

The John H. Glenn, Jr.  
Oral History Project

Oral History Interview 14

with  
John H. Glenn

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

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Brien R. Williams  
Interviewer

[Begin Interview 14, Tape 1, Side A]

WILLIAMS: This is the 13th of March, 1998, the fourteenth interview with Senator John Glenn in his office on Capitol Hill.

We're picking up our story here with your becoming involved in the Korean conflict.

SEN. GLENN: In getting ready to go to Korea, I didn't go to Korea as soon as I really wanted to go. It may sound a bit strange, but I looked forward to going to Korea. I had trained as a Marine fighter pilot for so many years, all through World War II, of course, and then all the training afterwards, being active in training other pilots in fighter tactics, and I had been an operations officer of a squadron. So I thought this was my vocation, this was my life's work, and to not go to Korea was

something that I couldn't contemplate.

I had been stationed for a couple of years at Quantico, Virginia. I'd gone through the Amphibious Warfare School junior course, AWS, as it was called, and then was kept on the general staff at Quantico after I was out of school. I had thought that I would go to Korea when I got out of the Amphibious Warfare School in; I guess it was late '51 or early '52. I'd have to get the dates on that. But I was picked to go on the general staff there, and I was the only pilot on that staff and I didn't relish that duty. It was probably the best living conditions we'd ever had in the Marine Corps, because after a rocky start at Quantico as far as housing went, living in half of a Quonset hut for one winter. Then, finally, at the last part of it, we did actually get base housing, which was very nice quarters, nice big apartment on the base, and it's the only time in twenty-three years in the Marine Corps I ever had base housing, as such.

But despite the living conditions and so on, I wanted to go to Korea because I thought professionally it was something I should do. I wanted to do it, and I was almost remiss in my duties as a Marine if I did not go. Being on the staff, however, made it difficult, and for a long time I wrote a letter. I think I sent a letter almost every month requesting that I be reassigned to Korea.

All the materials we had studied in school there involved the Korean War. The talk was about the Korean War. You had people coming back from the Korean War. Every month I would put my letter in, or every other month, and after several episodes of this, I was called into my boss' office one day, who was a Marine colonel, a ground officer, and he told me in no uncertain terms that I was

not to put any more letters in, that when the Marine Corps decided I would go to Korea, I would go, and I could forget putting anymore letters in.

Well, I thought that probably was the end of it, but about two months later, I got my orders to Korea, after having been on the staff there for about a year and a half, I guess. So, orders to Korea, and we had decided Annie and the kids were going to live back in Ohio, as they had on my previous deployments, live back with the grandparents in Ohio. So, they moved back there, or we moved back there—I was on leave—and then on to the West Coast and on to Korea.

Back in those days, of course, we did not have jet transportation to cross the Pacific. So, when you went back and forth across the Pacific, it was in the old DC-6 prop planes, and those were very long trips. Those were not the most comfortable airplanes in the world, because they had them configured for troop transportation or for cargo. So those trips back and forth across the Pacific were not something you really looked forward to.

We went to Japan. We were just there for a couple of days for processing and then over to Korea and into the First Marine Air Wing. I was assigned to Marine Fighter Squadron 311, VMF, V standing for heavier than air; M, Marine; and F for fighter; 311 as part of the First Marine Air Wing. Since I'd been an operations officer in a squadron several times, I was assigned as operations officer there.

This was a little bit different than my previous operations officer jobs in that here we were in combat, and the Marines, of course, were doing mainly air-to-ground support of troops type flying. We were flying the F9-F Panther jets,

F9-F 4s and 5s, two different models, and it was a good airplane for what it was designed for. It was a Grumman airplane, heavily built, heavy frame. It wouldn't go as fast as a lot of other jets, but it was a very tough airplane and would take a lot of hits, which I found out later was to my advantage, because I did get hit by anti-aircraft on seven different occasions during the Korean War.

We lived in Quonset huts at K-3, at Pohang, Korea. It was well down into South Korea at a bay on the east coast. So we had a way to go to get up to the combat area. By the time I got out there, which, it turned out, was going to be in the last stages of the war—although we didn't know it at that time—the lines had stabilized pretty well after having been back and forth up and down the Korean peninsula several times from the initial combat in Korea in the days of the Marine Corps and the Chosen Reservoir and things like that that were really—well, I think the Chosen Reservoir is, to me, one of the most heroic actions ever performed by the Marine Corps.

They had this Marine regiment completely surrounded, and, literally, in the worst winter weather conditions had to fight their way out from that Chosen Reservoir down to the east coast city of Hungnam. It was a situation where they were bringing out their wounded by keeping them warm and alive on the hoods of jeeps where it was warm. I had a friend of mine who was a forward air controller in there, had gotten trapped in there with them, and he got hit standing up trying to bring close air support in to help them out one day. He stood up on a ridge line where he shouldn't have been standing up, got shot through the neck. He lived, he was okay. But the kind of dedication that those people had is almost

unbelievable.

