somewhere along there, even though there are people around here, and there have been in the past, in their early eighties who did great work. But I look at Strom Thurmond, for instance, and Strom is now ninety-three or almost ninety-four and still going strong. But I

think, quite frankly, Strom would have been well advised to quit some time ago. I think there comes a time when people should realize that the birthdays are a factor, and as I said in my announcement speech back in Ohio when I said I was not going to run again, no matter how much research I may have sponsored around here or supported in all the time I've been in the Senate, or research I've participated in, we have never found a cure for the common birthday, and I guess that's a statement that is self-evident.

But Annie and I have talked about this for a long time, about whether I would run again or not, and we had decided some months ago that I probably would not run, although the real final decision on that, just a final, final decision, was not made until maybe a couple of months ago, three months ago, say.

There was another reason for deciding when to make the announcement, and that is that our filing date in Ohio for the next election is just about a year away, in fact, a little less than a year now. We're speaking here today on April 7th, and I think our filing date in Ohio is either the last of February or very early March, I believe, which means that if anyone else is going to have a chance of replacing me here or whoever might want to run, they have less than a year now to get their organization together, to get money raised, and to do all the things that have to be done to mount a good campaign.

Some of the other people that have left here in the recent past, Bill Bradley, Sam Nunn, Jim Exon, and some others, have talked about the incivility of the place here and that being a factor in their deciding not to run again, the fact that there is less bipartisanship. Party rancor back and forth and party incivility

has reached a new level beyond anything I've ever seen in the twenty-two years that I have been here. So I know that feeling, but rather than that being a reason to leave the Senate, just because it's not quite as pleasant as it used to be, I react to that just the opposite. It makes me want to stay and help try and straighten things out, because I think it is so important for the future of the country.

I might also add that some of that incivility I lay at the steps of the Democrats here, more maybe than at the feet of the Republicans, and for a reason which may sound a little bit peculiar. Over in the House of Representatives, when the Democrats were in charge for over forty years, I think Democrats became accustomed to treating Republicans in a lot of cases rather shabbily.

I know I used to go to conference meetings as a member of the Armed Services Committee. We'd have our conference meetings to iron out the differences between our bills, and all of the Republican members of the Armed Services Committee in the House would be there, and all the Armed Services Committee members in the Senate. In the Senate, we would always have the agenda for the meeting and have discussed it ourselves before the meeting on the Democratic side. Over in the House, quite often the Democrats would not even have given the agenda for the meeting to the Republicans. I used to make a joke about this with Herb Bateman, who was a Republican over there I knew fairly well, and I'd give Herb a copy of the agenda when I walked in the meeting and make a joke out of it.

Also, in the Senate, the money that a committee gets is normally split two-thirds for the majority, one-third for the minority. Many House committees do

the same thing, but some of them didn't. Some of them had actually cut funding for Republicans over in the House in that period of time. I was told one committee had gone down to 5 percent for a while, which I never really checked up on, but some of them were at 10 percent. So that's not fair to treat people like that, and I think that a lot of Republican members of the House had sort of gotten a permanent chip on their shoulder as far as how they reacted to Democratic proposals.

The leadership over in the House, when Republicans finally took over in `94, really, I think it was equal opportunity time, the way they looked at it, because they took over and literally just cleaned house and started treating Democrats, to a large extent, the way they had been treated for so many years.

Now, the reason that also affects the Senate is that the new Republican majority in the Senate is made up of people who used to be over in the House and were in leadership positions in the House. They came over here sort of with that same feisty attitude, as I view it, that same feisty attitude they had developed over there, and the Senate only works if you have a more collegial atmosphere here. So to come over here with that feisty sort of get-even, chip-on-the-shoulder attitude just has led to what has been termed the lack of civility in the Senate, and I think that's what it is.

