

JOHN GLENN - DAVID PRYOR

March 4-5, 1982

I flew down to Little Rock to attend John Glenn dinner. Barbara Odell picked me up and took me to the office. Barbara worked in Pryor's campaign. She worked for State Committee before that, and did a lot of arranging and likes that. It must be tough for her to sit in the back office in D.C.

Skip Rutherford has a "Mighty John Glenn" recording he wants David to play tonight at the speech, and that's what he's excited about when I see him. He plays it for me "John Glenn is a travelling man" "John Glenn is a mighty man." etc. Barbara told me on way in that they had duplicate sign made up of "Col. Glenn Road". When we drove from the airport to Hotel, David is pleased with record and pictures and sign "Good I won't have to talk about the issues. I'll let Dale talk about the budget. And someone says "and busing." And Davis whooped. He voted for the anti-busing law and Bumpers voted against it.

Carl Ford is there (he comes from Hot Springs) and he says of Pryor "He's a nice man. He's so nice that people underestimate his political skill and his political instincts." That may be true, but not if you've spent any time with him.

We sat in an ante room waiting for press conference to begin--the Glenn Party and Pryor group. The two men did not do a lot of talking to each other. Each tended to talk to his own aides. They had just spent 5 hours in the plane together. But they are different politicians. David started talking about Herby Bramson the state chairman. "He's the only lawyer in his country." And he introduced John to each person who came in "This is John Glenn." I suppose just plain John didn't seem like enough. David was his folksy self. "Do you come from Dallas County. My daddy was born in Holly Springs, right on the county line, so I'm practically from Dallas county. That's a fine county."

John smiled at this, but didn't join in at all. The mayor Bussee and city director, Shakelford came in and were introduced. They are both black. John had little to say to them. He looked not ill at ease, but just not interested. He sat at table and talked with Carl Ford. David sat at table and talked with Skip. MaryJane talked to Mayor Bussey. Annied talked to Ms. Skackelford. I sat there. And when I evinced an interest in what he was saying to Carl, about a trip by Ohio bankers and education to Abu Dabi, he came over to tell me about it. Then, as they were trying to round him up for the press conference, he kept talking to me about it.

Earlier, he had come to me and said "I don't think I have anything particular to get off my chest at the press conference. If you were a member of the Arkansas press corps, what would you ask me?" (Why are you in Arkansas?) "Oh, I always come to Arkansas," he said smiling.

The press conference was devoted to his candidacy, economy, education, military, Harrison Williams. I noted a couple of times that he noted specifically that certain things were not partisan. He doesn't give partisan Democrats red meat.

Skip talked about Arkansas politics as "personal." "People call up and say 'Is David there?' or 'Let me speak to David.' They might have met him somewhere or maybe not."

John's appeal is not personal. There is a distance between him and others in this kind of political situation anyway. He's very nice; but he doesn't plunge easily into a political situation like this. Illinois wasn't Glenn's cup of tea either. That politics a la Byrne is also personal even though it is constructed around a machine. It is still obligation, loyalty, favors, first names and history--Chicago and Arkansas. (Al Smith and Joe Robinson).

David tried to give John instant ID when he introduced him to the TV press conference (and that was the first thing David said to me, too, when he saw me at the airport, i.e., "Dick, when you write your book, be sure to put in it that on March 5....) "When our plane flew over the Mississippi River Senator Glenn and Mrs. Glenn gave the Arkansas call."

David's speech - no men's room

When I first went to the Senate I knew I was going to meet John Glenn one of the greatest American heroes of all time. I was trying to figure out what to say to John Glenn. I met him on subway. "I stuck my hand out and said I'm David Pryor. I was just elected to the Senate. I couldn't think of anything to say - I don't know anything about space or science. So I said We have road named after you in Pulaski County. He said Pryor you're a damned liar. At last I have a chance to prove to my friend that we do have .