I was told by some of the other people there that day, they tried to pull him back down when he was up, but he had to stand up to get a view to direct the airplanes in on close air support. They tried to get him not to stand up. He stood up anyway because that was the only way he could do his job, and got shot through the neck. He was even still trying to stand up and direct the planes, even though blood was gurgling in his throat as he was trying to talk on the radio.

So there were just incidents after incidents like that. General Ray Davis, I believe, was the one who was the commanding general. He got the Congressional Medal of Honor after that episode was completed. It was one of the most heroic actions, I think, in which the Marine Corps ever participated.

WILLIAMS: And your friend's name?

SEN. GLENN: Good question. I'll think of it in a second, yes.

WILLIAMS: How did you get your information about the Chosen Reservoir?

SEN. GLENN: Well, that had happened long before I got out there, so it was well known. That was back and was mentioned, and actually some of the things that had happened at Hungnam and what they did were actually being taught in the Marine Corps schools when I was still at Quantico. So I had known all about that situation.

WILLIAMS: And you were also seeing footage of the war on television or film.

SEN. GLENN: Yes. Television was not the high art then in the early 1950s that it is now.

Whoever had TV, it was black and white and very spotty, but it was there and we got some. Most of the time we were at Quantico, we didn't even have a TV set. We had a friend who had a TV set, another Marine, and we used to go over to his

house to watch TV quite often. So TV was not as common as it is today. It's hard to believe, but that was just in the 1950s, in the early 1950s, but that's the way it was.

We had seen pictures, of course. There were pictures on TV and in the newspapers of Hungnam and of the Chosen Reservoir operation, as well as other things in Korea, too. Our operations in the squadron were that we would get our orders from what was called the JOC Center, Joint Operations Center. It was located up closer to Seoul. They would give us our missions each day, assign them, and that would come down to us and then we'd prepare for them.

In the F-9, we had a lot of armament we could use on that thing. We could carry 500-pound bombs. We could carry HVARs, as we called them, high-velocity aircraft rockets, five-inch rockets, usually. We did a lot of work with napalm, where you drop tanks like fuel drop tanks, except they're filled with this—it's a combination of kerosene and sort of a gel that spreads out and catches fire. It's all set off by a white phosphorous grenade in the tank cap so that when that hits the grounds and breaks—white phosphorous, when it hits the air, will flame and that would set the whole thing on fire.

We did a lot of napalm work in support of our troops, particularly the Marines in the First Marine Division, which was in a centrally located position on the main battle lines that had pretty well stabilized by the time I got out there. The ground Marines that were in the lines up there loved to have us come in on close air support, because with the napalm and us being able to get right down into the opponent's trenches opposite them, we could do a lot of damage in there.

A high percentage of our flying was done in close air support.

We also did what were called interdiction missions in which we flew deep behind enemy lines, way up into North Korea, and hit bridges and railroads and tunnels and things like that, as well as occasionally hitting into personnel areas where the North Koreans were staging people to come down into the front or where there were supply dumps coming down into the front.

On bridges, in particular, we became pretty expert at being bridge busters, because that was a key to their whole transportation system. If we could keep the bridges knocked down in that rough country in North Korea, both road bridges as well as railroad bridges, it would prevent the resupply for the people fighting down along the front lines. So we did a lot of that kind of work in addition to the close air support work.

We worked off maps that were mainly photo maps in which a grid had been put on these, and you became very familiar with some of the main landmarks in North Korea. We didn't have any of the sophisticated guidance systems that people have now like inertial guidance systems or global positioning systems or any of those kinds of things that help people out now to find a particular location. If you were a flight leader, you became a real expert at being able to take your chart or your aerial photos of a particular area and recognize certain terrain features. Where roads cross or a railroad crosses a river or something like that that makes a notable landmark, and then going to your target area from recognizing certain landmarks like that.

We flew, a lot of the time, under overcast conditions out there, particularly

in the winter. The most common weather was sort of high, as we called it, milk-bottle-type conditions. Your visibility in the air was not something that was like a complete fog on the ground. It was like a light fog where you could see a few hundred yards. So you could be flying along with a whole squadron and see most of the other airplanes, but you couldn't see anything on the ground or see anything up. So you're flying on instruments almost all the time and it put a particular load on the flight leader because the flight leader had to really be the one that everybody else homed in on and flew on.

You'd take off at K-3, rendezvous the squadron, and when you took off. Usually the leader would, rather than circle to get everybody together, the leader would take off on course, flying at a lower power setting and a little slower speed and a slower climb than was possible. The other planes then stayed at full power after they took off and gradually caught up. So everybody was in a big long trail after takeoff, and sometimes if we needed to get everyone rendezvoused, the leader would make a few shallow turns one way or the other to help people get caught up.

You got the whole squadron together and flew a loose formation going up, and then when you came to whatever your target was—let's say we're going after a target deep into North Korea—you would pick a spot as the entry point for your attack. Then we usually would make what we called around-the-clock approaches. As you came in over a target, the leader would peel off and make his attack. Other planes then would set up a curving pattern around that spot as though you were going to fly a circle around that spot. Then one after the other,

planes, in order, would peel off and come down and make their own attack. That was done mainly to break up antiaircraft fire.