I look back to when I first came here. We had people like Howard Baker and Hugh Scott on the Republican side and others, of course, Jack [Jacob] Javits. On our side, on the Democratic side, we had people like Mike Mansfield and Ed Muskie and Russell Long and John McClellan and [Warren] Magnussen, people

like that, who, while they were partisan, certainly, as we are here, but it was always done in a very civil and a very considerate way. We always tried to work things out as much as possible.

In the Senate, that's absolutely necessary because by Senate rules, we are more free to filibuster and to do things that can delay legislation more than they are able to do under the rules they have in the House. So here in the Senate, you cannot get much done if you're going to operate on a strictly partisan basis. So I think that explains a little bit about the incivility here in the Senate.

Now, that was not a major reason for my wanting to leave the Senate. My inclination, when I see a lot of that happening, is to want to stay and fight it out and bring this place back to a more even keel. So I guess that's my combative, fighter-pilot background nature coming out, when I want to stay and fight it out. So the basic reason for deciding not to run again was age. So Annie and I made our decision, and we made that decision together, that I would not run again.

I wanted to get it announced so that the people back home in Ohio that might want to run or would consider running would have an adequate chance to do it. To mount a decent race in Ohio these days for someone not as well known as I am, is probably going to run, at a minimum, $6 million. To raise that kind of money and get a campaign going and get the issues defined and get around the state enough that they'd have a chance to be elected meant I pretty much had to do it when I did it.

Since the time was almost the same, was coming up in the same time period as the thirty-fifth anniversary of my orbital flight, Annie and I decided that

we would go back to where my whole career, or our career, had started, which was back in Muskingum College in New Concord. We would make the announcement on the thirty-fifth anniversary of my orbital flight. We thought it was appropriate to do that.

There was another reason that I like to go back there on that also. That's where my whole career did start, and for a reason that most people were not aware of until I told them about it in the speech I gave back there. Annie was a music major at Muskingum, and she was a very good musician, too. She specialized or majored in pipe organ, big pipe organ, and was very good at it and, in fact, good enough that she had been offered a scholarship after she was to graduate, a scholarship to Juilliard in New York, which she never was able to accept. But she was giving her senior recital in the chapel on the campus there at Muskingum. It's called Brown Chapel. It was a Sunday afternoon. She was a senior, and I was one year behind her in school; I was a junior. On a Sunday afternoon she was to give her senior organ recital there. She was at the chapel, and I was driving up to the chapel that day when there was a bulletin, a news bulletin broke in on the radio broadcast, and I listened to it with great interest and then even sat out in front of Brown Chapel in the car for a little while listening to more details of it as they were coming through.

I did not tell Annie about the broadcast that day until after the organ recital, but I went in and sat, and I know exactly where I was sitting that day, because it turned out that was December 7, 1941. The broadcast that I had heard was of the attack on Pearl Harbor. This was early afternoon. You remember the

attack on Pearl Harbor was like six in the morning or something like that, so it was just being reported about two o'clock in the afternoon when Annie was getting ready to start her organ recital.

Anyway, the organ recital, to get back to that just a moment, was outstanding. She was very good. But we sat then that night and talked about our responsibilities and what I should do and what we should do. We had planned to be married as soon as we both graduated, but we decided our responsibilities were in a different direction at that time. So within a few days I had volunteered to go into flight training, and that was our decision.

Well, that decision made that Sunday afternoon and evening there after her recital in Brown Chapel really called the direction of our lives for the next fifty years or so, or still to this day, because one thing led to another out of that. I went through military flight training and was in World War II out in the Pacific, trained on the West Coast. We were married right after I got out of flight training about a year later, April 6 of 1943, which would mean that we celebrated our fifty-fourth wedding anniversary yesterday, as a matter of fact, on April 6.

But anyway, that changed the direction of our lives from that day there in Brown Chapel, and went on to World War II and the Korean War and test piloting then for a number of years after that, and the space program and the business world and politics and several different careers, but it all started there in Brown Chapel.

So we decided it was appropriate to go back where all of this had started. Well, they've changed some of the seating in the auditorium now. I had Annie

and the family sit about, approximately, in the same seats where I sat that day and listened to her organ recital. So there were a lot of memories involved with that whole thing.

