The John H. Glenn, Jr.
Oral History Project

Oral History Interview 10

with
John H. Glenn, Jr.

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

April 28, 1997

Brien R. Williams
Interviewer

[Begin Interview 10, Tape 1, Side A]

WILLIAMS: This is the tenth interview with Senator John Glenn. It is April 28, 1997. We are in the Hart Senate Office Building. This is Brien Williams.

So we'll start with what you were doing at Cherry Point with the VMF-913 after you returned from Patuxent River.

SEN. GLENN: Okay. When I came back from Pax River, I was in the squadron, still in VMF-913, nine-thirteen, which was being used as sort of almost a holding squadron for a little while, because there were a lot of people still in the Marine Corps that were getting out, or were thinking about getting out. So we had a great number of pilots assigned to the squadron and a lot of trouble keeping the aircraft all in commission and up to fly, and pilots working some of the airplanes doing the mechanical work right along under the supervision of some master sergeant who

really knew what he was doing.

But, nevertheless, we did some training there with all of those people, although it wasn't enough that you really would be ready to go into combat with it. We were doing a lot of rocket training off of the old Corsairs and would fly those down to Camp Lejeune, Marine Corps Basic Camp Lejeune, where it was mainly a ground base. But they had a place down there, a little airport called Peter Point Field. We'd go down there, load up the rockets, and go out and have rocket practice on targets out in the mud flats along what is now the Inter-coastal Waterway down through that area. While that was some training, it wasn't all that great. It was really used as a holding squadron more than anything else.

Now, I was there for a few months and then was transferred out in March of '46 to VMF-323 at Marine Corps Air Station at El Toro, California. That was a squadron. We did more training in that squadron also, but this being after the war, it seemed that everybody wanted to have an air show at their local airport. I can remember those days as being days when it was a rare three-month period that we didn't practice for and go and do some fly-over air show at some place out on the West Coast. I think we did one up in San Francisco, over downtown San Francisco—took part in a giant celebration of some kind up there. We had another one in Orange County, California. We had another one over at March Field. We had another one up at San Bernardino, as well as ones there at Oceanside or at the general area at El Toro.

The Squadron 323, its insignia was the Death Rattlers. They were sort of

famous of out World War II days, so they had come back. I was the operations officer of that squadron, so I was doing the scheduling of different events.

WILLIAMS: What kind of aircraft were these fly-overs?

SEN. GLENN: Well, at El Toro we were still using the Corsairs. I guess what I remember more out of El Toro than anything else is the fact that the only way we really got any flight time or kept the airplanes in commission was really by the pilots all out working on the airplanes. That was something that I really didn't think much of, because I'd rather have the professional maintenance people taking care of any airplane I was going to fly. But we did all the work under the supervision of the master sergeants and the other people on the enlisted crews who were experts at aircraft maintenance.

That was a time period that was very rough, as far as pilots went. We had a lot of people at that time who had decided that they didn't want to stay in the Marine Corps and were leaving, so there were a lot of transfers in and out of the squadron. But we had a good group of people out there. I still remember very fondly being in 323 there for quite some time. I think it was about eight or nine months, something like that, we were there operating that way.

WILLIAMS: You say rough. Why was it rough?

SEN. GLENN: Oh, rough in that you couldn't settle down and do any real training. I didn't mean rough in a physical sense, but I meant rough as far as having any stability in a squadron and having it ready to do anything constructive, or destructive if there was a war. That was the main thing that I meant by that.

WILLIAMS: You had been in El Toro prior to your service in the Pacific?

SEN. GLENN: I had gone to—no, that was at El Centro.

WILLIAMS: So you never were at El Toro before this?

SEN. GLENN: No, this was the first time I was actually stationed at El Toro. I had flown in there and flown out of there, but I had never been based there before this particular time.

WILLIAMS: Can you contrast the mood of El Toro after the war with El Centro during the war?

SEN. GLENN: Well, during the war when we were training in El Centro, you were looking forward to combat. Combat was in the offing and so you trained for it. There was a sense of urgency and of the importance of the training as to what you were going to do, and the importance of your relationship with other people within the squadron and how they fit in and how you thought they'd do in combat. You were always assessing those things in your own mind.

Primarily we trained in El Centro before we went overseas in World War II. We trained there as a squadron complete and went over, the same personnel, same flight organization. You knew who you were going to fly with most of the time, anyway, where after the war, when I was back at El Toro then during most of 1946, that was a time period then when you weren't looking forward to any war or didn't have that in the offing. So it wasn't something that you really thought about that much.

But we still were supposed to be training. We all liked to fly. The fact

that we weren't getting a whole lot of flight time was aggravating to a lot of people, me included.

One thing I left out when we were at Cherry Point in 913, when we came back from and were there for a number of months through the fall and early winter of late '45 and early '46, is when Dave our son was born. We had a little house that we had rented just outside of Newburn, North Carolina. I remember that night very, very well, as I guess I'd be expected to. The main problem was when Annie starting getting labor pains in the middle of one night about two o'clock in the morning, we then had to drive about fifty-five or sixty miles down to Camp Lejeune, which is where the only service hospital was. Cherry Point at that time had a dispensary, but not a regular hospital where you went to give birth. So we wound up driving in the middle of the night.