We operated against very large amounts of antiaircraft fire, and they were good at it. Their antiaircraft fire, it was everything from when you're right down on the deck, right down on the top of—just a few feet above the ground, clear on up to 18 or 20,000 feet we could expect antiaircraft fire. If you went above that—why then anti-air couldn't get up much higher than that.

We took a lot of hits from antiaircraft fire and lost some people from antiaircraft fire, but the main reason for making what we called an around-the-clock approach was to break up the antiaircraft fire. If we all came in on one set sloping pattern on an attack, obviously the antiaircraft fire from all over that area could concentrate on that one course coming in and have a much better chance of hitting some of our planes coming in. So this around-the-clock attack broke up the antiaircraft fire as much as it could be broken up or diminished on each particular airplane. Usually, if you're coming in on a glide-bombing attack, you'd come in and they'd put the speed brakes out to keep your speed down. Those were just big flat-plate boards that extend out to keep the speed down on a jet airplane, to keep it from going too fast. That way you kept the speed down so you could keep your sighting right on the target as you came in. If you did not do that and just came in very fast, came in faster than you should, it was very, very difficult to get any accuracy on placing your bombs or your weapons where they were supposed to go.

An attack as I've just described, an around-the-clock approach, was the

way you did bombing runs, or one way you did bombing runs. Now another way you could do bombing runs, if we're out after bridges, was to come in on a much flatter approach, come in on the tree tops. What was most effective in blowing bridges was not trying to hit the bridge itself, but to blow up the abutment at the end of the bridge. To do that, what you would do is come in at low level right on tree tops and fly right at the bridge abutment, or fly right at the berm right at the end of the bridge where it joined the land. You'd fly right at that. When you had to pull up to keep from hitting it yourself, why, you'd release the bombs, hit the pickle—the bomb-release switch on the control stick inside was called the pickle, bomb pickle—and you hit the pickle, and the bombs would release and sink into that bridge abutment.

Now, in a low-level attack like that, you always used some sort of delay fusing, because obviously if the bomb hit and went off instantly, why, the plane would get blown up above it. So we would use delay fusing. The art of fusing for combat like that gets to be rather exacting. Sometimes we'd use a four- or five-second delay to let you get up and away from that particular spot. You always pulled up and made a turn away from the release track, because if you missed and overshot just slightly, that bomb is tumbling along right under you. So you wanted to be off that track, because we had planes be damaged from that.

But what got to be quite an art was outguessing the North Koreans in their repair capability. They were very, very good at putting huge crews in at night and repairing roads and bridges and railroad bridges, both roads and railroads, and having them operational again, back in the next day or within a day or two. So

what we would do sometimes is put fusing in some of the bombs that you sunk into these abutments at the end of bridges. You put fusing on those bombs that was like eight or nine hours. So it meant that if you're making a late-afternoon attack, say, at four o'clock in the afternoon you blew a bridge abutment, you knew that that night they were going to be coming in and repairing the bridge. Putting an eight-or-nine-hour delay meant that in the middle of the night, you were going to have bombs going off while they were working on the bridge. I'm sure that discouraged them, also. So we did attacks like that with bombs.

Also, on low-level attacks like that, we did a lot of napalm work, either in front of the lines where the enemy was dug in, in trenches, or up country, well up into North Korea in staging areas where we knew there were troops and supplies being marshaled that were on their way down to the front. On the napalm runs, we used to call those an "ape scrape," because that's how low you flew. You almost scraped them off when you came in. On those you didn't worry about how low you got, because when they hit and flamed they weren't explosive and so they didn't damage your airplane. So you could actually get down to not many feet above the ground. That was your most accurate way of making attacks like that, was to come down and just fly into—you literally were in a very slight glide, maybe only a five or ten degree angle of attack coming in.

Once again, when you were going to fly into what you wanted to hit, you would just, a second or so ahead of that, you'd release your napalm tank, and when it hit the ground, then, it would spread out. The tank would break, of course, the white phosphorous grenade would break and ignite this whole thing

and it would be a huge burning flaming area maybe a couple of hundred yards long and fifty to seventy-five feet wide. Of course, dumping that into a trench area was very, very effective. Or dumping it into an area that was being used for marshalling of troops or assembly of troops was very effective also.

I remember there was one area out on the Haeju Peninsula, west and a little bit south of Pyongyang, where one time we got intelligence word, or the intelligence people had word, that there was a very large area being used to amass both people and supplies. They wanted us to make an all-out effort to really obliterate that area, because these people were moving down for a major attack on our forces down at the front. Our particular air group, we had two squadrons in it, VMF-115 and the squadron I was in, VMF-311, and I led one of those strikes of our two squadrons combined, which gave us forty—I don't remember how many airplanes. We had twenty-four planes to a squadron, and usually there were a few planes out for work of some kind or another or battle damage or one thing or another. I don't remember exactly how many planes were on this particular mission, but there were probably on the order of close to forty airplanes, I would imagine, on that particular flight.