He called for "a bipartisan effort to help a troubled country." Bumpers called Reagan program "a disaster." Tells Packwood story.

Bumpers asks Glenn if he wasn't scared - scrubbed 3 times - before I had chance to get scared they let the thing and I was off. "Most respected man in Senate on scientific matters." Speaks of Glenn as "dear friend", feels "close kinship" to John Glenn "real American hero, every inch a gentleman and a Great Democrat."

"Stark terror struck me when I realized that I was flying with David Pryor as my copilot."

1981 Republican script - Love Boat on way to Fantasy Island--1982 a cross between Jeopardy, Family Feud, and Let's Make a Deal."

Glenn speech - used line again that we need not apologize for being Democrats." "I believe the time has come to speak out" same as Chicago.

Attacks big deficits - time to stop blaming everyone else for problem he caused (biggest applause).

Ticks off problems in housing and unemployment "What he doesn't seem to understand is that people have to eat in short run." (applause)

He ticks off statistics demonstrating how bad our situation is.

"We've got to do better than trade soup lines of depression for cheese lines of this administration" (applause)

"Fondue for you in '82." is motto of administration.

"If this administration spent as much time on a consistent foreign policy as they do on taking away social security maybe we'd frighten our adversaries instead of our senior citizens." (applause)

"There's a lot of difference by making one woman a justice and bringing justice to all women (great applause)

"We ought not to confuse the epistles of the the new testament with the apostles of the new right." (applause)

Ends with attitude toward change - "We generated change." a nice point.

I looked around as he concluded on a note of America isn't finished yet. We can still outwork, out produce, out innovate, etc... and then a note of everyone has opportunity to work... and to dream--and everyone was listening carefully. He had the audience. His delivery was better than in Chicago--although he still will not win the Presidency as a "great communicator." He'll win it if people want something else--and he can convey it.

Skip was very enthusiastic and remained so throughout the evening, as he and I went out for a drink afterward. He went non stop "I like John Glenn. The people liked John Glenn." "The people want a hero. They want someone like Dwight Eisenhower." "He acted like he was happy to be here. All the research he did on Arkansas was right. He pronounced the names without any hesitation. He was shuckin' and jivin' with the folks. People will go away with a warm feeling about John Glenn." "People didn't want to hear about a national program.

They wanted to hear John Glenn tell them 'it ain't workin'. They believe him. Next time, when he comes back with a program, they'll listen." "The one thing Bill Clinton has never learned is that people don't want to hear about national all the time." "Off the record, Annie Glenn has it all over Joan Mondale." "Herby Bronson told me that all the comments he heard were favorable." (I asked Herby how it went "I had lots of favorable comments. People would tell me if they didn't like it. Everything went well, and the speech was the center of it.)_ DP also told Skip that he liked it. "I got the word from DP this morning on the speech--(he showed thumbs up) he like it." "I thought John Glenn was just great." Other people liked his wife, liked fact that he gave Pig Sooeey calls; one said he wasn't a good speaker, but that wasn't the dominant thing I heard.

Trip home - I flew co-pilot from Little Rock to Washington, DC. Mary Jane and Annie Glenn rested in back. Mostly we talked about flying the airplane, the communications system, the navigation system, etc. He loves the details and is a patient teacher and expounder. Again he noted that it was his therapy. We remarked how beautiful it was--flying at 25,000 feet in the sunlight above the clouds (occasionally we flew in and out of a "milk bottle" of clouds) at a ground speed of up to 348 mph, (air speed of about 170 knots, but with a 70 knot or so tail wind). I said "You have it all to yourself up here." He said "I love it. It's my therapy. You have to shift gears psychologically. This makes you do it. You have to monitor the instruments constantly." As we came in, he said, "We're coupled and we're on the glide slope. All I have to do is to monitor. But do I monitor!" He said that every emphatically, as if he wasn't going to miss a trick! He talks to himself as we go in for a landing checking off each dial and switch. "Everything is OK and I'm going to fly it in myself" as he takes over for the landing. He's a check and double check person.