I remember it very vividly because the labor pains were getting closer together and we were in the middle of a giant thunderstorm driving down there along this little two-lane road in the middle of the night about three or four o'clock in the morning. We arrived there about 4:00 or 4:30, and Dave was born about, I think, about 6:30 in the morning. So I have that recollection out of Cherry Point very, very well, when I was in 913.

So then we were transferred to the West Coast and drove across country just a few months later and into 323, as I was talking about a moment ago. That was our first time of living in a peacetime environment on the West Coast. That was something new, with the area of Laguna Beach and that area around there,

and being close to Los Angeles, also.

Do you want to go on to China now?

WILLIAMS: Well, I want to go on to the next step.

SEN. GLENN: Let me see. There's not much else to tell about 323, except just some of the people, maybe.

WILLIAMS: That and you mentioned being near Laguna Beach and all. What did that signify?

SEN. GLENN: Well, Laguna Beach, being along the Pacific coast there, Annie and I both enjoy the beach very much. Wherever we've been, we've always loved to go to the beach, and especially ocean beaches. So you had all that beach area along there at Laguna Beach and Corona Del Mar and places like that. Every time we had any spare time, we were down there. Some of us would go conk fishing down there, going down, doing underwater. We didn't have underwater tanks at that time. We didn't have them available, so we just did snorkeling. But you could dive down fifteen feet or so and get these, not conk, but abalone, abalone shells out there. That was a big thing then. Those are all protected now, but they were very plentiful back in those days. I guess the fact that was pretty good eating was something that we liked, so we used to go down there and I would go out and dive. We loved going down to the beach there.

We also took the opportunity then to go back in the mountains some, too, back in that mountainous area between San Diego and the desert back at El Centro.

WILLIAMS: So you did get back to El Centro?

SEN. GLENN: From time to time, yes, we'd be over there. We weren't there very often. But that was sort of after the war and things were still in sort of a hodgepodge.

The first real mission then that I had after the war was when I received orders to China, and that came up as sort of an opportunity. I wound up volunteering for that, which turned out to be a mistake. But they said there was an opportunity if anyone wanted to go to China. It was supposed to be a short tour, something like three to six months at the max. But we thought that I would be gone ninety to a hundred and twenty days, something like that. Go out, be there, and go into a squadron that was based just south of Peking, China, about six miles out from the city, and that then the squadron was coming back and that would count as an overseas tour, so in about three to four, five months, I would have gotten credit for another overseas tour and wouldn't be expected to go out again for another three to four years, something like that at the earliest.

So with Dave being a baby at that time, it looked like a good time maybe for me to go and get that out of the way. Then I'd be back and be in the States and be around home for a while. Well, that turned out to be a mistake, because about two years later, I got back from Guam. The only time in the middle of that that I was home was our daughter Lynn was born then, in March of '47. I, by that time, had been through Peking. We were being ordered out down through Tsingtao and Shanghai and out to Okinawa. I got word when Lynn was born; our daughter was born, when we were waiting for a ship to come pick us up at Okinawa.

Ordinarily, back in those days, they did not grant leave for you to come home for a birth of a child, but Annie had some problems after that and had to go back in the hospital. She had some infection and they were worried about her, so they sent word through the Red Cross that if I could get emergency leave to come home, I should do it. They were that worried about her. And I did that, got emergency leave immediately, and left from Okinawa then, and a rode old DC-6 across the Pacific and caught another flight back towards Ohio. Finally wound up, I think it was like—well, from the time I got the emergency leave, it was like five days it took back then to travel across there, four or five days at least.

By the time I got home, Annie was okay. I think the day I arrived back there—she was just released from the hospital the morning I got there. But she was very weak. So I saw Lynn, our daughter, then being just about seven or eight days old at that time. I was only home about three or four days and then went through the reverse process, flew back out.

By that time the squadron had gone aboard a carrier on down to Guam and offloaded at Guam and was setting up shop at NAS, Naval Air Station, Orote on Guam. That's where we were based then for the next year and a half. It wasn't until the very last part of that time that Annie was able to come out and join me out there.

But back to China now—let me talk about that a little bit. Because when you went to China—it was one of the most interesting tours I ever had outside of combat, because I had not spent much time in the Far East. In fact, I hadn't spent

any time in the Far East at all up to that time, except being out in the Marshall Islands in the Central Pacific.

The reason we were in Peking, China, or the squadron was there, was General George Marshall had what were called Marshall's Peace Teams out there. They were doing their best to negotiate a peace between Chiang Kai-shek's forces and the Communist forces that had been on the Long March. The Chinese Communists had taken most of the territory north and west of Peking, and so Marshall was trying to negotiate peace between the two factions. They had representatives of both factions in Peking doing daily negotiations.

Now, they had a lot of Army officers out there and their families. They had taken families out there with them, which surprised us. The Marines, of course, usually did not travel with families, and we didn't then, unless you were going for a permanent overseas tour and then sometimes you'd get to take families along. But this was not a move like that.