What I did in planning the flight, we knew there was going to be heavy anti-aircraft fire, but we were going to be coming in at a very, very low level. To split up the anti-aircraft fire so that we weren't all just coming in on the same attack course, I had a very complex attack plan, and it worked out pretty well. I might add, too, that as we came in I had it set up that I would come in on one channel and hit a certain area of this marshalling area. Then I had assigned the

lead elements of the other squadron to come in on exactly the opposite track going the other direction and taking the next few-hundred-yards-wide area. Then the third group we'd split out would come in on the same track I had come in on, except, once again, a few hundred yards displaced from the middle group. So we had planes coming in from different directions and hitting these areas. Each plane that came in then would drop at the far end of the drop zone so that as the smoke and flame came up, planes behind coming in could still see their target area and each would drop farther back along this area. It was quite an intricate plan, but it all seemed to work out all right. We made multiple attacks on that day, which was a little unusual because sometimes you'd have two flights a day, but usually a single attack per day.

On that particular day and in that particular area, we did multiple attacks that day. I think we did two, did a flight in the morning and a flight in the afternoon, with all the planes we could put in the air, and we did a pretty good job on them up there.

WILLIAMS: These different tracks, were they simultaneous?

SEN. GLENN: Yes, one right after the other. I came in first, then when I came in the others were just starting, they were running in from the other direction, so we passed them. They were on the way in while I was on the way out. It all worked out pretty good. We had them separated and had landmarks that the people were to key on.

WILLIAMS: Has anyone used a pattern like that in a combat movie?

SEN. GLENN: I don't think so. [Laughter]

WILLIAMS: It would be very dramatic.

SEN. GLENN: We had planes going every direction for a while. But it all worked out pretty well. The only way you could do it would be in a fairly large area, and the staging area that we'd been assigned to hit was a pretty good-sized area. So we wanted to cover the whole thing. The normal way would have been to come in and just let each wave of planes coming in just work in a wave across and just pick a different area as you worked your way across. But this was a little different approach to it, but it seemed to work all right.

WILLIAMS: You said there was antiaircraft there.

SEN. GLENN: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Did you sustain a lot of hits?

SEN. GLENN: I don't think we took too many hits that day, because we were down low coming in. On napalm attacks, you come in very, very low, as low as you can get. I don't remember how many people got hit that day, but usually on napalm attacks, if you've got hits, they were like small-arms fire. It was from the people down below in the trenches just shooting their rifles at you rather than big antiaircraft. So you'd come back sometimes with single holes, things like that. But I don't recall that we lost too many planes. I don't think we lost many on napalm attacks.

Anyway, that was one type of attack. I talked some about bombing attacks and then about napalm. Other type attacks we had were using the

HVARs, the five-inch high-velocity aircraft rockets. We used those against more solid targets, or if you ever saw tanks or trucks or something like that, that's what they were particularly effective on. You never saw too many tanks at that stage of the war, the last days of the war. There weren't too many tanks out running around, but we did shoot at trucks with those on occasion, if you could catch trucks out in the open. That was the problem, in that they moved at night, and, of course, we had very little night capability back then. We didn't have all the things we have today, like air-to-ground radar that could pick up trucks and tanks and things like that. All we had was fire-control radar...

[Begin Tape 1, Side 2]

SEN. GLENN: People tend to forget now, all these years later, what a primitive system we had as far as making attacks, compared to what people have now. The most we had in the airplane was a little radar that had just been developed that was used for fire control from the airplane itself. But that was just usable on other airplanes, air to air, to try and give you your proper range out to a few hundred yards as you came in making an attack.

There was a gun site that would help you out, but all of our attacks from air to ground were all done with an old ring sight gun sight. It was a projection on the windshield or on the reflector just inside the windshield where you looked through a piece of glass, but also reflected off that glass from below was just a ring sight. So you had to make your own estimates

of how much wind there was, what your wind drift was coming in, how much lead you needed to make. These were all done by just your own intuition or your own experience from practice, having made thousands, literally thousands, of bomb drops in practice with little two-pound miniature bombs that have the same air trajectory as a five-hundred pounder. You didn't have some of the systems like they have now where you had laser-guided and precision-guided munitions, PGM, as we call them now—things that will home in on a particular target on the ground. So it was much more up to the pilot and his own proficiency in making a bombing run that would work or that hit.

You'd see some of those pictures of bomb-damage assessment, BDA, after an attack out there, when we usually would try at some later time to have a photo plane come over and make a high-speed pass across the area just to get pictures. You look at bomb-damage assessment and there were bombs all over the area sometimes, just because the bombing was not as accurate. That was particularly true if you made a very steep bombing run coming in. Let's say there was a mountain valley so that you couldn't make a low-level run and you had to come in very steep from above. Those runs were not as accurate because you had to make your drop from like, oh, 3,500 feet, or 3,000 to 3,500 feet, in order to make your pullout, if you're coming down at a very steep angle.

A pilot had to be very good to estimate the wind properly and the drift of his airplane and the trajectory of the bomb in order to hit. It's a

real work of art, if you want to term it that, to become that proficient so you can really put the bombs right on target. But out of a whole squadron coming in on a target, you usually had some hits right on the target, too, out of all these planes, so we'd get our targets usually, but it was not as accurate as things are now.

