

The John H. Glenn, Jr.
Oral History Project

Oral History Interview 15

with
John H. Glenn, Jr.

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

March 23, 1998

Brien R. Williams
Interviewer

[Begin Interview 15, Tape 1, Side A]

WILLIAMS: This is the fifteenth interview with Senator Glenn. It's occurring in his office, in the Hart Senate Office Building, on March 23, 1998.

I am going to ask you about why you think Ted Williams calls you—"The man is crazy" is the quote that I picked up somewhere, because of your behavior in the air, I guess. I don't know. You tell me.

SEN. GLENN: All right. Well, Ted's comment that he thought I was crazy, I think, stems from the fact that I was rather intent on war making when I went out there. I had trained for so many years for combat. I won't say I was trying to win the war all by myself, but I took it all very, very seriously, and things such as making a second run on an antiaircraft position, which wasn't exactly—well, I won't say it

was foolhardy, but you put yourself in a lot of danger and you knew it. I think that's the kind of thing that Ted talked about. On a lot of the attacks, I went very low and was very intent on targets, and I think that's the kind of thing that Ted was talking about when he made that remark. We've joked about that, too, through the years, and I got a big kick out of that.

WILLIAMS: What about Jerry Coleman? He was another baseball player.

SEN. GLENN: Yes, Jerry was out there, and he was in the next squadron to us. He was in VMF-115, and I knew him, but not as well as I knew Ted, of course, because Ted and I flew together on a regular basis. But Jerry was a great guy. All those people that came back in from sports—you know, everybody concentrates on the sports figures and so on, but everybody that came back in that was in the reserves—we had a fellow who was a cabinetmaker and a carpenter in the squadron. I remember him. And people like that, who had their own careers and maybe were in less financial condition to take a recall back in than perhaps Ted and Jerry Coleman and some of the other people were. So I give the reserves a lot of credit. They signed up and they performed their duties and they were called back in. That's what the reserves are all about, having the civilian counterpart to the regulars that come back in when they're needed. They did and they did a great job.

WILLIAMS: Was there anything like the disillusionment that one reads about in terms of Vietnam, when these guys got over there and saw what a cold and sort of awesome battle, or war, that was?

SEN. GLENN: I think there was some disenchantment about the Korean War, and I think some

of that built up back here in the States, too. You remember [Dwight D.] Eisenhower, one of his big pledges was, he was going to go to Korea and he was going to end the Korean War, during that election. So there was some disenchantment that built up. I think the Korean War, instead of evoking all of the antipathies that were developed with Vietnam and all the outright opposition, I think what happened in Korea was that it became the forgotten war. People just sort of put it out of their minds and it was just something happening off someplace. When people came back from the Korean War, there was none of the celebrating that you had at the end of World War II.

World War II had been so big and so all-consuming that I think the public reaction to it; it was like an aftermath of World War II. Here we were in the fifties, only five or six years after the end of World War II. Here we were fighting again, in a small action, limited to one little peninsula sticking off of Asia out there, when what Americans had become accustomed to thinking about was a worldwide, global conflict with things going on in almost every nation, all over the world. There were good guys and bad guys and good nations and bad nations in World War II and there wasn't any middle ground. In Korea, here we were in a thing that we got into on perhaps a questionable basis, with [Harry S.] Truman having, at one point, said that we would not defend that area. Then when the encroachment came from the north, switching, and the United Nations going in then and we, of course, were the leading force in the U.N. that went in there in Korea. So it was a real switch, and I think people were not as enthusiastic about Korea, to put it mildly, as they had been about World War II.

Now, let me contrast that, though, with the individuals that were out there. To the individuals that were involved in Korea, it was every bit as much a war as what happened later in Vietnam, or what happened prior to that in World War II. When you're out there in combat and you're being shot at, and you're shooting at other people, it's a very personal experience, and it's a very heartrending experience when you have friends that are killed. That's the way all combat is.

We'll leave it to the politicians and the historians to go into the great tides of history as to how Korea occurred, but to those individuals in squadrons or in units on the ground out there, that were doing the fighting, there was just as much heroism as there's ever been in any conflict that ever occurred.

WILLIAMS: But you volunteered to go back, and you kept writing letters to get back there as fast as possible.

SEN. GLENN: Well, I did because I'd been in the Marine Corps, went in the Marine Corps at the beginning of World War II, and fought through and decided to stay in the Marine Corps, which meant that I was dedicating my life to the Marine Corps and to this country, if needed, and that was what you signed up for. I had trained for exactly the kind of thing that was going on in Korea, had trained for flying, for combat flying, and for both attacks on the ground and for air to air work. I guess because I had trained in both of these areas, I wanted to get experience in both of those areas and take part in it. I thought I'd be a good pilot in both areas, whether it was ground attack or whether it was flying against other airplanes in the air, in the air to air combat. So, at the end of my Marine missions, where I normally would have been put on a desk job someplace, I volunteered to go up and fly with the Air

Force, flying F-86s.

Now, since almost all Marine pilots were used exclusively in ground-attack roles in Korea, either close air support along the front where you're working with bombs and napalm and rockets immediately in front of our own friendly troops, or whether we were flying real deep interdiction missions, and bombing bridges and hitting tunnels and making attacks on convoys on roads and things like that, the other kind of flying that the Marines had very little experience with, was in air-to-air combat. In air-to-air combat, where you are pitting one airplane and pilot against another, or formations against formations, that's a different kind of flying, of course. And it's the kind you see epitomized in some of the movies, I guess, in *Top Gun* and some things like that.