Some of the things I talked about that day in the speech back there were not only relating some of the historical background to the students who were there. I think it was some six to seven hundred students in the chapel itself, and then they had some closed circuit TV over in a couple of other areas where other people could watch since we couldn't get them all in.

I was surprised at the interest back there, but there was a great deal of interest in what my announcement was going to be. There had been a lot of speculation in the newspapers and the radio and TV over the past eight or ten months about whether I was going to run again or not run again. So this finally took care of answering that particular question.

One of the things that I feel very deeply is that I think the young people of today have not been called upon to meet an emergency or something bigger than themselves. I'm not saying that anyone of the younger generation is any less patriotic than any of the rest of us were in times past, but I think in the days back when I was growing up, many of our decisions and our feelings about the country were almost decided for us by events that happened.

There was the Great Depression when I was a boy along about ten or twelve or thirteen years old, and that defined a lot about community life and family life and how you reacted to that and how you reacted to the emergencies. Everybody planted big gardens. You had enough to eat, and families took care of

families, and community took care of its own. In some of the bigger cities where that was not possible, there were soup kitchens on the corners, and it was a real emergency. Unemployment for four years was over 20 percent, and one year it was almost 25 percent. That was an emergency that defined a lot of what happened to people back in those days, whether they wanted it to be that way or not.

Then World War II came along and that was a defining moment for millions of Americans because the country was threatened and it was for real. It wasn't some fake emergency; it was for real. So people's lives were changed, and their lifetime decisions were made for them by their reaction to what happened. Later on, even the Korean War or Vietnam or other things that happened through the years, they were sort of national events or things that happened that defined what people could go into or it was determined for them by other forces what they were forced into.

Now we find ourselves in a time period where, instead of people being called to some big purpose bigger than themselves, they, in effect, have it much easier, and the choice is theirs as to what they will do or not do. It's not forced upon them. For many, it seems to me that that means being more critical of government, being more critical of their own situation, being more critical of their own families, maybe, than we ever were before when I was growing up. I see this as somewhat of a danger to our country.

I don't think our country is nearly as likely to be taken over by some external power as it is to be undermined by our cynicism and/or apathy from

within. That kind of cynicism and apathy is the hardest kind of thing to combat because there's no one great defining moment. It's something that I think is a danger for the future, because if our young people of today really do get to the point where they think this country is not worth taking an interest in and not worth defending if the occasion arises, then we will have become a lesser nation.

We have been fortunate in this country, in our democracy, in that there always have been people willing to serve, willing to go into public life. Thomas Jefferson said, "If our democracy is to succeed, every man must have his voice heard in some council of government." Well, I think that's very true, but you also have to think that every person wants to have their voice heard in some council of government. Not just the availability of that council, but that young people and people growing up and middle-aged people and, in fact, our whole population is interested enough that in a democracy, each person will express themselves, make their voice heard. They'll take an interest in public affairs.

If we lose that, then, in a democracy, you're going to have lesser people running things. You're going to have less capable people really determining the outcome of events, not all necessarily running for public office themselves, but certainly taking an interest in who does run and in taking part not only in family, but in community activities, state activities, federal party activities. That means that our whole democracy is alive and working and is not controlled by just a few people.

It's a real danger when our voting in the last national election was just a hair under 50 percent, less than half the people. Less than half the people in the

United States of America were interested enough in going out to vote. Now, I guess you can look at that two ways. You can say people have it so good these days and the economy is good, unemployment is low. We have a forty-hour work week, there's comparatively a lot of leisure time, and so maybe they're satisfied enough that they don't really get out and vote They're pretty happy with the ways things are, so they just don't bother to vote.

I'm not sure that that's the case, however. I think that there are more people who do not take an interest in government and do not do the things that we would normally define as good citizenship, in other words, taking part in local community organizations, whether it's Little League or a civic discussion group or a foreign policy association meeting or running for school board or city council or state rep or whatever. There sometimes is not the interest now that I think there should be in a democratic society like ours.

