

The summer of his content!

JOHN GLENN

July 21, 1983

Nancy Becker, Anita Dunn, Greg Schneiders

I talked to John in two sections--I got displaced by Bill White and Joe Califano and then Bill Fullbright. I talked with Mary Jane in between. I went to lunch with Kirk. But in all I had a good hour with John. It was altogether rather unsatisfactory. He was tired (got in at 3 AM this morning from Minneapolis so he could vote on MX). And I was pushing a line of questioning that he didn't really respond to--the Senator-presidential candidate contrast or transition or sequence. He doesn't use colorful language nor does he like to make sharp distinctions. His language and his distinctions are gray. Altogether he talks with caution and care, but you don't get the sense he's really conning you. His mood was upbeat and everyone in the office was upbeat. He thinks he's going to win. Not only does he say so, but Mary Jane said "He really wants it now; and he really thinks he's going to win. He believes now that it is as likely to come to him as to any of the others in the race."

"How's it going?" Very well. We've been moving up steadily. I suppose I would rather have saved what we are doing now for next November so we could move up and carry the momentum right on into the primaries. Right now Mondale is here (he's using both hands here sweeping up, setting levels, etc.) and we're here just below him. Since we're up here, we've got to make sure we don't drop down. We've got to hold our position till the primaries and then move up. We can do it. But we have to beware of people getting candidate fatigue. They get tired of seeing the same candidates; and then they begin to look around and say 'Aren't there some other people around here we would consider.' Mondale is suffering from a little bit of that now. I have standing invitations to appear on Meet the Press, Face the Nation,

David Brinkley. I could go on those shows anytime I want. But I'm not going to. I want to save those for the big push later on. We're gaining just the way we planned, except that we're doing it a little quicker than we had hoped. But I'm pleased. The campaign is going well." (He took an invitation to one of the shows soon after.)

MJ and John and I talked re a party they were going to, for Bella, on the old Sequoia. "Off the record, one of the dumbest things Carter did was to scrap the Sequoia. More seductions--political seductions--were carried out on the Sequoia than anywhere else in Washington. You'd go out have a nice dinner and there would be the President talking to you. If you were in the gray area he might flip you over. "Gee, Mr. President." He tried it on me, but it was on nuclear proliferation, and so it didn't work. But when I'm elected President--and I'm going to be--one of the first things I'm going to do is to buy a yacht. (He pronounced it yach-t deliberately.) It won't be like the Sequoia. I can't pop for a million but I'll ^{buy} bring a small boat. ~~And when I'm through as President I'll buy a small boat.~~ And when I'm through as President I'll sell it and get my money back. (He leaned back and puffed on his pipe and grinned a pixiesh grin and said) That's entrepreneur-ship--entrepreneurship at the highest levels. I'm serious. I believe that more arrangements and deals could be struck there than anywhere else. And you could entertain foreign dignitaries too. I'm going to buy me a nice boat."

He had started the interview--as we talked about Cape Cod [^] telling me how he loved the beach, [^] especially in winter and how he would go out on the beach near Houston with a marine parka on, and how they had a little put-put there and how he enjoyed it. "I love the beach. But I'm weird. Do you know when I like the beach best? Winter. When we lived in Houston near the beach, I would love to put on my marine parka and go out on the beach and walk in the coldest, windiest weather. We had a little put-put there, too and I used to enjoy going out in that."

I opened the interview by asking what stage he was in and reminding him that it had been a year since we talked. "Has it been that long?" He went back to his 1980 victory and said he "expanded my speaking engagements," to see what people's reaction might be. I was thinking about running but was by no means committed to doing it." Then he said "we intensified our activity in the 1982 campaign." Then "when Kennedy dropped out, that changed everything. Up to that point the media had played up the head to head conflict between Kennedy and Mondale. They have to have conflict. So when Kennedy dropped out, I became their ^{new} ~~hero~~ 'conflictee.' It became Mondale and Glenn. At that point I had to decide whether or not I thought the direction Reagan was leading the country was the right direction. I decided it was not, that I did not like the turn the economy was taking, the drift of foreign policy, policies in areas like civil rights, the elderly, environmental enforcement. So I decided to run. And that decision brought the first phase to an end."

He then went on to talk about the next phases--"I don't recall them with any degree of specificity. He praised Bill White for gearing up. "Bill White went over to the campaign and did a good job in gearing up. For a while we took a bum rap from the press. Then kept saying that we weren't organized. It's true, we weren't; and we admitted we weren't. But they had to have something to write about. You remember it was my idea that we didn't need to begin till 14 or 15 months out. That's just what we did. Kennedy dropping out put attention on us more quickly." He did say he wanted to cut down on travel for a while this summer so he could "read and think." Then do some fund raising and then turn up the heat going into the primaries. He said a little more, but I don't know what, nothing startling. MJ says he's always saying he wants to cut travel. But they don't think he can or should.