But back at that time in Korea, it was very much different. They had arranged for there to be one slot in each Air Force fighter interceptor squadron that was doing all the air-to-air work in Korea. They arranged for one position, one slot, for a Marine pilot in each squadron, where the pilot would go up and be there for about ninety days, get checked out in the F-86, and go into combat with the Air Force squadron, so we had a cadre of people at the end of the Korean War who would have had some air-to-air combat experience. They thought that was important.

When my Marine missions were finished, that occurred at a time when the position up north in the fighter interceptor squadron was just turning over, and I applied for that and was accepted for it. Now, one thing you have to remember, too, I think, is what air-to-air combat was like in those days. We've all seen

pictures of flying in World War I and in World War II, where the old prop planes have fixed guns. They have six 50-caliber machine guns, or two or four, or whatever the combination was. And those guns are not flexible. In other words, you can't turn the gun like a turret; they're fixed on the wing of the airplane. You have to maneuver your airplane to shoot anything down or to make an attack on another airplane. You have to maneuver so that your guns are bearing on that airplane and you're actually pulling enough lead on it, just as though you were out skeet shooting or duck hunting. You don't shoot at the duck; you shoot ahead of the duck, enough that by the time the shot goes through the air and gets there, the duck will, in effect, fly into it. That's just known as "pulling lead" on the target.

That is the kind of flying that was done in World War I and World War II, and it is the same kind of flying that was done in Korea, except we now were flying jets and going five or six hundred miles an hour, and cruising up to target at, you know, like .85 or .82 percent of mach number, speed of sound. When you actually got into combat on other airplanes, it was the same tactics that had been used in World War II, except your speeds and the space required was expanded dramatically.

In other words, if you had an enemy aircraft headed towards you going 550 miles an hour and you're headed toward him at the same rate, your closing rate is 1,100 miles an hour, which is very, very fast. You have split seconds to make a decision and reaction to the situation and decide what you're going to do and know what angle you're going to make your attack from and things like that.

Now, we also had something that was very different from the World War

II type training that we had had, this was the altitudes involved. Here the MiGs that we were up against, the Russian MiGs that the North Koreans had, they were almost identical in performance to the F-86, the Sabre that we flew in the fighter interceptor squadrons. The Sabre was a little heavier airplane, so it couldn't get quite as high as the MiG. The MiG was a little lighter airplane, had a big engine, and it could get up to like forty-seven to forty-eight thousand feet, where we could get up to, say, forty-five or forty-six thousand. So there were times when you found yourself flying around under MiGs and you just couldn't quite get up there. It was like; you ached to get up a little bit higher and couldn't do it.

The altitude difference from World War II days, where we were usually flying around at ten, twelve thousand feet, and occasionally got up higher. In Europe, some of the bombers over there, of course, got up into the twenty-some-thousand-foot level and the fighters, namely the P-47, was built as a higher-altitude airplane, just to fly along with the bombers in Europe. But still, they used fixed machine guns, and you had to maneuver your airplane onto the target and pull the right amount of lead.

Now, what had been developed also was a computing gun sight, and it was the first of the computing gun sights. As you make an attack on another airplane, the amount of lead that you aim out ahead of that airplane is something that you develop a feel for, just by having made hundreds of runs on a banner, making practice target approaches and firing the guns on a towed target. We had done that year in and year out, so you get a feel for it, almost like skeet shooting, where you don't really sense, you don't say, "I'm going to put the lead out there one foot

or two feet," you just sort of sense that after a while, as to what you need.

But at the speeds we're talking about, that was even more critical, and so what had been developed was a computing gun sight in which there was a little fire-control radar in the nose, one of the first of the airborne radars. It would give the exact range, and then that range was fed in through a—they weren't real computers, but it was a gyro mechanism that was offset enough so that at that exact range, and the Gs you were pulling, it would give you the exact point that you should aim.

What you did in the cockpit, you kept the little pipper, your sighting pipper, you kept it right on your target airplane. Then, as you were pulling more Gs and the range was closing, the position of that pipper would tend to drift. To give you your proper lead angle you'd have to put the pipper right back on target and just keep it on all the way in. So we did have a computing gun sight there to help out a little bit, and that was one thing that was different from World War II days.

But a lot of the shooting still in Korea, even, was done sort of by seat of the pants, sort of, or intuition or practice told you should have a certain lead angle. The computing gun sights out there were not 100 percent reliable, either. Sometimes you'd fire and the thing stops or would be out of whack so it wasn't working right. Although I think all the combat runs that I made where I actually fired at another airplane, why, the computing sight worked fine. So I had no complaint about it.

Another thing that was a little bit different, different from now, is that

radar control from the ground had not been as well developed then, of course, as it is now. While you had radar, it was not as good. It could give you a general position of enemy aircraft, but that was about it. We were identified to the radar by IFF, it's called, identification friend or foe, which is a coded signal that is sent to the ground, or sent back to the radar, so they can tell the difference between our flights and enemy flights. And they would give us some very general direction, but it was still left up to the pilot.

The pilot was still your prime means of getting in contact with an enemy airplane, and you did that just by searching the skies. You had a regular scan pattern set up to go back and forth, looking at different sections of the sky to try and pick up any little movement that would indicate an airplane or a sun glint off an airplane. Then you would initiate the attack if you could identify the airplane. That was something else that was very difficult, because the F-86 and the MiG-15 that we were up against were very, very similar in appearance, swept wing. The MiG had a high tail, that was one difference. In fact, there were times during the Korean War where there were accidentally attacks on friendlies, where people had thought they were attacking a MiG and made an approach, and actually they were making a run on a friendly on their own forces, their own F-86s.

So it was a very different kind of war than any combat we'd been in before, in the way of speed and altitude and engagement time, because if you made a run on an airplane, or a flight of airplanes that you saw, and made a run on them and they broke up into combat, more individual combat, you would go from planes sort of going every direction, or planes and a lot of fast movement out of a flight,

and within seconds, there wasn't anybody in sight, except maybe you and the plane that you were after or that was after you. So, your space that was required was completely different. You weren't working in a confined air space just because of the speeds involved.