Now, that being the case, my speech announcing I wasn't going to run again at Muskingum concentrated some in that area. I told them I'm proud to be a politician. The word "politics" comes from the old Greek word which means "business of all the people," and what can possibly be more important in a democracy than the business of all the people? And unless everybody's willing to participate in that process, we're going to go downhill over the long run.

I'm proud to be a politician, because I think, as my friend Bob [Robert F.] Kennedy said, that it's an honorable profession. Too many of our young people don't look at it that way today. They look at it with great cynicism. They've gradually come into the feeling that most people in politics are on the take

somehow or they're fools or crooks or a combination of both. So they don't want to really participate. I've heard people tell me, "I don't want to get involved in a dirty thing like politics."

Well, for some people, politics is a dirty—they try and get out of it what they can, and they're not respectful of the responsibilities that they have nor the people they represent. But I think those people are a very small percentage of most politicians. If we ever get to the point where our young people think so ill of politics that they're not willing to run themselves and not willing to support people who are willing to run, then our country will go downhill, because we will not exist as a nation for very long unless we have good leadership.

What I tried to encourage them to do in that speech was to be involved whatever the level. Be involved whether it's on campus or whether you're part of a discussion group or can you teach a child to read in New Concord or Dayton or Columbus or someplace else. We've had students out there helping build homes in the Habitat for Humanity effort and we've had students from there at Muskingum going out to some of the retirement homes and reading to some of the elderly. I applaud their efforts in those areas.

So I tried to concentrate the speech in some of those areas. I think that come a couple of years from now when I am no longer in the Senate, I want to spend a good amount of my time, a good chunk of time, involved with students, particularly those who are sort of searching their own souls about what they will do in politics. The least anyone can do is to at least be active in a political party. Our whole system revolves around that and I encouraged them. In fact I said,

"Don't join a party just because your parents happen to be a member or just because you have a friend that's a member of a political party." I suggested that they take a piece of paper and set down the things they think are most important for the country and for the long-term future. Two areas: one, what the short-term problems are and then, number two, the long-term problems or opportunities we have as a nation for, say, the next fifty years. Once they have their views set down like that, then which party most closely agrees with those views? That's the way I hope people join a party.

A lot of people will make an analysis of themselves like that and obviously decide they're going to be Republicans. Others will look at it the same way I have in the past and become Democrats. But that's the heart of our system. I think if for very long we lose faith in our political system, then our government gradually goes downhill compared to other nations around the world.

I happen to think—not happen to, I believe very firmly we have the greatest government in the world. We have problems, of course, but so does every other government in the world, and certainly our government is the envy of much of the rest of the whole free world. It's set down in the Constitution as to what our protections are and the basic premises of our government and how it will operate and where the responsibilities are and who has the responsibility in different areas, whether it's legislative or executive or the judiciary. But while the Constitution lays out very precisely how the government will operate, it says little or nothing…

[Begin Tape 1, Side B]

…and how we will furnish the people, the personnel to run that ideal constitutional government. That has just grown up by circumstance and by just trial and error through the years. I think our political parties, by and large, have served us pretty well as a personnel department for this constitutional government, if you want to put it in those terms. It hasn't always been perfect, and we don't always get the best people in government, but by and large, it's been pretty good. So when we find interest in our political parties going downhill for whatever reason, it means that what we're saying is that our interest in supplying good people to this constitutional government to help run it is also less than we would like to see.

So I think it is important that people join a political party and be active in it. You won't always be successful, but you can support the party, support the people, work for the people you believe in. That's what I encouraged the young people back there at Muskingum to do, and it's some of those areas that I want to be active in after we're out of the Senate. I do believe in politics. I think it's an honorable profession. I think too often for some people it is not, and those are the ones that get the bad press and give all things political a bad name.