At one point, I reminded him of the day Air Florida went down and how he had come through the office and talked about ice conditions. "I called in six times that day, and each time they said there was icing between 1000 and 10,000 feet. There was no way I was going to take that plane up. Once you are flying you have equipment to take care of icing. But you can't take off. There are some kinds of weather no man can control. There are some kinds of weather no one should fly in. That day was one of them." My point is that he has good judgment--in the sense that he won't make any colored mistakes. I'm not sure he is bold. But he is careful almost beyond compare.

During the 3 hour flight I asked maybe a half dozen questions. He answered each of them and, occasionally, expanded on the answer. I would wait till we were honed in on some point 50-75 miles away and then pop a question. But he has to watch pretty constantly and I don't think he appreciates too much conversation at that time anyway. After all, that's his decompression time. Near the end I asked him if he was on the firing line anywhere that evening. He was emphatic "No, I'm going home, put on my slippers, curl up and read the newspapers." In the airport he said "You were a good co-pilot." I said "You mean I didn't make any great mistakes." He laughed "You didn't make any mistakes. You kept your mouth shut." So--whereas 3 hours with him is great opportunity, I bend over backwards not to abuse it. And if I did abuse it, he'd keep me away. Since, he gave his OK, I assume I was persona grata before the trip--and still I hope.

I asked him how it went. "I thought it went well. People seemed to listen to what I had to say. And more people came to the reception afterwards than were expected. We'll get some letters and we'll see what they have to say. And I'll be curious to see what the papers report. They'll pick one thing I said--and make that their story. But I thought it went well." He seemed satisfied without registering any special enthusiasm and without revealing any particular

I asked him whether he got a good feel for a place when he went there. "Of course you get a better feel for what people are thinking if you go there than if you just read the Washington Post. The farmers are having a terrible time. This morning at the breakfast table I talked with two farmers, and they are worried. But they are worried about the same things as the Ohio Farmers. There was a black man on one side of me and a farmer on the other side. And the farmer leaned over to me and talked about the blacks getting too much. So that feeling still lingers. You wouldn't be reminded of that so kindly by reading the newspapers."

I asked if Kansas (his last stop) and Arkansas were different. "There is a little more affluence among the farmers of Kansas. But farmers everywhere are in trouble. In fact, people are worried about the same things everywhere--the economy. I gave him a chance to highlight difference, but he didn't. He sees Ohio as microcosm and sees the economy as overriding any distinctive state problems. And, I guess for a person thinking nationally, the issues are pretty national. He did not talk about what he learned about state politics, and I got no sense that he ever got off in a corner and talked state politics with anyone.

Spontaneously, he commented, about his trips. "I get a lot of invitations to speak, many more than I got six years ago. It used to be that an older generation of Democrats went out to speak at these kinds of party dinners--the Churches, the McGoverns, the McClellans. Now, I'm in the top half of the Democrats in seniority. People like Dale Bumpers and I are getting out to Jefferson Jackson Day dinner to talk about the party. And I think we should do it. No matter what happens later on--will happen--I think it's a good thing that we are doing this."

I asked him, at some later point, if he thought people get a feel for him and he said yes "They don't know me. Most of them were party people." But I can't recall anything interesting. I asked if the speech or the reception was more important in giving people a feel. "More people heard the speech than went to the reception, so I guess that was more important."

I asked him if the response he got this year differed from last year, and he agreed emphatically. "Last year, when I went around people's attitude was that they wanted to give Reagan a chance. This year people are scared. Last year whenever you mentioned the economy, they listened. But this year when you talk about the economy, you can see them nodding their heads. The attitude is completely different. There is that great concern. And you can't sense the depths of it by reading the Washington Post."