We were based at an air base just south of—in fact, if you come out of the main entrance to the Forbidden City in downtown Peking, now you come out onto Tiananmen Square. If you went from the entrance of the Forbidden City straight south across Tiananmen Square and right out through South Gate, it was six miles from the Forbidden City out to our air base. Tiananmen Square at that time was not there. It used to be a whole area of very narrow streets and one street that led straight out through South Gate with a lot of little shops and little places where people lived behind it. But later on then they cleaned all that out and made what

is now Tiananmen Square there with the Great Hall of the People on the west side of it and the things that you see now where the Tiananmen Square massacre was a few years ago and all of that.

Back at that time, though, that was still really old China. China hadn't started modernizing yet. People were extremely poor. It was subsistence for most people, although for people in Peking itself, there was food if you had money to buy it in Peking, but there was starvation, actual starvation going on in some of the villages that were within thirty or forty miles of Peking and within thirty or forty miles of our base.

They had some of the UNRA people came out then, the relief organization, were out there for food drops. They would have bags of flour that they would take up all in padded containers and go out and push them out the door of an old C-47 or a plane like that, out where some of the starvation was occurring in these villages. It was disconcerting, though, to sometimes see within two or three days after a food drop, out where you knew people were starving, to see those same bags of flour show up for sale in the big open market back behind the Peking Hotel in downtown Peking. That was the power that Chiang Kai-shek and his people had over what was going on out in the villages, that they'd bring that back in and some of that was for sale in downtown Peking later on.

The reason we were there as a Marine fighter squadron flying Corsairs was to give some security for General Marshall's Peace Teams, and we flew what was called the North China patrol every day. It was down at low altitude. We'd fly

along at 500 to 1,000 feet above the ground. You flew on a grid-type pattern where you'd go twenty-five or thirty miles along a certain route. Then you'd do a 180-turn and go back and make a grid and then do another turn, so that you covered a large area. We had people assigned to different sectors up there, so that we covered most of North China, that area around Peking, certainly, every day.

We were armed. Guns were loaded and you had bombs on board, so that if you were fired at while you were out there, why, you could return fire. What we were looking for were cuts on the railway, or bridges blown up, or roads down or power lines down, things like that, that we'd report back in, because there were Communists operating in some of those areas.

We were warned that the Communists were around. The only time we actually ever had any gunfire, though, were a couple of times at night you could hear mortars going off way in the distance. There were always threats that they were going to come down and attack the base, but they never did. So we kept up our China patrol and we'd go into Peking a lot when we were there. I guess we were there almost six months before we came out of there.

Some of the observations, though, I think are interesting about that area. The men pulling rickshaws, for instance, that's all they had in this whole world, was their rickshaw and a little rice bowl up on some little springs under the seat. They'd have sort of a blanket cloth-type thing they could throw over their shoulders and a coolie-type hat. And at night they pulled their rickshaws up under the eave of a building, and that's where they slept, even in the wintertime.

There were big barrels of like hot water or soup on some of the street corners, and that's what they ate. They'd have a little bit of rice in a bowl from underneath their rickshaw seat and then they'd fill up with a little bit of this weak soup out of these barrels that had a little fire under them. I can remember very, very well going over and looking into one of those barrels at one time and inside were mainly animal intestines and parts like that, and that's what the soup was made out of. So it was no wonder people were starving at that time.

At that time in early 1947, the biggest building in Peking was the Peking Hotel, which was, as I recall, about seven or eight floors high. It's amazing to go back now and be in Peking and see the giant high-rise buildings that have grown up there literally in the last eight or ten years, today being 1997, of course. But in those days when we'd go into town, there had always been the threat of danger from the Communists. They had threatened to attack the base. At one time while we were there, they said that for every day the Marines stayed in Peking or were there and supported General Marshall's Peace Teams, they were going to kill a Marine a day.

That was the word that went out, and people didn't take that too seriously because there had been threats before, but on this particular occasion they actually did it. They had some individual Marines that were going through a back street somewhere and they actually killed—there were two days in a row where Marines were killed. We were restricted to base after that for like a week or ten days and then were permitted to go into town, but only if we went in pairs, and only if one

of the people was armed. Of course, everybody carried their .38 pistol that you normally carried in a shoulder holster, normal flying. You just carried that in your pocket. I carried a—I remember I had a very hard blackjack I had bought downtown that you could put a loop around your wrist and had a little extension about eight or ten inches. It wasn't one of the padded blackjacks like police use now to keep from cracking skulls. This one was a pretty tough one. I never had to hit anybody with it. But I remember I carried that and the .38 revolver in my pocket all the time. We didn't have any more problems, though, and I never had to use it or anything like that. But we were permitted back into Peking after that had happened.

We went down for one short period, down to Tsingtao, which is on the Gulf of Chihli, to do gunnery practice, which we had not been able to do anyplace else because there wasn't anyplace to do it. We were down there for about a week, and I guess that's the only place that I ever really drove a tank. We had a Marine tank outfit that was stationed there at Tsingtao and we got to know some of the people over at the O [Officers] Club. They came over and we had a couple of old training airplanes and we took them up for some rides in the airplane.