I also believe this is the finest government in the world. We have flaws, we have difficulties, but that doesn't mean that the basic structure of government is bad. It just means that we need to learn how to operate it more effectively.

Williams: Has a program occurred to you on how that could be done?

Sen. Glenn: No, and that's a very good question, because I don't know exactly how it can be done. I think the first thing is to have some of us who have experienced a lot of this take an interest in passing along some of our observations to young people, whether in seminars or in classrooms or meetings, conferences, conventions, whatever. I think that we get so accustomed these days to being down on our government and down on things political and feel nothing is right in government. Nothing is right in politics seems to be the attitude that many people have, and yet our government is the best government in the world. We are a more compassionate government. We are a democratic government that wants to see opportunity provided for every one of our people, and yet that isn't the way things work a lot of the time.

We need to realize that while we extol the virtues of a democracy, that it is tough for a lot of people to live in a democracy. In spite of the fact that—I guess it was Lincoln's statement—all men are created equal, it just in many respects is not true. People have different talents and capabilities. They're not equally created with the same brain power, the same physical power, the same whatever power that enables them to excel in a democracy.

A democracy means it's dog eat dog. You have to get out there and make you own way in the world, and if there are people who just don't have an IQ much above the daily temperature, what happens to them? Do we just throw them on the scrap heap of history and say, "Oh forget it. So you weren't born with the same brain I was, so you're not as much of an American as I am?" No, that's not the way we're going to do this, and we shouldn't.

Back in times past, where there were people that had problems like that, who just couldn't quite make it in a democracy, well, the families either took care of those people or communities took care of those people. I can remember several people when I was growing up—without putting names to it—in New Concord. They never made it through school and they lived with their parents. They helped around town, and they had odd jobs, and that was the way they got along. And that continued even after their parents died.

But then we've come to a time period now where it's rare that a family has several children who all stay in the local community. My own family is not unusual, in that while I'm speaking here today, Annie and I are living in Washington [D.C.]. We have a place we go to in Ohio, of course, when I'm back in Ohio, but a home here in Washington. Our daughter is in St. Paul, Minnesota, and my son and his wife and our two grandsons are in San Francisco, live up in Berkeley, but he's a doctor and works over in San Francisco. So we are not an unusual family in that we are spread out the length and breadth of this whole land. And that's not unusual. It's the way we've developed. Families no longer settle in the local community and raise their kids there with grandma and grandpa. It's quite the opposite.

Williams: What about a form of national service? Is that something you have supported?

Sen. Glenn: Yes. National service is something that I think is—I tell you, if I ideally had my way, I guess I would probably require—and this would be highly unpopular, and I'm not about to propose it, not that I would be afraid to propose it, but just that I know that it wouldn't be accepted. I think there's something about not only

military service, but the Peace Corps or VISTA, or taking part in organizations that are like that where you're lifted out of your own community, in effect, where you rub elbows with people of other races and religions and creeds and colors and everything across the board. There is a leveling of the mental attitude toward each other that comes from that kind of an experience that, to me, is at the very heart of democracy.

I can think back when I first went into the military in World War II and what an experience that was. There you were, tossed into training with people from all over the country. In the very first squadron I was in, I can think of Ole Hanson [phonetic], who was from Minnesota; and Bubba Ochoa [phonetic] from deep Texas; and Clare Jarvis was from California; and Art Sierra was from New York; Tom Miller, one of my closest friends to this day, was from George, West Texas. I was from Ohio. The basketball player Joe Gerard [phonetic] played with the University of Indiana. Just on and on and on, and here were people of different backgrounds and religions and creeds and colors, and you were tossed into that kind of a cross-rubbing of experiences and different walks of life in America. That was something it's almost impossible to describe and impossible to say how much benefit I think that was to almost every person.

Now, a lot of people can get that same feeling by being active members of their church. Some get that same feeling of belonging to something bigger than themselves by political activity. There are all sorts of community organizations where you can get this feeling of operating together or a cooperative effort that is necessary if a democracy is truly to succeed. I think that if we have our young

people today so hesitant about joining organizations or the military or religious organizations or devoting themselves to something bigger than themselves, if we ever lay that down, then we have laid down something that I think is very valuable for this country.