But the only interesting thing he said about the two phases--pre-decision and post-decision was that. "When we were expanding our speechmaking and exploring the idea of running it was much easier to control events. Once we decided to run and get into the campaign, we lost a great deal of control. In a campaign so many things can happen to upset your plans." He ticked off things that can't be controlled. Pt is: degree of control changes over time in campaigns.

I asked him if he had to learn to be a presidential candidate like he learned to be a senator. "I don't think of it that way, but that's what you are doing. I think I have a great advantage as a Senator from Ohio, because Ohio has every blooming interest there is in the United States. It is a microcosm. I've dealt with all the issues as a Senator from Ohio that I'm dealing with as candidate for President. It's an intensification and an amplification of the things I've already been doing. So, no, I wouldn't say I've had as much to learn as someone would if he came from a state where corn was the only thing he had to worry about as Senator." But, again, later on he said intensity and depth were different.

I told him the story about Donald Smith and HST - "I wasn't president then." Did he feel bound by his Senate votes? "You have to defend all your votes. And there isn't one vote I have trouble defending. I always voted in the way that I thought brought the greatest good to the greatest number. That doesn't change whether you are senator presidential candidate. I always looked after Ohio on things like ^{VQAG} ~~UAG~~ grants or Cleveland harbor. But otherwise I voted as I thought best for the country. There isn't a single vote I would change now that I'm a presidential candidate."

Somewhere in this exposition, I interceded and asked if Ohio had acid rain problems. "Our soybean crop is down 10% as a result of acid rain. So we have that problem, too."

I asked him whether he saw himself in transition from Senator to candidate. "no, I'm not letting my duties as Senator slide. My voting record is down a little; but I haven't missed one important vote. We were supposed to stay in Minneapolis last night, but we change our plans and flew in at 3 AM this morning, so I could vote on the MX missile this morning." He wouldn't really concede that he was thinking more like a presidential candidate. It was all just an extension of what he had been doing, with very minor adjustments.

Later, he said re. the Senate office. "This is where the issues are decided, right here (puts hands down on desk). This is where I decide how to vote; this is where the expertise is. I'm not going to let some new campaign staffer say 'Wouldn't it be wonderful to do this' and commit me on the issues. They are preparing position papers over there. But the decisions on the issues are made here in this office."

I asked him whether running for president had changed him in the sense that he had become more calculating 1) as to predicting audience response and 2) as to claiming credit.

He picked up on "credit" first. "I'm afraid the credit business will come back to haunt me. There are times when I would do something on the floor that I thought was significant and exciting, come back here and forget to tell the press secretary about it. I get the satisfaction but not the credit. Let me give you an example. I'll stack my civil rights record up against anyone else's in the Congress. But when I went to talk to the NAACP, they didn't know my record. They had no idea what I'd done. These other Senators, who had issued 40 press releases on what they had done got all the credit. I didn't. Credit is going to come back to haunt me."

Then he went back to the idea of gauging audience response. "I still say what I think; and I still get into trouble with the audience sometimes. The other day I referred in a speech to the DNC to the "Marxist-Communist guerillas" in the hills of El Salvador. When David Broder wrote up that speech, he said that expression 'Marxist Communist guerillas' would strike the audience as peculiar. Why? That's exactly what they are. I don't always get the buzz words right for the audience." *(It's really a "wave-length" problem, not a "buzz words" problem)*

He and MJ talked about how he used "man and wife" in speaking to a women's group and how they jumped all over him. Again, "I thought I had all the buzz words right, but that's one I missed. I said I've been using man and wife for 60 years. They said you either said man and woman or husband and wife. I said I'd try to remember that." This was in a press conference it happened. MJ told the story because she had not been showed the draft and she could have caught the error and primed John. Kurt told me the same story as an example of how JG just doesn't operate on the same wave length as the women's groups (and others) even though he votes right.

I read him Meg Greenfield's quote: "The possibility that a man will become President greatly influences his influence in the Senate." He thought about it for quite a while. "Maybe a little, but not to the extent that quotation implies. You don't become much more powerful than you already were. People do take more of an interest in you. They come around to ask you how it's going or what you think. But in terms of any quantum jump in influence, no. In the Senate, there is nothing unusual about people running for President. They take it in stride. Maybe you get a little more influence, but if you do it's hard to measure."