There were some other restrictions, too, up there, in that the North Koreans and the Chinese, when they came in, were operating sometimes on bases outside North Korea, up into Manchuria, across the Yalu River. Since China was not officially in—but we knew that they were in—but they were not officially in, we had a big set of ground rules as to where you could go and where you could make attacks. You were not supposed to go across the river, across the Yalu, to the north. You were supposed to stay in South Korea, or stay in the bounds of North Korea, in trying to—when you were up there looking for MiGs.

Now, you didn't just go up, just say, "Well, today we're going to go up looking for MiGs." This was always done with a purpose, and what we had going on were like the Marine missions that I had had, where we were doing attacks on the ground and on troops and things like that. Every time we had attacks like that going on in North Korea, or down along the front, ahead of our own troops, Marines and the Army, the MiGs were supposedly trying to come down and attack our planes doing ground-attack work.

The F-86, as a fighter interceptor mission then, was to set up a screen up there along the Yalu or somewhere up across North Korea, and prevent the MiGs from coming down and interfering with our ground attacks. So that was the basic scheme of things. Every time there was a ground-attack mission going up and

there might be a chance of MiGs coming across to try and interfere with them, the F-86s would set up a screen, as it was called, up along the Yalu, and try and pick up any MiGs coming across that were headed down toward the front-line area.

When you set up a screen—if you can think of the Yalu River as running sort of from northeast to southwest, along the north edge of North Korea—we would set up a screen just into North Korea, by setting up a—the best way to describe it, I guess, is you set up a long, a very, very long elongated figure eight, the axis of which paralleled the river. So you'd fly almost parallel to the river, slightly off the river, until you were into the end of your sector. Then you would make a turn toward the river, because you always wanted to be headed toward the MiGs, if you picked them up coming across. You'd make a turn, and then make another very, very long trip, probably, oh, fifty to seventy-five miles, maybe, fifty miles, something like that, a long swing down, and then make another turn back toward the river. So it was a very elongated figure eight.

Now, along the river up there, you'd probably have two figure eights like that set up along the river, from the ocean, up to maybe sixty or seventy miles inland, something like that. You'd have a screen like that set up at altitude, thirty-five or forty-thousand feet. You'd have another screen like that under it set up down low, doing the same figure eight patterns at maybe fifteen or eighteen thousand feet, because sometimes the MiGs would try and come across up high, sometimes they'd try and come across down low, and so you were set up to try and pick them up.

Now, the nearest radar we had was way down—I believe the nearest radar

was on Chodo Island, and that was quite some ways away, and so radar was of some help, but very, very limited. Once in a while they could tell you when there were MiGs coming across, and sometimes they couldn't.

But anyway, that was the screen, and you flew in a very loose fingertip formation of four airplanes. You'd cruise along, and, of course, the wing man for the flight lead, then the second section lead or the second element lead, those were the people that were in the main shooting position. Their wing men were there to protect them, basically. Once in a while, a wing man would happen to get a shot at another airplane if he was trying to take somebody off his leader's tail, but that was about the only time. In other words, his job was to stay with the leader, wherever the leader went.

You tried to keep the formation. Even when you got into combat, you tried to keep the formation together as much as possible. But when you made a bounce, which is what you called it when you made an attack on the other airplane, called "bouncing." Bouncing, I don't know where that came from, but that was the term. When you made a bounce, why, quite often the two elements would get separated, but always the wing man's sole job was to stick with the leader, wherever he went, and he stuck tight. But he would be out far enough away so that he could look around also and see if there were other airplanes around and still see his leader and see the tail back here, so if anybody was making a run on the leader, he could protect him.

WILLIAMS: You said a "wingtip formation."

SEN. GLENN: Fingertip. Fingertip formation, yes. A leader—just as though you held your four

fingers out in front of you—the leader would be the longest finger. His wing man would be the person on the left. I'm looking at my right hand here. And then the second element would be on the other side with the little finger, then, being his wing man.

WILLIAMS: So unless you were involved in combat, you were all seeing each other as you were flying along in a group of four.

SEN. GLENN: Yes. You could look around and see each other. You didn't fly tight formation like you see people in parade formation at air shows and things like that. You're spread out with several hundred yards between airplanes, but everybody keeping each other in sight. Sometimes you'd have it stacked to fingertip formation like that on one side, or sometimes it would be the other side like it is if you looked at your other hand. They'd shift around during flight. As you made turns to keep from adjusting throttle, people would shift to the other side as you made a big, long, easy turn. You wanted everybody's eyes to be of use, picking up a glint.

To help identify the MiGs, we had—and this seems a little strange now—we carried binoculars. The binoculars were not much use in searching for aircraft and trying to find MiGs at first, but they were of great use in identifying them as either MiGs or F-86s. We bought those over in Japan, and obviously, if you're getting into a rough flying time, you don't want binoculars floating around the cockpit, banging away on everything. So what we did was carry them under the shoulder strap. You'd tuck them under the shoulder strap, and then when you needed them, why, you'd pull them out. We used to practice, as a matter of fact, being able to just take binoculars and pull them up and hit a certain portion of sky,

and that requires some practice. We used to practice that when we were sitting on the line waiting to taxi out or at the beginning of a mission.

I used to take my glasses and pick a top of a telephone pole off in the distance or something, or a mountaintop, and see if I could get my glasses and bring it to bear just like that on that specific spot so you didn't have to hunt around for it, because when you're up there looking out against the sky, you have no reference point. You either hit the target the first time, or you just don't have much time to hunt around with it. Those are very handy glasses. We got those over in Japan. In fact, I still have them at home. They're known in the family as the "MiG glasses," and I carry them to ball games once in a while, still to this day, but they were a great help out there.