In the past, we almost always have had some sort of an emergency that came along within each generation, almost, that called people into activities beyond just their own self interest. I'm not sure that we have that kind of an interest going right now, and that's the danger that I see.

I used as an example up there that day, too, in New Concord, I used as a little example just something I think I have observed in the people I think are living the happiest and the most fulfilling lives. I think these are reasonable observations, and I think I've seen this in person after person, and I think they are true. The first is, I think people are most happy who are using the most of the talents that they have. Every person has a bundle of talents. A person may be working as a bank teller, but that person may secretly have a sort of a feeling of the rhythm of poetry and poetic license and be interested in poetry. Does that person ever get around to doing that? Sometimes they do, sometimes not. They may be interested in athletics and want to take part in Little League or something like that. We're all a bundle of talents, and if we channel our activities to where we only let one of those talents be exercised, we're probably going to be frustrated in many other ways.

Now, another characteristic, I think, besides just using all those talents that we can, is you have to be called sometime. You have to have an interest in

something bigger that just interest in yourself. Now, that kind of interest can come from church work. It can come from being in the military and being devoted to service to your country. It can come in the Peace Corps. It can come in VISTA. It can come in community organizations where you're working for a community project of some kind. There's a lot of satisfaction in doing so.

I've been fortunate enough to be in that position several times where I felt I was devoting myself to something bigger than myself, something that was important for the country, and there is no feeling you can match like that. You can't describe it to someone else. I'd say it was like a virus or something. It's not a virus—it's a good virus if there is such a thing.

Then the third element is that I think those who are happiest not only have those two characteristics, but I think they want to help others. They're doing something to help others and not necessarily for public relations purposes, but you're helping others whether known or unknown. It's just good that you're helping someone who may not be quite as fortunate, someone who may need a little help, someone who may need a little financial help, you give them a few bucks to tide them over or you work with them on some problem they have. Annie's worked with people in stuttering. She was an 85 percent stutterer all her life, was able to overcome that. She's worked with others and gets a great satisfaction out of that.

So I think those three characteristics, ones of exercising your own talents and working for some purpose bigger than yourself and doing something specifically for others, are three things that I think lead people to the most

satisfying and productive lives that they can have. So I tried to stress some of those things in New Concord that day when I was saying I was going to withdraw.

I've enjoyed public life, and I have two more years here, or a year and three quarters more here, and I plan to make the most out of it I possibly can and be as constructive and propose just as much constructive legislation as I can. But at the same time—and I don't think I'm just talking myself into this—I think perhaps I can almost do more good working with some of our young people in colleges and universities, perhaps at Ohio State University—if we work out these arrangements with them, which are in the mill right now—and at Muskingum and other schools around Ohio or other places in the country, too. I'd like to see us start sort of a wave of interest and pride in country and what's right about this country and the opportunities that are provided by the country that we get from nowhere else in the world, and how do we make it better. Let's work together to make it better. How can we put together programs? Maybe we need some place just to study how we start re-invigorating plain old flat-out patriotism and pride in country and pride in working with each other. That kind of thing, to me, can be a great, great challenge for the future.

So we used the kickoff or the announcement, anyway, that I would not run again, we used it to sort of put some ideas forward. I really do look forward to once we're out of here—it'll be a big transition—but I think it'll be a transition for a good purpose. If there's one thing I've learned in life, every time we shut one door, another one seems to open up that provides even better opportunities than the last. I just hope this time the door we're closing here in the Senate, I'm

trusting that the new doors will be maybe even more productive for our young people than what we've done, too.

Williams: What was the reaction or reception to your speech?