He was quiet for a while after he had answered these questions about the feel you get. Then he said spontaneously "This is off the record, for now anyway," And he launched into the most interesting comment of the trip. "When you take these trips, you see an America you don't see in Washington. You go up and down the east coast and there's a jaded attitude about the country. It's an attitude of cynicism and greed. The newspapers feed on it and foster it. It's almost incestuous. In Washington, you live on that Boston-Washington axis. Then, you go across the Appalachians out to Ohio and into the small towns of the midwest and you find a very different attitude. People are proud of their country. They love their country. They put the flag out on flag day. Then you go further west into Wyoming and Idaho and, boy, if you say anything against America, you'd better watch out. Then you get to the west coast, and it's like the east coast. Everybody is for himself. Everyone thinks the country is going to the dogs, and there's nothing you can do about it. You have two coasts--and in between is America. Of course, you've got to have the two coasts. But I hate that east coast crap."

When he put this "off the record, for now" it was the only indication that he saw himself in a vulnerable time right now. The comment shows clearly why he feels "at home" and why Ohio, Kansas and Arkansas don't feel all that different to him.

When he made that comment, I added that one of the things I had found when I travelled out of Rochester was the enormous amount of energy people showed in doing good.

"Reagan is right in emphasizing volunteerism. But there's a lot that volunteerism can't do too. And we have to recognize the difference. It can't do all that Reagan wants it to do. When I was growing up in New Concord, people took care of each other. When someone was in trouble, the neighbors would send a roast beef over to them or some clothes or whatever they needed to tide them over. We helped each other. My mother was one of those who organized that kind of help. Hundreds of times when I was growing up, she'd say to me 'Take this food over to Mrs. Rice's house' or whatever, and I would go and knock on the door and say 'My mother sent this over.' We could do that. Families were in touch with each other. But now we are a mobile and freeflowing society. Our family is a perfect example--we live in Washington, our parents are in Ohio, one child is in Denver and the other in San Francisco. We are well enough off so that we can stay in touch, so we don't worry about it. But what about families who can't stay in touch and can't help each other, who haven't the money. That's where the federal government has a responsibility. Volunteerism can't do everything. The government has to step in and help."

He moved, I think, to a similar reflection on cooperative federalism. "I was saying to Annie this morning--she was showering and I was propped up in bed listening to TV--I said to her that we are the united states of America. You can talk about cooperative federalism, but you can't just throw these programs

back to the states--programs like welfare and medicaid. If we do, we are asking the states to compete with each other, not cooperate. You take our immigration problems. We have certain entry points--New York, San Fransisco, Miami, Texas. We can't control the immigration coming into Texas. But we can't throw that problem to Texas and say 'you take care of it.' It's a national problem. We are supposed to be a united states. So, sure, let's turn programs back to the states where the states can take care of it. But let's be very careful of just what we throw back to the states."

At one point, after some of these reflections, he said. "Democrats have to have an idea of where we want this country to go. Then we have to hang our domestic and foreign policies onto that. But so far, no one has been able to set forth that vision."

"I think people are more interested in foreign policy than they were. Five years ago, you talked foreign policy it was MEGO--'my eyes glaze over.' Now they listen. I don't know why."

"When I talk about the right of people to dream, you can hear a pin drop. People don't want to be told America is finished."

I asked him--since I thought I saw similarities between Chicago and Little Rock speeches--if he had a basic speech that he was reworking and remolding and he said "yes" and started to answer when some one called him on the radio and that was it. We didn't get back to it. I can check.

"When I write a speech, I always try to include sections to take out if necessary. I thought I was to be the speaker last night. I didn't know there would be 2 Congressmen and 2 Senators and that, after that, people would have to listen to me for half an hour. So I cut out some places. Instead of going into detail about social security, you just say that people are worried about social security and go on to the next topic."

A couple of flying comments. "I have great respect for thunder storms. I've flown in combat, flight tested airplanes, orbitted the earth, but nothing has ever frightened me like flying through a thunderstorm. You have all you can do to keep the plane level. You have your seat belt pulled as tight as you can and still you bounce to the top of the cabin. You just keep your eye on the instrument panel to keep your flight path level. Never mind if you drop 1000 feet in a couple of seconds; you just have to fight to keep the plane level till you get out the other side. Your heart is up in your mouth. I've never been so scared in my life."