I remember one night at the club, a little O Club in a Quonset hut was all it was, but some of the tank people were in there and we were talking about flying and about tanks. I said, "You know, I've never driven a tank and I'd sure like to some time." These guys said, "When do you want to go?" So I was, "Well, let's do it tomorrow sometime." "Okay."

Well, we had just finished our muster the next morning; it was squadron at eight o'clock. I hear clank, clank, clank. Here comes an old Sherman tank, drove up in front of the thing, and this guy crawled out and wanted to know if I wanted to go. So I did. He went with me, but I drove that thing all over. They had a maneuver area that some of it was pretty rough ground, big maneuver area off up behind the base. So we took this tank up there and drove it around. That was a lot of fun. First time I ever drove a tank. I remember that one.

During most of our time in Peking, though, we went in town a lot. We visited a lot of the famous places in Peking, Summer Palace. Another I have some pictures of is one taken at what is called the Center of the Universe. It's a special stone about two feet across set in the center of a large flat area on sort of a raised pedestal area that's probably two hundred feet across. It's called the Center of the Universe. Somehow the ancient Chinese had figured out that the whole universe revolved around that particular point where that stone was placed. Of course, it was false. There were things like that to see around Peking.

At that time we were not able to do much travel outside of our base or the corridor that went back and forth to Peking. I went out a couple of times with some of the people that were on some of the trucks. We were out maybe eight or ten miles, but that was about as far as you got out of town, because you didn't want to provoke an attack by Marines going out in the countryside.

I guess the thing that was most surprising to me back at that time, having seen the way the Chinese were living, it was a surprise that there weren't more

people going over to the Communists sooner, because I didn't see that they had a whole lot to lose. Now, you can say, well, they had their freedom to lose, but freedom didn't mean quite that much when they were starving to death, a lot of them.

Anyway, finally, after that time spent through the winter and into early spring, Marshall's Peace Teams then were being evacuated out of Peking. It sounds like a cheap grade-B movie, but when they were withdrawn, they went by train and down through Tianjin and down to the gulf near Tsingtao and then turned north and went a ways up along the gulf to a place called Chin-Huang-Tao, which was a little port. That's where the troop transports could come in and that's where they offloaded then.

I remember very well that time when they went down, because we covered them for the day and a half or two days it took to get down there. So that if there were Communists along that area that wanted to blow up the train, why, we'd have some support overhead. So we went back and forth across this train giving it cover all the way down to, not only down to Tianjin first, then on down to Tsingtao and then up to Chin-Huang-Tao also. Chin-Huang-Tao was also notable in that that's where the end of the Great Wall came down and met the water, met the ocean, at one time back a long time ago.

I should have mentioned the Great Wall, too, because that was an area north of Peking. It, I guess, averages about thirty-five or forty miles north of Peking is where the Great Wall came across that area, and it's still there. Of

course, in modern days now, part of it has been repaired, but back then it was still in pretty good shape up through that area. We were not supposed to fly behind the Great Wall, but I don't think there was a pilot out there didn't stray just a little bit over from time to time on looking around up in very, very, rough mountain area.

[Begin Tape 1, Side 2]

SEN. GLENN: I have some pictures I took with a little 35-millimeter camera I had then, flying in a Corsair down a valley up there looking up at the Great Wall on the ridge line. So they're rather unusual pictures, taken out of the cockpit of a F-4U. It was safe enough as far as that went, but very unusual pictures taken out of an airplane looking up at the Great Wall flying along there.

Beyond that, back at that time, from the desert areas and the areas north of Peking that would be up in what is now Mongolia, there were camel trains that would come down there. You'd see them on the road occasionally coming down through the mountain passes. So it was a very unusual experience to be out there and be in that part of the world in such different cultures. It was the first time I'd ever been in that different an environment than our own country here.

WILLIAMS: Was this strictly a Marine operation?

SEN. GLENN: Yes. I should have said that. We shared an air base out there. The air base we shared was really a Nationalist air base. They had P-51s that they flew from the same base that we operated out of. There were Army units in town that gave some security for the areas where Marshall and his Peace Teams were actually

conducting negotiations, but we had no large military force out there to really enforce the peace if the Communists tried to attack.

We had our own security around our base and it was very tight. We had Marine security, Marine ground troops that were stationed there with us that were security for the base we were on, or for the parts of the base that we lived on. But around the rest of the base, in fact, around the part where we lived, they had an electric fence. They told us it had 4500 volts, was the voltage on the fence, electric fence, and high amperature. While we were there, there were actually three people killed on that fence. We had no Americans killed on it, but three of the Chinese were killed. One of them I remember in particular was this fellow who thought he was going to get off the base, I guess, for whatever reason. He took a piece of Quonset sheeting, metal steel sheeting, and put it up against the fence. He apparently thought he was going to climb over, and that's where they found him the next morning was right there with that piece of Quonset sheeting up along the fence.

There was another one that's an even more dreadful story than that. A Chinese sentry had apparently been walking along the fence there. Normally the path—there was an area there that had another little fence that protected people from getting out onto the electric fence. He apparently had to go in the worst way, and he urinated through there onto that electric fence, and they found him the next morning dead also. So there were things like this happened that were bad.