Sen. Glenn: Well, the reaction could not have been better. In fact, I was almost shocked by how well it was received. I'd thought a lot about it and what I wanted to say, and it was all heartfelt. I guess people realized that. But the reaction in the newspapers, the editorial reaction was almost universally very good. I appreciated that, not just because I have worked hard here, but because I think maybe it sets the stage, then, for a couple of years down the road for me being able to go back and use some of that wellspring of support and good feeling to trigger off some good things for our young people. That would be great if that could happen.

Williams: The announcement, or that speech, was covered in the national press very narrowly. Basically, you were not running again. Is it discouraging to you that these other issues that you brought into your speech were basically overlooked at the national level?

Sen. Glenn: Yes, to some extent. I think you're right. The national press, you know—senators come, senators go, and that's it. The people back home that have followed more of what I've actually done here commented on it favorably with some details on things that I had actually done here that I'm proud of. So there was more detail of it in the Ohio press, at least. But there were some, too, like Peter Jennings—this "Person of the Week" they have at the end of every week—Peter Jennings had a very nice little piece on that that runs five minutes or six

minutes every Friday evening, I think it is, on the person of the week. So there was some national recognition like that. I noticed—I think there was a little short article in the *New York Times* that talked about how I had done a lot of work to bring better efficiency to government. I was glad somebody picked that up, too, because usually that isn't very exciting to the press. Yet I think it's one of the more important things we ought to be doing around here, is trying to make government run better, and I've devoted a lot of time to that.

Williams: It is discouraging, though, that some of the messages that you want to get out there don't seem to be colorful enough, or I don't know what to say it is, but you would think that your reflections on a matter of national debate and what the character of citizenship is and so forth would be something people would pick up on more.

Sen. Glenn: That may come later, but I think you have to remember, too, most newspaper reporting is to report the fight. I've kidded some of my friends in journalism. I think Journalism 101 teaches you to report the fight, the confrontation, and if there isn't a fight going on, start one so you can report it. I think that's the way much of the press operates.

This was not a confrontation. This is something where I'm sort of exhorting people back to some of the feelings I've been fortunate enough to feel all my own life in doing other things, whether military or here [in the Senate]. So I think maybe there will be a time for reporting it. I'm sure one of these days after I'm out of the Senate, maybe there will be enough time to do some writing and perhaps a book or two. Not only an autobiography, which I'd like to do just

for the benefit of my grandkids, if nothing else, just so they'll know what happened back in Granddaddy's lifetime, but also maybe writing along these lines of sort of what it means to be an American and the responsibilities of being an American.

I think you don't get anything for free. We're not a benevolent dictatorship where somebody decides how your life will be spent. You make your own life in this country, and yet we have to take care of those who don't have the ability or where the circumstances that they were born into denies them the ability to get along in a democracy, which is tough to get along in. That's where I guess I disagree most with my Republican brethren. I think too often people are elected to office who never really had it tough themselves or who never really were in anything but very favorable straits when they were growing up, so they don't realize what it is to have to make their own money and take care of other people in the community.

I went through some of that when I was a kid. We were never poor to the point where we were hungry, but we planted a huge garden. Mother canned everything in sight, which we ate all winter. I saw the [Franklin D.] Roosevelt programs come along when we were in such dire straits in the Great Depression that communities had lost the capability to take care of even their own people, and cities certainly couldn't do it, and families, it was far beyond their capability. We see the old movies now of the Okies heading west with a mattress on top of the car. So some of the social programs that were started back then to get our economy going again are ones that we still debate about and argue about to this

very day: Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, that came along in later years, unemployment insurance. These things that take good times and try and put some things over into bad times that level out the economic impact of any one moment.

I think those are good things. I think too many of my Republican brethren haven't really appreciated those things. We have a lot of things that benefit those who have a tough time making it in our society, and, to me, that's the mark of a compassionate government—compassionate democratic government—that we should have. It doesn't mean that you give everybody everything for free and it doesn't mean that you go overboard with things like that, but it does mean that you don't just let yourself throw people on the scrap heap of history just because they happen to be born with a little less brain power than somebody else.

Williams: What has the reaction been from your colleagues in the Senate to your announcement?