I'll get into a little later on some of the air-to-air fighting that I got into out there, but this use of a gun sight was particularly important when you got to air-to-air fighting, where one airplane is fighting against another one in the air. In that situation, it's very difficult, as you come in, to make an accurate estimate of how far you are away from the other airplane.

The F-86 had developed a computing gun sight in which you put the pipper, or your sighting dot—instead of trying to draw a lead yourself as you would almost like skeet shooting, instead of trying to make that type approach, as we all had been taught to do all during World War II, by the time the Korean War came along, they had developed a computing gun sight. You would put your pipper, or what you wanted to hit, you'd put the pipper right on the target you wanted to hit. Then as that target maneuvered, and as you would then try and keep the pipper on, it would automatically then set up the lead that you needed for the distance out you were from that target. Hence, the need for a little radar on there to give you that precise distance so that as you came in, the radar would give the distance and cut the lead down you needed as you came in, in a shorter

range. You couldn't use that for ground-attack work though, as we were doing in the F-9F.

In the air-to-air work, also, we were actually using—it was almost World War I type firing—in that we had forward-firing guns. They were mounted fixed on the airplane, same as they'd had way back starting in World War I. Then during World War II, of course, that was developed. What we had in Korea was we had four 20-millimeter cannon on the F-9F, but the F-86 that I flew later had six 50-caliber machine guns.

Of course, too, there were no standoff missiles to fire or anything like that. So what you did, it was literally World War I or World War II type dog fighting, where you had to bring your six 50-calibers to bear by getting behind that other airplane and maneuvering enough and pulling the amount of lead you needed. Just as in shooting a shotgun if you're out duck hunting, get the proper amount of lead to hit the other airplane.

So it was not like today where you can pick up on radar a plane maybe fifty miles away, fire your missiles, they go out, home on the target and do the job that has to be done. Then you had to get out and maneuver in behind the other airplane yourself by out flying the other pilot or having the airplane, too, that had superior characteristics to the other airplane so that you could get in behind the other airplane and shoot at them from, oh, somewhere—usually you'd have to close in to under 1,000 feet to be accurate in shooting at another airplane.

So, maneuverability of the airplane became far, far more

important, I think then, than it is today when you have some of these missiles that can go out and do half the job for you. But we didn't have that in the F-9Fs, doing air-to-ground work. We did go up on some night flights that they had, although the night flying was a little more rare. They had flights that were called MPQ flights, and that stood for a certain type of ground radar. Someone had developed, and the Marine Corps was testing out, this system where you could fly at altitude. You could fly at, say, 20,000 feet with a bomb load. The people on the ground had developed radar accurate enough that they would direct you very precisely what your course was to be and what your speed was to be, and you held very, very precisely to that speed and direction. Well, they then had all the latest meteorological information and all the different winds and levels and so on, and they were supposed to have computed all that out, which they did. They would bring you along and you sat there with all the switches on, and when they gave you three, two, one, drop, you dropped.

In effect, with fighters, we were doing, in effect, high-altitude bombing. We had some pretty good reports back about getting hits on targets in pretty good shape, targets not far from the front lines. It had to be done very, very precisely, obviously, if you're working along the front line, because you didn't want to drop on friendlies. There were some cases of that at different times that people had misidentified a certain landmark or something and dropped on friendlies, and some of our people were killed by our own people in attacks.

The MPQ flights, as I recall, were terminated when one night they had a flight up on an MPQ, and as they were going along, obviously enemy antiaircraft could track these same airplanes. They had a shell go off right in the middle of a formation on an MPQ run, and I think it killed the lead. I think the lead pilot was taken out and two other planes were damaged, or something like that. So it showed the vulnerability of MPQ, as well as the advantages of it. I don't recall that we did any more MPQ after that. But they picked someone right off the lead of the flight at—I think it was like 20,000 feet or something like that. That was one other type bomb attack we tried out also.

We'd, also, in making attacks—this was an interesting incident. I had a pilot, who I guess shall remain nameless at this point. Well, no. Ted Williams was a good pilot and a great baseball player, of course, and he was also a great Marine pilot. He and I happened to go out and happened to be assigned to the same squadron at almost the same time. Ted got out there a couple of weeks ahead of me. He'd gotten his checkout flights and had just started his assignment to combat flights just as I arrived. On one of his first flights, it was interesting, he got hit and had to come back. Instead of getting back to K-3, he was hit, was on fire, and had to go into one of the airfields up by Seoul, in K-16, I think it was. The old F-9F had what was called a centrifugal-flow engine. Instead of the air coming in and being compressed and running straight back through the engine and through the burners, it came and went through a big

circular fan, in effect, that threw the air or compressed it by throwing it out off the ends of the blades and it was then caught in a collector ring and the pressure then went back through the burners. It was a different type engine. I don't think any of them are used today. But that was the kind of engine, and in most of those using that centrifugal-flow engine, in most of the F-9s that have been hit back in that engine area, if there was a fire, they had a big propensity for blowing up and blowing the tail off the airplane, which was fatal obviously.