"The best thing that ever happened to me in flying was when I was assigned to all weather flight school. I didn't want it. I had been fully checked out in instrument flying. But I had to take three classes through that difficult program. I became completely confident about my own instrument flying. It's probably the reason I've lived as long as I have."

At breakfast the next morning, I was not invited, but I came in late. "I have had a request in to see the President since early December and he won't see me. Every week we call to see if I'm going to be able to see him. But I've been frozen out. I told Bob Dole, and he said he'd do something about it. But I said, no, that I wanted to go through regular channels. I want to talk to him about research. They are butchering our research programs." And he launched into a passionate statement about need for research, strinking research budgets etc. It is the subject that gets him most animated "dumb" "stupid" etc. rushes out of him, and he does get carried away in talking about this.

At end of reception DP had Skip play "Mighty John Glenn" record. "

"As he rode higher in the sky.
The clouds opened up to let John go by
Johnny Glenn, what a man
Johnny Glenn, what a man
He went through space like nobody can

Everybody said he's a travellin' man
He's our number one, John Glenn
John Glenn, what a man
Yes, Johnny Glenn is a mighty man."

"The world gave thanks to the powers
that be
when he landed safely in the deep
blue sea
Johnny Glenn, what a man.
etc.

Skip called that idea, by Pryor, of stopping the reception and playing the record "pure Pryor." He said it showed Pryor was having a good time. Bumpers did not come to the reception, or at least wasn't there long, and Pryor went to the breakfast with Glenn. So, whereas the invitation was a dual one, it was Pryor that really escorted JG and sponsored him throughout the weekend.

To get back to Glenn's arrival press conference, there was some bantering when the Mayor said there was a "hitch" to his award, that he would have to pay a sales tax. "David, can you get me out of that tax." "We'll file an appeal for you, John."

When press asked "the question," he said he was elected by 1 million votes in Ohio, that he's doing things around the country, getting some mail that's encouraging, keeping his options open to see what happens.

"My comments about the economy are not political comments. There is just as much concern on the Republican side as on the Democratic side. We are trying to put together a bipartisan coalition." DP's remarks at dinner, when he quoted 5 Republicans on the economy's problems and said we were working on a bipartisan approach to help a troubled country--were similar.

"What happens in the economy will have an effect on any decisions we may make later this year."

"last year I did an op ed piece in the NY Times on the targeting of tax cuts to encourage business investment." He's still talking about that.

Wants to set back the tax cuts.

"It was difficult to oppose him last year perhaps, but it's not difficult to oppose him this year. My people back in Ohio are very concerned. The situation is as bad as I've ever seen it in my time in the Senate."

He sees idea coming from many places, bipartisan groups working. "We can't be cynical enough to go ahead with a program that's bad for the country, so that we can pick up the pieces after the crash. Is it hard to raise taxes? Sure it is."

On education. "I quarrel violently with the speed with which it has been done--we can't adapt." He's on Board of Trustees at Muskingham.

"Talk about research cuts - "I can't think of a better way to guarantee dependence on the Persian Gulf than to cut back on energy research... I can't think of anything worse" than cutting research. He gets passionate.

Big lag in weapons - changed mind, though, on MX. Doesn't want it in hardened silos--only if it's mobile. (see papers for rest)

Re Williams. "We're in effect the jury and are in the middle of that right now... Any conduct of that kind, I abhor--but what the penalty should be will have to be decided later." He separates the FBI and Williams matter and would support an investigation of the FBI. But "Do I think the tapes give an image of what we should not condone in the Senate? Absolutely."

Then someone asked him if he knew how many electoral votes Arkansas had. And David jumped in and said "That's already enough to get him here for."
(laughter)