Another thing I remember, I hadn't mentioned this before when I was

talking about the hunger, there was a little place on the edge of the base where, when they loaded the garbage out of our mess hall, they'd take it out and dump it down this little place into a little ravine. The Chinese came to know about that and Chinese would walk the six miles out with some little buckets to try and get our garbage out of the mess hall. There got to be such a number of people out there that one time they had a near riot and had to send the troops out. The Chinese troops went out to control it.

After that, they wound up selling our garbage to somebody in Beijing, or Peking it was then, who came out with a truck and collected the garbage from our base every day and took it in town and, I suppose, sold it and made some money out of it. But this walking out six miles from Peking with a couple of little buckets to get our garbage was something that had to impress you with how poor the people were.

We had a—called him a houseboy. He was a fellow that kept our Quonset hut. His name was Yon [phonetic]. He had a family in Peking. I got to be friends with him. He and I sort of had language difficulties, obviously, but we were friendly. He invited me to come into his home, and I did. Someone else went with me. I forget who it was now. But a couple of us went in and we were his guests and went to his home.

It was a place that would be, oh, you could put, I suppose, four or maybe five of those homes in my Senate office that we're talking in right now. It was two rooms with sort of a little curtain in between, but the second room was very

narrow, not more than maybe four feet wide and about ten or twelve feet long. The main room where they had a little place for a fire for cooking and all was maybe twelve or fifteen feet long and maybe seven feet wide, six or seven feet wide. He and his wife and two children lived in that space.

It was quite an experience to go in there with him. I'd always manage to get him some extra food or things like an orange or things like that, that he could take with him every once in a while. He appreciated that very much. I still remember to this day what the inside of that place of his looked like, and he was pretty well off by Chinese standards. He had employment. We paid him and people gave him things. So in his little community where he lived, which was on a back street back not far from the Peking Hotel, he was looked at as being a very fortunate person because he had a job out at the base. He went back and forth, walked back and forth those six miles every day.

Sometimes when someone would be in town and didn't have a Jeep ride back to the base, occasionally they would hire these rickshaw drivers, rickshaw pullers, to take them back to the base. They would start their little chop, chop, chop, chop, chop, chop, and little trot and they'd go six miles out to the base. I think the cost at that time was something like ten cents or something like that. I remember there were complaints by some people that somebody had been giving the rickshaw fellows a quarter, I think it was, or fifty cents. I forget exactly the amount—complaints that inflation was setting in. We were going to wreck the market.

WILLIAMS: You were there in support of General Marshall?

SEN. GLENN: Yes.

WILLIAMS: But it sounds like most of your patrols were to surveil Communist activities, whereas he was trying to negotiate between the two parties.

SEN. GLENN: He was trying to negotiate. We were looking for places the Communist had hit out around Beijing, or looking for any forces that might be moving toward Beijing, and that was our job. We were to report both any evidence of where they had done something overnight or anyplace where there were main forces that were heading towards Beijing, Peking.

WILLIAMS: How could Marshall be perceived then as being objective as a negotiator if the American forces were out basically doing the Nationalists' work?

SEN. GLENN: Well, we weren't attacking. The Nationalists, of course, they had had active combat with the Communist forces and had during all the Long March and all of that. We were not there to take part in combat; we were there to just be a warning of what might be coming to our own people there. We were loaded, I guess, mainly to impress them that we were there, I guess, or just that we were a force there, anyway.

WILLIAMS: What was your reputation amongst the great pro-Nationalists?

SEN. GLENN: Well, they favored us being there and they favored the squadron being there, because I think they probably assumed that since we and the Nationalists had been on the same side during World War II that if push came to shove and if there was an attack on Peking that we would operate on their behalf. I think we probably

would have, because that was the way things were at that time.

I didn't have any doubt that if somebody tried to attack Peking and that Marshall's Peace Teams and the families that were there were about to be overrun or something—would we be in active combat?—yes, I'm sure we would have been. But that didn't occur. The Peace Teams withdrew, and then a year or two later was when the actual takeover occurred. I think the actual takeover occurred in, what, late '48 or '49, I believe.

Then we flew out of there. After Marshall's Peace Teams left, then we folded up the squadron and we flew the airplanes out, down to Tsingtao and were there a few days, then on down to Shanghai. I was in part of the flight echelon on that move. The rest of the pilots, the rest of the officers in the squadron, of course, were back there then in Peking packing things up and getting everything on trains and bringing that down through Tianjin, which is where the Marine Division Headquarters was located. There were ground forces in north China, and they were mainly centered in Tianjin. So our people came down to Tianjin then, on down, and they loaded out. Some of them loaded out also aboard ship and they arrived then out on Guam later on after the rest of us arrived at Guam.

Shanghai was interesting then because this was old China. I mean, these are like things you see back in the opium war days. We were stationed—the couple of weeks that we spent in Shanghai waiting for the weather to get good enough to fly on out to Okinawa—we stayed at a place called the German school. It was a place that had been there for a long period of time from back in the days

when there were different spheres of influence that Europeans had in there. The Germans had come into that particular area and they had their own school. It was a comfortable enough place.