WILLIAMS: How long did you train then to develop your skills in an F-86?

SEN. GLENN: Well, when I was on the way to Korea, I had known—this goes back a ways.

When I was in the training command and was an instructor in the training command, I was sent out at one time to check out how the Air Force trained their instructors. I was in the instructors' training unit, IATU, Instructors' Advanced Training Unit, at Corpus Christi [Texas], at that time. This was back in the late forties, after the end of World War II. I had come back from China.

I was sent out to Williams Air Force Base to represent our IATU, to see what kind of training techniques the Air Force was using, and that's where they were doing their primary training for jet pilots. Now, our training at Corpus Christi had not gone to jets yet and we were all still flying nothing but prop planes. So that was quite a coup when I got sent out to Williams, because I was

going to get checked out in jets for the first time, as well as checking out on their training techniques.

I went out there and was there for, I think that was about a three-month time period I was out there, and went through their training syllabus, just like they trained their instructors, and then flew with their instructors on training missions. But the good part was that they were flying the old P-80, Shooting Star. So I got checked out in that airplane at Williams Air Force Base, and flew it then and got some flight time in it and a little bit of training and tactics training, which was brand new at that time in jets, of course. And cross countries and, of course, we were flying up at high altitudes that I hadn't even been to before. So that was a great experience.

The man who headed up that training wing out there was a Colonel Leon Gray. I got to know him pretty well in the time that I was out there and we became friends. Later on, then, he was the commanding officer of an F-86 training group at Otis Air Force Base, up in Massachusetts, and he was up there at the time that I finally was selected to go to Korea. So I called him and said, "Look, I'm going to Korea, and after my Marine missions are done, I would like to have a chance of going up to the F-86 program, and I'd like to get checked out in the F-86 before I leave here, because that might give me some assistance in getting assigned to that."

He said that they normally had to go through, I think, some sort of approval process through—I don't know what it was through, through the Air Force headquarters, I guess, for a person from one service to come over and fly in

their planes. But he thought it would be all right if I just came on up there and we'd work this thing, and we did, and so I got leave. I took leave from Quantico, where I was stationed at that time.

[Begin Tape 1, Side 2]

SEN. GLENN: So I took leave from the Marine Corps and went up to Otis Air Force Base for a few days. I went through their trainers and their checkout procedure, and got several flights in the F-86 then up there, so that I at least was checked out and had been through the school. I think it was good that I did that, because later on in Korea, this was a factor, at least, one of the factors I had on my side. In other words, I sort of set myself up as well as I could in advance on that situation.

Where was I?

WILLIAMS: Before we started talking about Corpus Christi and the Marines, you were talking about binoculars.

SEN. GLENN: Oh, I know what it was. So when I was selected to go up and fly with the Air Force in Korea, I already had flown the F-86. I already had flown the airplane. While I didn't have a lot of time in the airplane, it made it easier for me to check out once I got up to a K-13, at Suwon, which is where the 51st Fighter Interceptor Wing was based. I was assigned to the 25th Fighter Interceptor Squadron, FIS.

The process up there was, at first, when someone came into the squadron, whether they were a new Air Force replacement coming from the States or whether it was me coming from a Marine squadron farther down in South Korea, they had a regular procedure you went through as far as checking out in the

airplane, the reading and the systems checkouts and things like that. It was all the same for everyone. And so I went through that.

The next process then was to be assigned, and you did some flying, of course. You'd go up with different squadron members and practice air-to-air combat, and then finally be assigned for missions. You were assigned to missions as a wing man, on your checkout flights, and you flew checkout flights for quite a while, just flew as a wing man so that you got familiar with what happened on flights and everything that was going to happen.

I flew my checkout missions, flew the first checkout missions and then flew the first combat checkout missions on the wing of our squadron commander, who was a major at that time, John Giraud. John was a real gung-ho squadron commander and had been in World War II, had been shot down in Germany, was a prisoner of war over there, and the squadron commander of the 25th FIS. I flew a number of missions with him. In fact, the first MiG I shot down—I got three MiGs in total, in the time that I was up there. I should say something about the time, I guess, because I got up there in, I think it was about the end of April or about the first of May, sometime in late April, I believe it was. We'll have to check the dates on that.

When I arrived up there, there were a lot of rumors about peace talks. Well, the peace talks had been going on for some time, and the lines along the front had been reasonably stable. There were some big pushes, but it wasn't the flowing mobile combat situation they'd had earlier in the Korean War.

Well, anyway, in my combat checkout missions, though, with him, we had

a couple of flights that were particularly notable. One of the flights was a flight in which I shot down the first MiG. We were up on a—I guess I should say, first, some of the combat rules. I mentioned you were not allowed to fly across the Yalu unless you were in hot pursuit. If the fight had developed south of the Yalu and you were in hot pursuit, and the MiG was trying to get away and it was going back across the Yalu, then the orders were that you were permitted to go ahead and follow that airplane.

The first MiG that I shot down, that was exactly the situation. We saw two planes. John Giraud had caught a glimpse of two airplanes flying low. We were up at altitude, and we came down and tried to hit those two airplanes. We were way off to one side, and we were trying to make an approach, and we couldn't. They were well out ahead of us, and we could keep them in sight, but we couldn't really catch them, even though we had our altitude above them when we started out, but they quite a ways away. We were down at their altitude, and we were going wide open with every bit of power on you could get, and were just very, very, very slowly picking up on them, but we were out of gun range.