Well, when Ted was hit, he had a fire going back there and everybody was yelling at him, "Get out! Get out!" He didn't get out and decided to bring it back in anyway. I'm not sure he had a radio connection with everybody telling him to get out or not, anyway. But he came back in, couldn't get the gear down, and bellied it and slid up the runway at K-16 and the airplane sat there on the runway and burned or melted down.

Anyway, to get back to Ted, Ted was in the reserves in the Marine Corps, and I was in the regulars, of course; had been a regular officer, and most of the regular officers had far more training in instrument flying and things. Well, we were just better trained. So they always tried to match up a reserve pilot with a regular pilot. You didn't fly every mission with that person, but if you were assigned to the same flight, well, you flew together. So I guess probably half the missions that Ted flew in Korea, he flew as my wing man, so I got to know him very well.

What I was thinking of, though, the type of attack we used, they

were called road reece; in other words, road reconnaissance. On a road reece, what you did, you were assigned a certain route where the North Koreans were bringing supplies or troops down a certain track or series of roads, and we had them numbered or knew basically which track was which. What we would do is just take off with just a couple of planes and take off very early in the morning so that we were clear up way, way up in North Korea at the head of one of these road areas. Then at first light in the morning, we'd drop down and fly along at tree-top level or hill level along these routes clear back down toward the front, and pick up targets of opportunity, because the North Koreans moved at night, and we had no way of attacking them at night, basically.

So we would go up and try to catch them still out on the road if they hadn't gotten their trucks or their people into tunnels or bunkers or caves or try and catch them on the road before they got off the road. On one particular mission—well, have to say one other thing. I mentioned the HVARs earlier, the high-velocity aircraft rockets. Those were loaded usually with proximity fuses. There had been some problem with proximity fuses and so the orders were that you never landed with proximity fuses, for fear one of them might give some problem after landing. So if you didn't use those HVARs, why, you unloaded them either out over the water, just shoot them into the ocean, or shoot them at a target of any kind you just happened to pick in North Korea just to get rid of them.

We also, as I mentioned before, had had some problems with drops on friendlies. Some Marines had been hurt because somebody had dropped in too close and hurt some of our own people. Of course, that's the worst fear of an attack pilot, is to get into your own people. There had been a couple of incidents like that, and the CO of the group had put out an order that that just wasn't going to happen anymore and that each flight leader was going to be held responsible. Anybody in the flight that dropped on friendlies, the flight leader was going to get an automatic court-martial.

I'd never had any problem dropping on friendlies. I was always very, very careful of that and very careful on any flight I led in, that you had to identify the area very precisely. In fact, we usually requested that the people on the ground fire a white phosphorous grenade, which would make a big white smoke plume. They would fire it out of their position so that we then would make our attack with reference to that smoke and where they would tell us the enemy was with regard to that smoke plume, where they wanted us to hit, what bearing and distance from that particular plume. So we were very, very careful with that.

Anyway, this one morning we were on an early morning road recon, and Ted and I were the two planes assigned to go up and make the road recon from up north, but this order had been put out about the firing on friendlies. We went up, and the way you ran these missions was that usually one plane of the two would be down low, flying along low and

coming over the hills and following the road down close. The other plane would be up maybe 1,000 feet or 1,500 feet behind where he could see out farther down the road and could tell you there are trucks down there at about five miles or two miles ahead, whatever it was, a little to your right. Then they could guide you in, because, at the last second, if you came over a hill, you just can't maneuver the airplane fast enough to get on target and make a good hit.

So we would fly maybe ten minutes with one plane down low, then you'd shift off and let the other fellow fly down low. So we made our whole run down from up north this particular morning just at first light and really didn't see anything of any significance. So we still had all of the HVARs on when we came back down to the front. So to get rid of them, when I crossed the front on my chart, I then pulled up and went back and headed back into North Korea. I went across the lines again and made my run just a shallow run and picked just a little abutment or something just to get rid of the rockets, and fired them.

Ted followed me around the pattern and made the same run I did, except his rockets didn't go off. I didn't know what had happened, but what happened later was he just hadn't turned on the master armament switch, which enabled the whole system to be operable. He then made another 180, heading back toward our own lines in a glide, and before I could even yell, he had fired his rockets, and on my chart I thought he had hit in our own lines, and I could just see my court-martial coming up.

So we went back, we then flew on back to K-3 and landed and went over to the big operations office, and I had to report what had happened. We went in, and I had my charts on where I had marked exactly where the hits had been, and on my chart they were within our own lines, just in our own lines. We got into the operations shack where they had the big expanded map, bigger scale, and it as a huge map, covered the whole end wall of a Quonset hut, as compared to my little flight chart I'd had in the cockpit. Well, as luck would have it, the lines had changed a couple of weeks before and they had changed about 500 or 700 yards, had dropped down to the south, and he had hit in that little pocket where there were enemy troops. So we lucked out on that one, but I've kidded him about that since. I see Ted every once in a while still and kid him about it some, and we laughed about that, the time Ted Williams almost got John Glenn court-martialed. [Laughter]

Anyway, HVARs were used on road reeces like that. The napalm was used mainly on either close attacks along the front or for hitting areas where we were trying to hit areas of troop or equipment build-up, and the bombs then were used either in steep glide bombing or shallow glide bombing or low-level bombing attacks.