One of the things I remember there—I remember very well touring around Shanghai and seeing some of the things, seeing Shanghai as old, old China, which it was—but one thing I remember very well was at the German school where we stayed, there was a group there that were the CID people, Criminal Investigation Division, that the Navy had out there. There had been some problems down along the Shanghai waterfront, and sailors had been warned to stay out of that area. I think a sailor or two had been killed down there. So the orders were out that sailors were not to go down in that area, period. But the CID people were there to check on that and to make sure nobody got down there—somebody didn't get drunk and wander down in the wrong part of town. We talked to them about this, about how rough it was and some of literally the old-style opium dens that were still there. They went down and went through some of these places every night to see whether there were any sailors there or not, so that if any sailors thought about going down in that part of town they would know they're probably going to get caught.

So they went in some of these places every night and they were telling us about it one time. I asked if I could go along with them. They said, yes, sure, they'd be glad to have me come along. So we did. We went down there, and I still remember what it was like going down some stairs and into a sort of a

basement place. It was like something out of a cheap Humphrey Bogart movie, literally, with the smoke level down there. Actually, to see across the room, you almost had to lean over to get a good view clear across the whole room.

What they were looking for was just to see whether there were any sailors there, but when they were down there they covered each other. They didn't leave their backs exposed much. They were being very careful to make sure somebody didn't get to them. They had submachine guns and they'd sling them under their shoulders. I still remember that trip through several of those joints very, very well. That was something like out of a movie. That's one of my biggest memories of being in Shanghai back at that time.

WILLIAMS: The clientele in these dens were all Chinese?

SEN. GLENN: Chinese, yes. I don't think that in any of the places we went that night, we didn't discover any Americans at all, but they were in there looking. Our CID people were in there just looking and we didn't find anybody, not that I recall. But you saw things along the river in downtown. They used to say that occasionally a body would come floating by that somebody had disposed of it just by tossing it in the river, you know. It was that kind of an environment. It was pretty tough.

So we were there in Shanghai for about two weeks. The weather finally cleared and we flew on out to Okinawa. We were on an abandoned air base, which we used as our base for a short period of time, called Yonabaru, which is on the southeast part of Okinawa on Buckner Bay, which was a famous battle site during World War II. There were still ships out there at that time, ships that had

been sunk in Buckner Bay with the bow sticking up and some that had been beached. We had a chance to get around all over Okinawa.

There were some Quonset huts there that we used. There was a very small group of people that were still manning this old air base. So it was a good spot for us. We didn't go over to the main field in Okinawa. It was sort of our little place to operate, so we would fire the airplanes up and fly them usually every other day just to keep them in good shape. We were waiting at that time for a carrier to come and pick us up, and then the carrier would take us down to Guam.

When we were there—we'd been there about the first week—that's when I got the information about our daughter, Lynn, being born and Annie having additional trouble, so I got emergency leave and left. I described that a moment ago. But when I then got back to the squadron about—I guess the total trip back to the States and the leave I had at home for a few days, and then back out again, I guess I was gone twelve or fourteen days, something like that. Then I went back to Guam, because that's where the squadron was by then.

All this time in China and with VMF-218 on Guam, I was operations officer of the squadron, so I did the scheduling and all of that.

WILLIAMS: Describe an operations officer.

SEN. GLENN: The operations officer, of course, takes order from the executive officer and from the commanding officer, but outside of that, in effect, you're sort of third in command, although there may be other senior people. The operations officer runs the flight schedule. He'll determine what flights we'd be doing, with the approval

of the CO, of course. But you set out the training schedule and what you want to accomplish over a one-month or three-month or six-month period. You know that you're going to have flight inspections by a readiness team, an inspector team coming out for a readiness check on occasion. You have to get your squadron at a peak for that time period. You do gunnery training, bombing training. That was most of our time out there, because in a fighter squadron you're not much of a fighter squadron if you can't hit something in the air on an air target. And as we were operating, you're not much good for Marine support for people on the ground unless you can hit something with bombs and rockets. So that was ninety percent of our training.

A little bit of our training would be on tactics, where you go up and have formations and then you protect each other as a supposed enemy force would be attacking, what kind of maneuvering you go through. But that wasn't more than maybe ten percent of our total training. So we did individual weapons training most of the time.

WILLIAMS: Your mission at this point? What were you on Guam to accomplish?

SEN. GLENN: We were on Guam for whatever might break out, out there in that part of the world. They wanted American forces out there. They had fleet units that came into Apra Harbor for replenishment and supply. We were there for whatever might break out in that part of the world, whether in China or the Philippines or anyplace else. Of course, after the war, we kept Okinawa and still have a force on Okinawa now. So we were to be a force out there. As it worked out, this

eventually worked out into our being a protective force there for Japan, as well as other interests that we had out in that part of the world.

Guam was a good place to train, because most of the weather was good. You almost had a daily thunderstorm come up every afternoon, or daily rainstorm. Each day would start off almost bright and clear, a few more clouds during the day, and by afternoon it was not unusual to have a shower or two then, and start over again the next day. It was really tropics.