That's something I should have mentioned. Gun range is like a thousand feet, down to just a few hundred feet. If you fire way outside, you have very little chance of hitting anything, so you really have to maneuver in fairly close to the other airplane to shoot it down. We were way off and were chasing the airplanes. This had started maybe, oh, fifty miles or so inside North Korea. We were in hot pursuit, and went across the Yalu, down fairly low, down probably two or three thousand feet altitude, and were very slowly closing on them. We went across,

oh, I suppose we were thirty or forty miles into Manchuria, when we finally caught up with them.

John got his, and I was off to one side and all at once the plane ahead of me slowed down just like he'd almost cut the power. That was a very major shock until I realized then that there was an airfield up ahead. He probably was trying to get back in, and so I shot him down, coming in. As a matter of fact, he hit right on the edge of the field, and it was a big flaming fireball out ahead. I pulled up over the debris and then radioed to John. He had made a left turn and we were still heading northwest. He made a turn down toward the water, which is what you usually try to do to get out over the ocean if you're going to be coming home, because by that time we were both very low on fuel. We had marginal fuel to get home on, and so we wanted to head right on out. So he headed out on a left turn and I did the same thing.

We rendezvoused on the way back and came back home together. So that was a little unusual for a situation like that to develop, where a wing man would get a MiG on a checkout mission, but it happened, and that was it.

WILLIAMS: Did Giraudo get his man, too?

SEN. GLENN: Yes, he did. We came out over the water and came home. We were real low on fuel, and came back okay, but we were way up, up country, as we used to say, up in Indian country. We were a long ways from home up there that day. I remember that one very well.

As I came off of shooting the MiG, he sort of exploded ahead of me, flamed and exploded, and there were parts all over and I sort of went through the

upper part of that, and I was still very, very low. By that time, we were down really low. This was down just a few hundred feet off the ground by that time. As I came off of it, I'm looking, I remember, I'm looking right down a runway, and the control tower was right ahead, so I took a few shots at the control tower, also, on the way by, and hit that, too. I remember it just sort of exploded with all the glass and everything.

But anyway, came out and got back and that was one checkout mission. Another checkout mission, though, that was even more eventful, although I did not shoot down a MiG. There were orders out that if you were up and set up a screen along the Yalu, and the MiGs weren't flying that day—and that was a variable. Some day, even though we'd have multiple attacks going on, on the ground, we'd have planes all over the place doing ground attacks down farther south, and we would expect that in a situation like that, that all the MiGs would be up and be flying, trying to get down there. But sometimes they just wouldn't even be in the air, and we never knew what the reason was.

But we'd go up and set up a screen to protect all of our planes farther south, and you'd fly around up there and not see any MiGs at all. All you'd do is sit up there and spend your time till you got low on fuel. These were all timed, of course, so that our screen was set up at the same time the ground attacks were under way, and by that time the ground attacks were finished and so we'd all come home again.

There was one particular time when there was a lot of logistics activity in North Korea, and they were sending all sorts of equipment and trucks and

equipment and people, personnel, down the road—the roads across the Yalu and on down into staging areas, short of the front. So the order was put out that if we were up and the MiGs were not flying, you didn't see anybody, don't just sit up there and grind around and waste your fuel. Save a little bit and at the end of the day, instead of just flying back home at altitude, go down and see what you could pick up flying low level down along the roads and make attacks on the ground, on trucks and things like that along the road.

We were doing that one day. The MiGs were not flying and so I was flying wing on John, and he decided we would go down and see what we could find along the road. We had dropped down, just south of the Yalu, just a few miles south of the Yalu, and started down one of the main roads that were used as supply roads, usually at night. But with the big push they had on down on the front at that time, they had been using the roads sometimes during the day.

Well, we got down and hadn't gone very far until we did see there were trucks up ahead of us on the road. So John initiated the attack and I came in behind him and he was shooting up trucks and I did the same thing, coming in behind him. We were hitting the trucks and some of them were pulling off the road, or being driven off the road. Just as he pulled up, he called that he'd been hit, and so I pulled up behind him. He sort of zoomed, but we were going fairly fast, and so he zoomed up to maybe ten or twelve thousand feet, something like that, and then kept power on to keep on going up, but he had basically lost control of the horizontal, his elevator control. The tail on the F-86 is called a "flying slab." The whole thing works up and down as a unit. It doesn't have a little

elevator on the back end of a horizontal stabilizer like a normal airplane, and that was useful for supersonic flying.

I should have mentioned the F-86 and the MiGs were the first of our supersonic airplanes. They wouldn't go supersonic in level flight, but you could dive them at supersonic speeds, and this horizontal tail is what gave you the capability to do that and still control the thing at supersonic speed.

So, John had lost control and the airplane was making big zooms up—it would go up maybe four or five, three or four thousand feet, and nose over and go down, and then as the lift increased, why, he'd go back up again. He made several big swings up and down like that. He was trying to adjust the power so that he could get the thing leveled out so it would cruise, and even though he wouldn't have elevator control, if he could do that, then we could go out over the water, at least. He was trying to maneuver it out over the water, so that if he had to get out, he could at least get rescued out over the water, not go down over land.

He made a number of swings like that. I was following him through these, and the problem was that each time he would go through an up-and-down yo-yo like that, he wound up at a lower altitude, and he couldn't control that. So he was afraid that he was going to get down where, on another one of these swings, he was going to run into the ground, run into the mountaintops up there. He didn't get it out over the water, and finally on one of these dips, it was too close to the mountaintop. On the next one that came up he said he was going to have to get out, and he did. He ejected.

He came down then about a mile from the water and up on sort of a

mountainside area. It was all little scrubby trees, which are very common in North Korea, a lot like, oh, live oak or pin oak or something like you see in the Southwest. The whole hillside was just covered with that type vegetation. There was a little village down by the water. I had seen it before when we were going through all these maneuvers. John came out and made a successful ejection. He detached from the seat and the chute came out, and so he was coming down in the parachute. Of course, I didn't have contact with him at that point, but I immediately called for the air-sea rescue people from down at Chodo Island to come up. They could send a chopper up from there, or a chopper off one of the ships, if there was a ship up in the northern part, up in that area.