One thing I didn't mention we used—well, I did mention some of the different kind of fusing. If we were going in on a bunker area, we'd use a delay fuse and we had some bombs that were armor-piercing, built for armor-piercing, and we'd use those to penetrate deeper into the earth.

They had a long needle nose on the front of them, and you put a delay fuse on that and that would sink into the ground down—I don't know how many feet it went, depending on the type ground you were hitting into, but they would go down, too.

Another thing comes to mind also is that one of the ways you gauge success in those staging areas sometimes is when you got a secondary explosion. In other words, if you came in on a bomb run and hit and your bomb went off and then a second or so later there was another explosion, you knew then that you'd gotten into ammunition or an explosives storage area. We particularly liked to see that happen because that meant you were really getting into them at that point.

Ted was involved in another incident where we had a secondary like that. We made an attack on a staging area or a supply area. It was again out on the Haeju Peninsula. I made my run and he came in behind, and I apparently got into them because there was a—well, as he came in, he made his attack, and he pulled out, and he called over the radio he'd been hit. We'd gotten secondary explosions on the ground, just as he was coming in, and he said he was hit. So as we pulled out and went out to the rendezvous point, I went over and I flew my plane around his, looking to see if I could see where he was damaged. Out on his right tip tank there was a hole that was probably a five- or six-inch hole through the bottom of the tip tank. It didn't go out the top of the tank and I couldn't figure that out. We came back, and what we found was that the secondary from the

ground had blown a rock up and the rock was still in the tip tank. It had hit hard enough that it went in through the tank and was in there, and when they took tank off they still had the rock inside that tank. So we kidded him about the type of North Korean antiaircraft that he was getting a response out of.

WILLIAMS: Did you tell me once something about calling Ted Williams "Bush League" or something? Is there some story related to that?

SEN. GLENN: Oh, yes, another story about Ted. Ted, of course, was one of the greatest baseball players of all time. He was the last one to bat over .400, which is unbelievable. He's a great guy and a wonderful person. Hard to tell what kind of records he would have been able to—records that just would never even have a chance of being broken had he been able to stick with it.

He came in, you know, and he was in the Marine reserve and was called in right at the end of World War II, and so his ball-playing days were interrupted there. Then, as a reserve, was called back into the Korean War, and right at the height of his career. So it was a real imposition to him, and he never griped about it or complained about it. But the worst thing you can tell a—I don't know whether this is still the case or not, but back then, at least, one of the worst things you could say about a Major League baseball player was that he was Bush League, meaning that he should be playing in the Bush Leagues instead of the majors. That was considered about the ultimate insult, I guess.

Early in Ted's time in 311, somebody was kidding him one day in

the ready room about something being Bush League, and he sort of bridled at this and got a little angry at it, I guess. So you can imagine what happened in a Marine squadron. He became known as "Bush" Williams from then on. [Laughter] But he was anything but bush, I'll tell you. He was a great guy and did a great job while he was out there and was a good pilot. It's too bad his career was interrupted twice. I still see Ted occasionally. He lives down in Florida now. I've see him down there. He had a very, very bad stoke, almost killed him. He's still recovering from some of that and takes some therapy, but is doing great, and we talk over the phone every once in a while.

WILLIAMS: How was the air war over Korea coordinated with the other services? Was the Air Force doing similar things?

SEN. GLENN: Yes, the Air Force had attacks, F-84s and some F-86s, the Sabre, assigned to ground attack work also. This was coordinated through, as I mentioned before, the Joint Operations Center, the JOC, as we called it, which was located up on the edge of Seoul. Joint Operations Center coordinated all these activities so that you didn't get in each other's way when you're going out on a mission, wherever it was.

WILLIAMS: Did you carve out certain territory? Did you have a region of North Korea where you did this deep work?

SEN. GLENN: Yes. I think JOC tried to keep people going in the same area so that you'd be as familiar as possible with the landmarks on the ground and could locate targets easier, because we had no automatic locators for them

up there, and we had no airborne airplane that was directing you into a certain area and giving you your target as you came in and telling you exactly where to go. You were on your own. You had the coordinates of your target. You knew where you had to go, and what we worked off of a lot to get you into the general area, we had an old ADF, automatic direction finder, as it's called, which is called a homer. Today's moniker for it is NDB, non-directional beacon, which means it just puts out a signal. Well, in the airplane you have an instrument, an automatic direction finder, in which the needle will point at that station. Wherever you are, it points at that station.

So what we would do is we'd go to the Chorwon [Valley] homer, and we would have our charts and have our target area in general. We would say that it was a certain bearing and distance from the Chorwon homer. What we would do then on attack quite often, if it was out in the central part of North Korea, you would go to the Chorwon homer, fly over it, go right over the homer when you got your needle swing to show that you went right over the homer, you would hold a very precise speed and direction until you got out to the general area where you wanted to be.

If you're up in this milk-bottle overcast, which we were quite often, you would time it so that as you came out you would start your letdown, hoping you'd break out of the overcast just before you came to your target area. That was up to the flight leader to really be on the ball when you came out, to pick up whatever the rivers were and the railroads, or

whatever the landmarks were you needed to pick up to then locate your final target area and make your attack.