Since it was not wartime, we had a peacetime tropical schedule, they called it. We went to work at—I think we reported to the squadron at 7:00 in the morning, and first flights were off about 7:30 or quarter of 8:00. Schedule those off. We'd probably have two more flights go out during a time period. I think we ended the day at about 1:30 or something like that. So we went from about 7:00 to about 1:30 straight through. Then you'd go have lunch, and the standard operation was everybody hit the beach. So we'd be down playing volleyball on the beach and swimming and all that, almost every afternoon. A little different than the situation we'd been in over in China, where we were there most of the time during the winter, when you had the winds come down out of the area north and west of Peking. It was very bitter cold a lot of the time that we were in China. So being out on Guam after all that was a pleasure.

WILLIAMS: Lynn was born where? When you returned to the States you went to New Concord?

SEN. GLENN: When I was out of the country, Annie would always go back. I should have said

this earlier. Annie would always go back and live with her parents back in New Concord. She was living back there when she was pregnant with Lynn. Lynn was born in Zanesville, Ohio, at Good Samaritan Hospital. That's where Annie was when Lynn was born. So I saw Lynn for about four days when she was just brand new, only about a week old.

I didn't see her again until, on Guam—that's another story I should tell here. This was rather interesting. The only time I saw people getting very close to mutiny in the Marine Corps, but not against other Marines. [Laughter] We were in Guam. The Navy on Guam was pretty well set up. They had come out and they had built—they'd had regular construction people, Seabees, come in and build Quonset huts. They had sort of a little village of Quonset huts. Well, there was a Navy captain, his name was Bagdanovich. That rhymes with some things he was called from time to time, I might add.

The Marines were not permitted to have families out there, even though the Navy did. The people who had built the housing apparently had left the island. I always thought there were other people—that we could have had those people build for Marine also. But the captain who was the CO of the base said there were a lot of old Quonset huts there, kits for Quonset huts, the raw material for Quonset huts, that were there in some warehouses, and if Marines wanted to build their own Quonset huts, then they could have families come out and be there, because there was enough food and it had a PX and all the things for families were there.

Well, that was a challenge, and so the Marines actually went to work and built their own Quonset huts. We'd go over, after we were done flying for the day, sometimes instead of going to the beach, everybody would go up and we'd all work on Quonset huts. By the time this was being done, I had been out there about a year or something like that. I thought I was just about to get orders home, and so I didn't put in for building a Quonset hut, because I thought my tour is up, I've been out here over a year now, and I'm just about to go home. So I was working with the other guys. I'd go up and help them build Quonset huts and all that.

So we had probably—oh, for people in the squadron we probably had put up maybe twenty-five or thirty Quonset huts, and people were getting ready, so they wanted to send for their families. We have them up now and they'd passed inspection and they were all painted and they were pretty good-looking. They weren't bad at all. We'd put the plumbing in. We had some of the Seabees that we'd give a bottle of something to and they'd come up and help you after hours. So these Quonset huts were great.

Well, when the first people in the squadron started putting in for their dependents to come out, Captain Bagdanovich decided that the Navy needed some more Quonset huts and that they wanted half of the Quonset huts that the Marines had built themselves. They were going to go to the Navy. That came close to creating a riot, I can tell you. I wasn't on the list to have somebody brought out because I thought I was going home. There was very serious objection, I can tell

you, about what he was doing. Our squadron CO, I think it was John Spooner [phonetic] at that time, he went over and talked to the captain and couldn't convince him.

Well, this was just coming to a head when we had a new Marine general came out to the island. He was to be head of the brigade, which was a ground force over on the other side of the island. As I recall, his name was McKitrick [phonetic]. So as quick as he arrived on the island, he then became the senior—Marines being naval personnel technically—he became the senior naval personnel on the island, being a Marine general.

So we went over and explained this to him. I didn't go over and explain it; I think John Spooner was the one that went over and explained it to him and explained how serious this was. And that ended that episode very rapidly. He just put out an order that the Marines were putting in for dependents and that was it.

Well, we then were out there. After those huts had been put up, we were still there for a while and I still hadn't gotten my orders. This was like another four or five months. So I finally decided, in desperation—I didn't know how long I was going to be out there and by this time I'm approaching two years overseas, which wasn't at all normal. So I finally put in for Annie to come to Guam, and she did.

Well, as it turned out then after about, I guess, two and a half or three months after she got to Guam is when I did finally get orders home. But Annie, with two little kids, went cross-country on her own on the airlines and flew—

reported into Alameda Naval Air Station at San Francisco and flew on a seaplane, the old Martin Mars, which was big four-engine plane that the Navy had built right at the end of World War II—flew on that Martin Mars to Hawaii. Our good friends Tom and Ida Mae Miller were out there. He was stationed in Hawaii then. They met her out there and then got her on another airplane to Guam.

You have to appreciate this a little bit, because Annie at that time still was an eighty-five percent stutterer and had real trouble communicating with people. In other words, eighty-five percent of the words she would try to say, she'd have a problem with. And there she was with two kids making that trip halfway around the world when she had never ever traveled on her own before. But she was determined to come out there. That was really some trip for her.

Some of the first Quonset huts that we had put together out there, one of the ones that I had helped the person work on, who had had his dependents there, he got his orders back. He was the executive officer of our squadron. I was assigned to his Quonset hut that I had helped build, and so that's what Annie and I moved into when she and the kids arrived out there.