Does Byrd treat you differently. "Not appreciably. In deciding who should reply to the President's radio broadcast, he sees to it that each

presidential candidate has an equal chance. But that's the extent of it. Maybe we shouldn't have answered them at all."

Does Percy treat you differently. "No, not in the committee. But if we've had a hearing on something controversial, the media is interested. Before, they might have been interested in a statement from me. Now they are invariably interested in having me make a statement. The media treats me as if I have more influence but not my colleagues."

I asked him if he wasn't getting more interested in domestic policy than he did as a Senator--as a matter of emphasis. He finally agreed with that. But his main answer was that: "The issues are the same; but we have to go into issues in much greater depth than before. You are drawing a much larger loop. We have been involved with women's groups in Ohio. But when we speak to the national women's groups, we have much more extensive briefing papers, what are their key issues 1, 2, 3, 4, which ones do we agree with, which ones do we leave out of the speech, how will we answer various questions. It's a much more extensive preparation. Of course, the whole press gang will be there, all the gurus and the TV cameras will be watching and recording it all." He didn't really appreciate the idea that he was less attentive to domestic matters as senator than he is now; but, as I say, he did admit that was the case. Said his interests were more foreign policy and defense as senator.

When I asked him about staffing, he took the same tack that there wasn't much difference now, except that a different group of people were involved--and he used this as a springboard to launch into his Vice Presidential ideas.

"Any president of any organization works with about 10 to 12 people, and maybe that's too many. He delegates authority to them in their functional areas, but he controls the policy. The president of a corporation or a university works with 10 people. As a senator I worked with that number

here; now I have the same number, but we've brought in some people on the campaign staff and left out some of those here."

Then he launched into his Vice Presidential ideas. "The way we pick our Vice President is all wrong. We have the idea that we must balance the ticket, geographically and ideologically. Geographically I have no trouble with. But why should we balance the ticket ideologically. To my way of thinking, the President and vice president should represent a philosophy of government, an idea of what the future of the country should be. Why do we have a vice president? To take over if anything happens to the President. If we pick a vice president because he represents a different ideology than the President, then we would get a complete change of philosophy if something happened to the President. That makes no sense to me at all. Now don't run that by me at the convention. I'm not promising to do what I'm suggesting. But I think the Vice President should be the chief executive officer who handles day to day operations while the president deals with the policy. The trouble with recent presidencies is the tendency of the president to get involved in the minutiae of government. If the President and Vice President were of the same ideology the Vice President could relieve the President of these burdens. They would check with each other daily to make sure they were on the same wave length. The presidency is no different from the presidency of any large organization. Having said all that, I'll probably pick a Vice President for ideological balance." It was longer than this, and very textbook public administration-ish. He didn't seem to be aware that presidents have said this for years and it has never worked! It's a political myopia of his, I think. Besides, how would he--given his ideology--

find a soul mate? (Well, he'll do what he doesn't want to do when push comes to shove. It's just that the political side of things doesn't come naturally to him. He'll learn -- he's a learner. Fiddler can impart due to him -- but politics is not natural. Recall his early pol. work.)

I asked him if the campaign pressures didn't push the candidate into

negative campaigning. "We've avoided that so far and I will continue to avoid it. To me public office is a calling. You represent someone else. You want to get the very ^{best} people you can into public office. It's easy to score points with personal attacks on your opponent. But that demeans the office you are entrusted with." He went on some in this civics book vein--a vein he believes in--said they had encountered a little so far, but it is issues that count etc.

I asked him if he thought of himself as a "hard ball" politician. "I don't know what you mean by hardball. If you mean, cut em up in pieces leave them dying on the road and walk away then; no. If you mean making tough decisions and sticking to them, yes. We had some tough judgeship decisions in Ohio and we stuck to them. People played hard ball with us to get us to change and we played hard ball back. Some people have a funny idea about politics. George Reidy had an article the other day on the briefing book episode. He said politics is war. The object is to win. How you get there doesn't matter, you can act differently when you get there, and so forth. He's completely wrong. If you're a lying, cheating, no good son of a bitch in the campaign, you'll be a lying, cheating, no good son of a bitch when you're in office. You don't put on a moral cloak when you stand over there on the east front of the capitol and take the oath of office. You are the same person you always were. You can't campaign one way and govern in a different way. You get them the same way you act when you are there. was all wet. He doesn't have any idea what he's talking about." A view of politics that emphasizes the good man.

He went to visit Carter a while ago and we chatted about that some.