So that's the way you really got in the general area—was off the Chorwon homer, more often than not. If you're working over along the sea coast, or something like that, then you could pick your position up off bays and inlets and things like that that were better. Or if you're working over an area with some river confirmations that were very notable, like the Imjin River had a big "M." If you looked at it from the air, the way the river flowed, it just happened to make a big pattern of an "M," and you could locate things by a certain bearing and distance from the "M" of the Imjin. Or if you're working out on the Haeju Peninsula, why, you use the coastline as a reference of bearing and distance when you'd come out, to work your way to a target area. There was no automatic way to get you on target, and so flight leaders had to be very careful where they went out there and getting on target.

Much of North Korea where we worked was mountainous, and you wound up down in mountain valleys a bit. There were orders out that you—this was another time that I remember very, very well. There were orders that you would not make a second run.

[Begin Tape 2, Side 1]

SEN. GLENN: Let me talk just a moment about antiaircraft fire. I got hit seven times in Korea. Some of them were small, but three of them were big-time hits,

and I was very, very lucky. It's the only way you can put it, I was lucky in that I never got shot down, never had to get out. But let me describe a couple.

One time we were just starting in on a long glide on a napalm run. I was going by about 8,000 feet, and we weren't too fast because you had the napalm tanks were rather fragile and we'd had some of them blow off and come apart if you made too fast a run. So we were coming in about 8,000 feet. There was a big explosion, and my airplane was tossed up about a 90-degree roll to the left. I could control it all right and looked back and I had calls from other people behind me that I'd been hit. What had happened was, to make a long story short, is this big shell apparently had hit the napalm tank and exploded just off the wing, which was lucky, lucky, because if it had hit the wing it would have blown the wing off. But the force of it still blew a hole. It was probably, oh, two feet across, and it came up right around the wing fold mechanism, which is a big, very solid-steel mechanism in the wing. It blew a hole that you could literally look down through. The plane did not stay on fire, but when we got back, it had sprayed so much shrapnel around and through the side of the airplane—they counted somewhere around 300 holes on the airplane and some of them through the cockpit. I didn't get hit myself.

So it was just plain luck. The plane wasn't worth much when we got it back. The engine kept running, everything was fine, and it controlled okay. But it was a major hit, and it if had occurred any

differently, I'm sure we would have lost the airplane and I would have had to have gotten out.

Another one I remember very well, because it was one where I was playing a little loose with the orders, also. That was that you were under strict orders that after you made an attack you did not make a second attack. You didn't come back in, no second runs. But on one particular run up out—once again, I was just north of the Haeju Peninsula. We were making a run. Obviously, we hated antiaircraft with a passion, and usually you didn't see where the antiaircraft came from. That was something that just happened. All at once you'd see it going off, the explosive shells, or you'd see streams of tracers coming up, but you never could see the actual antiaircraft position.

On this particular run, I was coming into a fairly steep dive-bombing run, and I actually saw the emplacement over to the right, could see the antiaircraft gun fire and could see it winking. So I actually saw the position, and that was something. Well, I continued my run, made my run, and then instead of pulling up and heading for the rendezvous point like I should have, I swung wide and came back down this little valley where the antiaircraft gun was. I was real low, coming in very fast and very, very low and was shooting 20-millimeter canon into this antiaircraft position and there was stuff going all over the place, it was blowing up. Just as I started to pull out, I was hit, it turns out, from another antiaircraft position across the valley that had been tracking me that I didn't see. It hit the tail

of my airplane and knocked out the trim system so that the airplane nosed down, and I was already low and going very fast. I still, to this day, can see the end of this—there was a long rice paddy, and the airplane dipped down just momentarily like that, and I can still see that embankment up ahead. I missed it by inches and going very, very fast, thought I was going to hit it.

Well, it knocked out the trim, but the airplane was okay. I still have a picture at home of the hole in the tail, the vertical tail on the airplane, vertical stabilizer, that I could put my head and shoulders through. So that was very lucky, too. But knocked a great big hole in the airplane, knocked out the trim system, and with the trim system out, then flying back I had to keep pressure on the stick all the time. So you'd hold it a while with one hand, then the other hand, and came back. Those were the two most serious hits I had by antiaircraft, but I shouldn't have been making that second run. There were orders out against it. We had lost planes before doing the second run, but that was such a good target of opportunity. I actually saw the emplacement and was able to get on it and tear it up, but I almost got torn up in return. That airplane was repairable, though, and they put a new tail on the airplane and it was okay and flew again. But the first was a survey; they did away with that one.

WILLIAMS: Did these kinds of experiences make it harder to go up the next day?

SEN. GLENN: Oh, no. No, you just went up and did your job. You don't have a fatalistic attitude. I never had it. Some fighter pilots just have a fatalistic

attitude, you know, "If my number isn't up today, I'm not going to get it."  
I never had that view at all. I figure our future, whether you lived or not,  
was determined at least to a large extent by how you did and what you did,  
but that didn't stop me from going up. It just made me more determined to  
go up and do a better job next time.

[End of interview]