She was there about three months or so and she got into the swing of things as soon as she got there and got to know the other wives and everybody in the squadron. We were still flying every day. Then we got orders home, and our orders home were not to fly home. They were to come on military sea transport, MSTS, Military Sea Transport Service, in one of these big old gray personnel transports they had back in those days. We left then out of Apra Harbor just

before Thanksgiving and had two Thanksgivings, one on each side of the international dateline, as we came across there.

It took—I think it was thirteen or fourteen days, fourteen days, I think, to reach San Francisco. There was a big storm area moving across the Pacific, the north Pacific at that time, so the ship stayed just south of that. It turns out we were moving just about as fast as the storm was moving for a lot of that trip. We came right through the middle of the Hawaiian Islands on the trip, on the way towards San Francisco, considerably south of where you'd be if you were doing a great circle route from Guam into San Francisco. But the weather made it pretty rough, and so the ship rolled around an awful lot. The kids were seasick and I didn't feel good for a lot of that trip either. It was a pretty miserable trip.

One incident that I remember more than any other off that trip would be good to get on paper also. We were rolling around, and the stateroom that we had was a room, period, bare metal old Navy transport room with a gray Navy painted solid-steel deck with one porthole, fair-size porthole about, I suppose, a foot across, something like that. Now, straight across from that porthole there was a lower bunk and a top bunk. Then right under that porthole was another bunk and then we had a crib at the end of that room, at the end of that little stateroom, for Lynn. So I was in the top bunk and Dave in the lower bunk on my side.

[Begin Tape 2, Side 1]

SEN. GLENN: You had a fitting that you could put in this porthole. It stuck out into the wind

outside and you could rotate this thing in the porthole itself. So that with this big thing—like a foot-long stoop made out metal—we'd catch the air and turn it into the room and keep the place a little bit cooled down, because there was no air-conditioning on the ships at that time. So these little rooms got very, very hot during the daytime when the sun on the deck above would make it hot in there. Well, we would turn that depending on what direction the wind was going so you picked up this air coming in.

In the middle of the night, coming across there, we're in rough water and the bow of the ship goes down enough that a bow wave then was thrown up along the side of the ship. It hit that air scoop that we had out and just scooped about fifty gallons of water that just came into that room at about fifty miles an hour, I'll tell you. It hit the top bunk I was on; hit the bunk Dave was on, Annie's down below. The whole deck was awash with cold seawater. I'll tell you, to be in the middle of the night and get hit with that cold seawater that was quite an experience. We got the light on and got dried out and got back to bed.

The only other incident was one that I was really worried about. Our son Dave, who by that time, let's see, he'd be maybe, what, two and a half years old, I guess, something like that, was climbing up the ladder to my top bunk to get in bed with me, when the ship lurched a particular way, and he fell off the ladder and fell down and hit his head on that steel deck. He was squalling and squalling, and I remember taking him in the middle of the night up to where the doctors were, the sick bay aboard ship, and them testing him for concussion and all of that. He

was okay, but he had a huge knot on his head that lasted all the way into San Francisco. So we were lucky he didn't get hurt badly.

But that was not too pleasant a trip. I remember that even though we did have two Thanksgiving Day dinners aboard. I remember when we sailed under the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, it was one of the most welcome sights I ever saw in my life—was to get that trip over with and get on back home.

WILLIAMS: It must have been exciting to be able to familiarize Annie with military life in the Pacific. I mean, Guam was not all that far from where you'd been during World War II.

SEN. GLENN: Well, it was quite a ways. Guam still had some of their remnants out of World War II from the battle for Guam. There were ships that were still beached and were rotting hulks on the beach. We went up to Agana, which is still the center of activity on Guam to this day. But Guam back at that time was more just a tropical island with not that much on it. Today, of course, there are hotels all over the place and tourists, mainly Japanese, down there all the time. Back at that time it was close enough after World War II that it was still pretty much just a tropical island. We had a beach on the south end of the island we went to almost every day, as I said before. It was one with big palm trees out over the beach. It was a nice beach.

Great place to fly for training. We had no real rough weather out there, although there was a hurricane season. We had one hurricane while we were there, as a matter of fact. They took people out of all the Quonset huts and put

them down in the big mess hall, where there was a huge concrete slab that had the anchor points for this big king-sized Quonset hut. So it was a much more sturdy building than the little Quonset huts we lived in.

I should have mentioned the Quonset huts we lived in were set up on cut sections of coconut log, so they were up about a foot off the ground. In order to give stability to them, we put cables over the top and took old .50-caliber gun barrels, which were about four feet long, and drove those down at an angle into the solid coral, and attached the cables onto them so the wind didn't blow these things off. They fared pretty well in the hurricane we had there. I don't recall that we got much damage. In fact, I think the winds got up to maybe—I don't know what they were, seventy or eighty miles an hour, something like that, but nobody was hurt or anything like that.

WILLIAMS: Do you want to go on?

SEN. GLENN: Yes, that sort of takes care of Guam. What else about Guam? I don't know. I'm sure when I see a print of this as I go along, I'll think of a hundred little illustrations to put in.

WILLIAMS: We'll do that then.

SEN. GLENN: Okay.

[End of interview]