He hit up on a hillside about a mile from this little village, or half a mile, maybe, from the village, but where he got out originally was about a mile from the water. And what happened, what I saw from where I was—I circled the point where he went down. I knew he was okay, because after he was on the ground, had gone down in all these scrub trees, I could see the parachute being pulled in, as though he was pulling on the risers after he was on the ground, and pulling the parachute. He wanted to get it in and get it out of sight. So I knew that he was okay when he got down. He was at least alive when he hit the ground. The parachute finally went out of sight, and I knew where the exact spot was, of course, and I kept circling that spot, and I circled and I circled. And they kept saying, "Yes, rescue is on the way," and I kept thinking, "If I can just hang on here," because I was beginning to get low on fuel. "If I can just hang on, then I can show him the exact spot, the choppers come in and try and pick him out of

there and get him out over water and we're in good shape, and they bring him back in a chopper."

But the choppers never got there. By that time, I'd been joined by two other planes. I told them what our position was, and so they came down and joined up and so we were all there. Well, finally, I sent them on back, because I knew the exact spot he had gone down, and we were all getting very low on fuel. We had fuel, what is called "bingo fuel." When you get down to where you have a certain reserve and you have just enough left to get home, why, that's your bingo, and you're supposed to go home at that point. Well, we passed bingo, and I finally decided what we'd do. I sent the other two back, told them to go on back, and I would stay there since I knew exactly where the spot was, because I thought if we could just get a chopper in, we still could get him out.

Then what I did, I figured enough fuel. As I recall, it was about 800 pounds of fuel is what I would need to fly from the ground level, where I was—head back toward our lines and fly up to about 40,000 feet, and at 40,000 feet I should be able to glide back over our own lines after the fuel ran out. So that's what I had planned. Then I stayed there to the bitter end, until I was down to just under 800 pounds of fuel, and still no chopper up there and no way of getting him out. So I went for altitude then, full power on a climb. I had figured just about right, because I got back to just about 40,000 feet and flamed out.

This was way, way north, of course. So there you are, flying a glider up there, and what I planned was to get back over our own lines, and I would eject and get out. But I'd do it over South Korea, where I'd be picked up all right, and

so that wasn't any big problem. As it turned out, we had a very good tail wind that day at altitude, and I got a little more altitude on the climb-out a little bit, because the airplane was very light. So I glided back—it was over a hundred miles, just over a hundred miles, dead stick, as we call it, which means no power.

You practiced dead-stick landings, making patterns at idle power but with speed breaks out just a little bit that would simulate having no power at all, and we had done that, and as I remember, if you made a standard rate 360-degree turn with no power, you lost, I think it was about 3,000 feet. I actually had enough altitude when I came back over our field at K-13, which is about, oh, forty miles, thirty-five or forty miles south of the front line at that time—had enough altitude I still could make that 360 and come back in okay. I made a dead-stick landing, no-power landing, which means you do everything right or you wind up off the end of the runway.

It all worked out okay, and I had radioed in to have them have another airplane waiting, so we could go right back up again and hopefully get the choppers in to get John out of there. I rolled to the end of the runway and they had a Jeep. I couldn't taxi in, of course, because I was out of fuel. So they had a Jeep waiting, and I jumped out of the airplane, jumped in the Jeep, ran over to the operations, or we drove over to operations real fast so I could locate the spot exactly, for rescue purposes. Then back out, had another flight, went up and took four planes that time. I guess that was probably the first flight that I actually led. I led that flight because I knew exactly where the spot was. We went back up, went down to low level then, and we circled the area for, oh, I guess forty-five

minutes or so and could see nothing whatsoever. So, John, we didn't know what had happened to him at that time. But that was a wild day.

I always remember that day there was a Catholic priest out there that was assigned as the chaplain for the air group. He was Father Dan Campbell. He was out of Washington University in St. Louis, I think it was. Father Dan used to come out, and he came around before every takeoff, Father Dan would bless every airplane. He was always out along the runway. He was quite a character, and he was out along the runway, and every time a flight would start rolling, Father Dan would be over here in his Jeep along the side of the runway, and he'd be saying, "Give 'em hell!" [Laughter] He was a real character.

The reason that Father Dan came to mind after I had this wild day, I'm a Presbyterian, and Father Dan and I, after we got acquainted up there, we'd had big discussions in the ready room about religion and his Catholic faith and my Presbyterian faith, and we'd kidded each other a lot. When I came back that day, at the end of the day, we had not gotten John back. So we had lost our squadron CO that day, and I'd been through the wildest flying day of my life, needless to say, with a dead-stick landing from way out and all that. So that night, we'd done all the debriefing and everything, and one of the guys said, "You know, you ought to say something to Father Dan. He was really in your corner today."

[Glenn crying] Some of these things are hard to talk about. Anyway, so they said Father Dan was really running the rosary, and they said he was running the rosary like a monkey climbing a flagpole. So, that evening, I went over and talked to Father Dan and I told him that the guys had said that he was really in my

corner that day, and I told him that, I said, "They said you were running that rosary like a monkey on a flagpole," and he got a really big kick out of that. Anyway, he was quite a character, and I liked him very much.

WILLIAMS: For the record here, I should add that I'd read the account that Giraudo gave of that day, in his oral history, and it is a remarkable story, of course, what he was experiencing on the ground.