We talked about how silly the caucuses were. "I was out in California,

and a reporter asked me if I was going to ^{enter} the Alabama straw poll. I said I had never heard of the Alabama caucus. I didn't know when it was or where it was. He said all the major candidates would be there. That was the first I'd heard. Come to find out the Young Democrats of Alabama decided to have a poll at their meeting. There were about 125 of them. Cranston came down, took 'em all out for a boat ride and food the night before and took 65% of the vote. How ridiculous can you get?

He tried hard to find a poll from San Antonio ^{reported in their paper} and couldn't find it in his brief case. Anyway headline was "Glenn Tops Dems Poll" it was taken in a bar where if you ordered \$5.00 margarita you go to vote. The story said "The sheriff of Texas County admitted to voting between 40 and 50 times--in the time honored tradition of south Texas politics." Glenn thought that was about the level of seriousness one ought to grant to straw polls.

I think their decision not to run ~~around~~ contesting straw polls was wise. Now they are wondering whether to go into Iowa or not and other places. John said problem was that you have to spend a lot of your money if you contest a straw poll. But if you don't, your organization crumbles. "It gives them some esprit, and a goal to shoot at."

I suppose one interesting thing is that he does now think of being president; whereas a year ago he would never have talked about the Sequoia, or the VP idea or the "moral cloak" when you are president.

I asked re how he came to trust people and that question didn't go. "The same way you learn to trust anyone--over time, working with them, talking to them, taking their advice and having it work out. I trust Carl Ford because he's given me advice a jillion times. I haven't taken it all, but I've become convinced after all these years that he's the smartest foreign policy adviser around. Trust here is the same as trusting someone who works with you

in a grocery store." The point was, it's all the same. I asked re Schneider - he said - travelling with him, talking to him, etc. you come to trust him. It was all very sensibly said, but not especially insightful in terms of hand holds for me. It's no different from learning gradually, through experience to trust anyone in any kind of endeavor.

There's a sense in which John sees politics as not very different from any other kind of endeavor in its mechanics. He does put it on a kind of pedestal in the sense that it is a "calling", that good people should be in it. So there's a kind of nobility to it for him. But the Sequoia talk was the closest I've heard him come to talk, with any degree of enthusiasm, about what I would think of as politicking. This is why, when you talk about politics, what you get is a certain amount of moralizing and not much coalition building talk. Interviews tend to be unsatisfactory; but when you collect examples, that's better. In chit-chat, you get your best material (Sequoia) and not in formal Q & A.

At the end Greg Schneider came in with a press clip saying "A new issue has just been injected into the campaign." Glenn takes the clip which says "Cranston says he would not have dropped A Bombs." John says "He wasn't scheduled to hit the beach in Japan. I was. It was a terrible decision to have to make. But you've got to remember what the options were at the time." Carl Ford says "That's just what you should say." Dan says "You've got to remember the times. Harry Truman said he had no regrets. It saved a million lives." John says "I suppose we'll have to face that issue when we all go out to Berk Bedell's thing in Iowa. And I'll be on the wrong side of that one, too." Greg says "I think you should take that occasion to come down hard on the side of realism in foreign policy." John says "The estimate was 1 million lives saved." Then it tails off.

This is in the wake of John's pro-nerve gas vote. MJ said "If he had been the kind of person who changed his vote because he's running for president,

he would have voted against nerve gas. But he didn't change and he won't." Carl Ford said "The other day I saw Paul Tsongas in the restaurant and he motioned to me to come on over after I'd finished eating. I did. He leaned over to me and put his hands up to his head and sighed."Carl, tell me, what do I say about nerve gas." Carl laughed. JG is putting PT in a pickle.

I asked John if media didn't exercise a lot of control over the campaign. "Absolutely. You can't reach 227 million people by shaking hands. You can only do it by the paid media and free media. We'll go to TV a little later. Right now the free media is what we worry about. Every morning you look in the paper to see what they are saying, what slant they are putting on their reporting. One day you give an interview; the next day you want to see whether it comes out anything like the way you said it. The problem is that too often it doesn't. The reporters put their own twist, their own slant on the story. Yet they are the people you count on to reach the public for you. So it's a daily problem."

Can you tell friends and enemies in the media? He thought about it for quite a while. "Maybe you find out that someone is opposed to you and then you see a slant to their stories." But he didn't go very far in that direction. He did say that "On balance, David ^{Broder's} ~~Borden's~~ article was favorable. I was pleased." This was the report on their DNC performance.