Sen. Glenn: Oh, nobody's going to come up to you and say, "I'll be glad when you're gone, you rascal, you," you know. [Laughter] But most of it's been pretty heartfelt, that they're sorry to see me leaving, and I believe them.

Williams: Did you coordinate this all with the party, or was this a decision that you and your wife made independently and proceeded without informing a lot of people, or how did that work?

Sen. Glenn: There were a few people here in the office knew it. Mary Jane Veno here knew it and a few people here in the office, but we didn't coordinate. What we did basically was decide when we wanted to do it, then we let the party know. They

were cooperative in setting up things back there, the Ohio party, the Ohio Democratic Party, in helping set it up back there.

As far as people here, I let the leadership—I let Tom Daschle know ahead of time, of course, so he would not be surprised. I called the President [Bill Clinton] a few days before and let him know what I was going to do. In fact, I had tried to get him, and we didn't get in touch before he had left on a trip. I got him on Air Force One, as a matter of fact, talked to him there, told him what I was going to do. He was sorry that the decision had to go the way it did, and then later he issued a very nice, a very kind and generous statement from the White House that I appreciated very much.

Williams: The speech itself, was that a joint effort?

Sen. Glenn: I had put down most of it on notes in what I wanted to say. Dale Butland, who's done much of my speech-writing through the years, through the last twelve or thirteen years, Dale put down some of his ideas, a suggested speech, and then I took it from there and wrote the final part of it. Some of it was part of what Dale had written, and much of it was additions that I made to it that put some of my own feelings, heartfelt feelings, into it. So it was a combination. And Annie made some suggestions to it also. She had been part of it.

It sort of laid out several elements, my pride in working for the people of Ohio all these years, and it is a pride. It's not just an honor; it's a responsibility, too. I've taken that very seriously and thanks to all the people who had worked with me back in Ohio and my thoughts about young people for the future and encouraging them into getting away from this apathy and cynicism that seems to

be prevalent these days. Giving them a feeling of why it was important for Annie and me to have our family with us and be back there sort of where my whole career started—everything started from me sitting there one day in Brown Chapel—and encouraging them to be active, to participate. That's what the country needs and what they need for their own happiness, not just for the country.

Williams: I watched the speech on C-SPAN. A very moving experience it was.

Sen. Glenn: Well, it was moving that day, too. I guess as you get older, you let your emotions come to the surface a little bit more, and that was a very emotional day, very emotional day for us back there also, but it all worked out very well.

Williams: Were there some other high points of the day? There must have been.

Sen. Glenn: Well, no. Giving that speech was really the high point of the day. We flew back and in the morning flew into Zanesville in our little airplane. They picked us up there and took us out to the college, and then there was a reception after the speech where a lot of the townspeople—people I still know there—came to the reception there at the college. I appreciated that very much. Then we went back with the family to Columbus that night and had just a quiet family dinner of our own in Columbus. We had brought the whole family back from California and Minnesota for the speech, thought that was something that they should be part of also.

Williams: And then you had a press conference the following day, was that it?

Sen. Glenn: Yes. Then the following day, so that I could answer any questions anybody might have, we had a press conference in Columbus the next day to sort of elaborate a

little bit on what I hope to do in the future and what I hope to do in the last two years here—some of the things that are important here in government—because I'm not resigning; I'm just announcing I'm not going to run again two years down the road. The press conference was pretty much concentrated on what we've done here and the track record here and things that I saw as the future for legislative activity the rest of this year and next.

The next day, too, a number of TV stations wanted to do things. So I did, I think, I guess I did four or five individual TV interviews that were rather lengthy. We have requests now for more of them whenever I'm back there in Ohio.

Williams: And then later that day you flew back to…

Sen. Glenn: The next day, then, we came back, flew back to Washington. Our son, Dave, and his family flew back to the West Coast, and Lynn flew back to Minnesota, and we flew back to Washington.

Williams: Good. All right.

[End of Interview]