SEN. GLENN: I have his book and I haven't read that particular thing yet. And then that's what I wanted to tell, was what happened after that. We didn't know what happened to John, never did. Didn't know whether he was killed or what had happened. I knew he was alive when he went down, but when they started exchanging the names of prisoners, when the planning was on for Big Switch after the war ended, which is what the prisoner exchange was called, John's name was never on any of the lists of officers that were supposed to be released. So we had sort of come to the conclusion that John had been killed some way, after he got down on the ground.

Now, this takes another side detour here. One of my very close friends, who wound up later on as a lieutenant general in the Marine Corps and in charge of all Marine aviation, wound up as Lieutenant General Tom Miller. He was out there and had been flying in a Corsair squadron out of K-6, and had completed his missions the same time I had. When Big Switch then occurred, when the prisoners were going to be exchanged, Tom was assigned by the 1st Marine Air Wing to be the liaison officer, to go up and go in the compound at Freedom Village during the actual exchanges of prisoners, and be the person there to get

any Marine pilots or Marine air crew coming out, in particular. That was his responsibility.

At the end of Big Switch, the senior officers came out last, out of Big Switch. I think it was about two or three days before the end of Big Switch, on one of the prisoner lists of people to be exchanged—this was down to the last couple of days, and we thought that John had been killed—and here his name was on a list.

So I got on the telephone, which was a job in itself out there, with the field phones being what they were. You didn't just pick it up and dial somebody like you do today. But I talked to Tom, to make sure that he knew that John Giraudo was coming out.

To make a long story short, Tom arranged for me to be his assistant. So I went up to Freedom Village and was up there when John came out, was in the compound there when he came out. So we got together there. And it was funny, because when he saw me, he said, "Oh, you son of a gun, I grew to hate you." [Laughter] And I said, "Why? What happened?" And he said, "Well, when you kept coming over me up there, that caused a lot of problems," and words to that effect. I said, "Well, I was just trying to get you out of there, for gosh sakes." He said, "No, no." He laughed, you know, and he told me what had happened.

What happened then, when I was still circling John, when he was down, he had pulled his parachute in, and he said he put it in a little ditch or something and got it all covered up with leaves and some branches and thought that people couldn't see it. He was crawling away through some of the brush here, because he

heard people coming up from the village, and could hear them shouting and yelling and they were fanned out and coming up through the woods. He thought he had it set up so he could get away, and he was going to get away and then hide someplace and then try and get rescued, of course, by signaling later on.

Well, what happened was, his dinghy—the little life raft that you had as part of your bail-out equipment in case you went down over water—the life raft also was back there, but the life raft apparently had been partially toggled. As he was crawling away—he had all this stuff hidden—as he was crawling away and he thought the people from the village were going off in a little different direction and he was going to be in good shape. All at once the life raft inflated, all by itself back there and goes—pssss—makes a noise, a hissing noise, and, of course, the people from the village then homed in on that.

John said when they came up he couldn't get away. So they were coming and they were jabbering, and so he stood up. He said he stood up and put his hands up in the air, and there was one soldier with them who had a machine gun slung over his one arm. This soldier was yelling at the people, and he started to fire, turned the machine gun toward John and started to fire. John had his hands up in the air and rolled off to one side to fall down, and as he rolled off, one slug went through his shoulder and out through the shoulder blade behind, and went clear through him.

So he said that he was knocked down on the ground. He was laying there and he thought, well, that was the end of it, or going to be the end of it, and he lay there very still and he was face down. There was all this jabbering going on

around him. He finally decided that he'd better roll over, at least let them know he was alive, so he moved a little bit and they didn't shoot him, and so he moved a little bit more and they didn't shoot him, so he decided he'd roll over.

[Begin Tape 2, Side 1]

SEN. GLENN: So the machine gun was pointed right at his face. So he said what happened then, that they didn't shoot him and he said they finally stood him up and started marching him off down a little valley. He said that's where he got mad at me, because he said what had happened, every time I would come around over the spot they'd throw him in a ditch and sit on him, to keep him from making any signal or making any sign. He said it hurt like hell and he wished I'd just go away, because there wasn't any way he was going to get away from that, and so they kept throwing him. Every time I'd make a circle, why, they kept throwing him in the ditch and sitting on him.

He never had any medical help for that, either. We used to wear these little scarves that fit inside your flight suit, little silk scarf or a parachute cloth, nylon scarf, because your head is on a swivel all the time you're flying in a fighter like that up there. You're looking around to see where other planes are and the MiGs are, and over a period of time, your neck gets real chafed and sore if you don't have something there. So he took this little parachute cloth scarf that he had, and to stop the bleeding—he knew he had to stop the bleeding—and so he had this hole in the front and in the back, through his shoulder blade, and he tore some little patches of this and stuffed it in the hole to stop the bleeding, and could reach

around and do the same thing in the back. That's the only treatment he ever had. That stopped the bleeding. He said he knew after a day or a couple of days that he was going to have to take those plugs out of there, and he did. He just pulled them out, and the bleeding finally stopped. It wasn't infected enough that it got to him, and that was the only medical treatment he had for those wounds. One slug went clear through the part of his shoulder and out through the shoulder blade.

WILLIAMS: How did he look at Freedom Village when you greeted him?

SEN. GLENN: He looked pretty good. He was thinner. He hadn't had as much to eat. He was thinner than last time we saw him. But of course, he wasn't up there, see, for a number of years. This happened in—well, this would be in June, and then they came out on Big Switch I think in, like, October, something like that. So he was up there for about six months, five or six months.

But anyway, I got a big kick out of it that he wanted me just to go away up there. But we had a great reunion and we kept in touch in later years. He died about a year and a half or two years ago of cancer, down in Florida. He was quite a gung-ho CO, and I wanted very much to get him out of there that day, and just couldn't do it.

WILLIAMS: Was it usual that you would take all of those efforts, or make that effort to get someone who'd gone down, or were your efforts sort of extraordinary?