Kirk says JG is poorest in situation where spontaneity is required. He likes to be in control, to be briefed, to have papers in front of him. I detected that sense, too, when he described the intensity and depth of preparation on the issues when he goes to speak to groups now. He reacted to that not with exasperation, but with relish. He likes extensive briefings; he likes to have to absorb detail. That's his metier as astronaut--the check list. ^(He's a learner, as I noted earlier) He's not an improviser--i.e., his comment to me that he always has

staff advice before voting. He doesn't "wing it." He's an organized person who likes to be in control and to have a regularized relationship with others. Maybe that's why he wants a different VP relationship. He doesn't relish the idea of an unstructured relationship with the V.P.

When he talked of Bill White he said "It's not necessary for us to have the same ideology in order for him to do his job. In this office I am the ideology." (points fingers at his chest.)

John and Annie were going to Bella's 65th birthday party. They were both dog tired. Annie said to me "I wish they would give us two days off. I think they are this week." Eyes bright! She poked head in the door, saw me there and closed the door. How many wives would do that. I got up, went to door, reintroduced myself and told her to come on in. Carl Ford was there and they came in. But she was going to stand in the ante room till I was finished. A very unusual lady. I thought the fact that they were going to the party when they had all had half a night's sleep was nice display of loyalty to staff--to a staff person who really is not a campaigner in any sense. She's the office manager.

It was John's birthday yesterday. When Marion was showing me around the office, I bumped into John. He said "Hi Dick, have a piece of my birthday cake." That was my first encounter with him. He was eating cake. When I went in for my interview, he was eating a toll house cookie and offered me one. "Take all of them. You know my weakness." I said "I know, you're a chocaholic." It gave us a link. Then to Cape Cod, his love of beach and then to the interview. I had a set of prepared questions and worked from them. I'm not sure it made for lots of spontaneity. But I didn't want to waste his time. He kept asking me (when we broke up so he could see other appointments and when I returned later) "Are you sure your schedule is OK? Will this be all right with you?" Altogether very considerate.

MJ's view of John is that he is very competitive and that "The tougher the challenge, the more competitive he gets. The Mondale people are fond of saying that John can't fly at this high an altitude. They completely underestimate him. He can fly at any altitude when he wants something. And he wants it now. I'm continually amazed at how much he will take in public. He will never never show anger or irritation in public. When we met with the Hispanic group in Texas, they gave an award to an assistant of Alan Cranston's. Then she got up and made a little speech about Alan Cranston. John was there at the head table. I was furious. It was a terrible insult to John. I wanted to scream. But he got up and smiled and shook her hand as she left the podium. He knew it was an insult to him. He mentioned it back at the hotel--but only mildly. Anyone who thinks John Glenn will crack doesn't have any idea of what that man is made of."

My talk with MJ concerned 1) her truce with Kathy and Bill on the basis that they are the three who really care about the Glenns and that they must not let other staffers play them off against each other. 2) her decision not to give interviews to reporters. Howell Raines of NYT has been bugging her for human interest stuff and Schneider thinks she should do it. She thinks the Glenns should have one person close to them whom they know will not talk to the press, one person with whom they do not have to be on guard. She guards their lives personally and is with them in many intimate moments. I said she was right to draw the line, that press would respect that, that she was being a real professional in so doing. She seemed to be glad to hear that. "I don't care whether he wins or not. I didn't care whether he runs or not. I'm here to help him no matter what happens. If he never ran, I'd be here. If he loses I'll be here. I've told them that I don't want a job in the White House."

All I want in December 1984 is to find a rich man and get married. I want to be taken care of that way. She said that again to Glenn when we were sitting around after my interviews.

We chinned re our visits to Plains at that point. MJ reminded me how god forsaken I said Plains was. John says "So you thought New Concord was small, ha ha ha." MJ said John left New Concord and had a life after it and Carter never left Plains. John said "I sure did."

Kirk said he thought office mood was upbeat and good. Ed is frustrated, mostly with Bill. Bill's very unpopular. The office is a tightly held group and people are turf conscious. ^{Kirk feels} He's underutilized doing congressional record statements. The campaign headquarters is humming but contentious--again Bill's insecurity is big problem; and he thinks it could unravel because of Bill. MJ thinks Bill is much better, has learned and grown so that now "He's almost a human being." Kirk says John doesn't know his name or who he is.

- In Sept, I ran into Bill White + I asked him whether the media wasn't beginning to give John the work over that all candidates get. "It's begun. We've passed through the phase where they want to know what kind of guy he is. Now they would know what kind of President he'd make, which is nice for the future." (qtd)