SEN. GLENN: Oh, I suppose, looking at it, separating myself from it, I suppose it was extraordinary, a little beyond the ordinary. Ordinarily, if you hit your fuel bingo, why, you got out of there, but I wanted to get him out pretty bad. So I stayed up there longer than I should have, obviously. We didn't lose the airplane. But what

you have to look at in a situation like that, what you're supposed to look at, is not necessarily what you want to do yourself. What you have to look at is, you're endangering another life and you just don't do that, not supposed to do that.

But that was one of the wildest days of flying that I ever had, and it wasn't that I was being shot at; it was that he was down. I tried to get him out of there, and that was a long glide back from up there. The cockpit sort of frosts over as you come down, frost inside, once it gets cold and you don't have the air-conditioning system working inside, and so you wind up only being able to look out through sort of a narrow little part up front of the windscreen. But all that training paid off, exactly how to do a dead-stick landing and so on. The training of how far you could glide in an empty F-86, that we had talked about, and how much fuel it took to get back to altitude with a light airplane, and it all worked out. But that was some day.

WILLIAMS: When I first read about it, I assumed that you'd cut the engines at a certain point so you would have some fuel left to restart as you made your landing, but that was not the case.

SEN. GLENN: No.

WILLIAMS: Would that have been possible?

SEN. GLENN: You could have tried that, but I was interested in staying up there as long as I could, and came back. There was a tiny little bit of fuel left when they checked the tanks at the end of the day, and I never did know whether this was because I was in a climb attitude, and then you're in a gliding attitude for the rest of the flight, as opposed to that—whether that little angle made a difference or not.

WILLIAMS: So how long were you gliding, approximately, coming back? An hour or so?

SEN. GLENN: Oh, no, it wouldn't be that long. It'd be like, oh, let's see, probably fifteen minutes, eighteen minutes, something like that.

WILLIAMS: K-13 then was close by, so to speak?

SEN. GLENN: K-13 was about thirty or thirty-five miles south of the lines at that time. It was about sixteen or eighteen miles south of Seoul, so it would be a little farther than that. Seoul's about eighteen miles—so it would be about thirty miles south of the lines.

WILLIAMS: And then how far north did he go down?

SEN. GLENN: It was about thirty-five or forty miles south of the Yalu. There's a peninsula, the first peninsula that sticks out into the ocean, south of the Yalu, was where he went down. I forget the name of that peninsula. But he went down right along the lower east side of that peninsula, just about a mile off the water.

WILLIAMS: So when you went back up with the three other planes, that was a trip of forty minutes or something, back up to where he was?

SEN. GLENN: Yes, forty-five minutes, something like that.

WILLIAMS: The eighteen minutes of gliding gave you lots of opportunity to think about what you were doing.

SEN. GLENN: I didn't have much time to think about it. I was thinking about surviving, at that point.

WILLIAMS: And thinking you might have to eject, which would have been the first time that you had to do that. In fact, you never did.

SEN. GLENN: I never had to get out of an airplane. Got hit a number of times, but never had to

get out of an airplane. Never to this day have I had to bail out. Been lucky, I guess.

WILLIAMS: I remember reading a letter that you sent to Dave, saying that you were frustrated because you were wing man rather than a leader in the F-86s. Did you ever become a leader?

SEN. GLENN: Oh, yes. Yes, I did. After that then, I was in flight lead after that. I'd done all my checkout missions, and so I got into a lead spot, which was what we used to call the shooter position, shooters. Then was able to lead flights and so on, fit in a regular squadron rotation on lead of flights and leading not only—a mission usually was led by a squadron commander or the group commander would lead the whole mission, all the planes. But I was in a lead spot as far as four planes went. Those were the shooting spots because that's what you broke up into, four plane groups that you then set up your figure-eight patterns with, four plane groups. That was your basic combat formation, was the four planes.

Then once you bounced someone, usually your elements would split up, and then they'd be going different directions. Your wing man stuck with you. So I led the four planes on a number of them, but, of course, the war ended then, in the middle of July. Some days the MiGs would be flying, some days they would not. You never knew.

WILLIAMS: When we pick up again, I want you to talk about the two other times when you [unclear]. But just to finish up here, with the figure eights, how many planes would be participating in that figure eight?

SEN. GLENN: Well, you'd have four. You'd have at least four on each figure eight, and you'd

have two figure eights at the same altitude set up at different places along the Yalu. Then at lower altitude, you have two more figure eights of four planes each down below, so that'd be at least sixteen planes. And then if you had more airplanes on that particular flight, if it was a particularly heavy day, you could set up more than four planes on each big figure eight, so that you sort of passed each other as you went around. You're trying to stay at the opposite ends of this figure eight. But I don't recall that we did that very much. I think usually it was four planes per long screen figure eight.

WILLIAMS: And you described a high-altitude one and another one at low altitude, but then would there be figure eights all the way up the Yalu or just certain segments of it?

SEN. GLENN: I don't know that we ever had more than two figure eights. Figure eights, two of those would cover, oh, the length of the figure eight, of your pattern, was probably, I suppose, thirty or forty miles, something like that, and by the time you put two of those figure eights together, you were covering inland. They weren't quite that long, maybe twenty miles. But you're covering, say, forty miles inland off the water.

Of course, the MiGs didn't have a lot of range either, and so if they were going down and hit anything, they had to come across on a short route. The likelihood that they would fly clear around, way up along the Manchurian border, and then come down to the front, and then go back that same way, I don't recall that there was ever any concern that they would do that at all. So I think we set up screens that would cover, say, thirty to fifty miles in off the water, and that was it.

WILLIAMS: Good. We'll stop here today.

SEN. GLENN: Yes.

[End of Interview]