

**John H. Glenn, Jr. Oral History Interview – RFK#1, 6/26/1969**  
Administrative Information

**Creator:** John H. Glenn, Jr.  
**Interviewer:** Roberta Greene  
**Date of Interview:** June 26, 1969  
**Place of Interview:** New York, New York  
**Length:** 14 pages

**Biographical Note**

(1921 - ) Project Mercury astronaut; pilot, Friendship 7 space capsule (1959 - 1964). Discusses personal relationship with Robert F. Kennedy, working on the 1968 presidential campaign, and RFK's political philosophy, among other issues.

**Access**

Open.

**Usage Restrictions**

According to the deed of gift signed November 30, 2010, copyright of these materials has been assigned to the United States Government. Users of these materials are advised to determine the copyright status of any document from which they wish to publish.

**Copyright**

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be "used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research." If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excesses of "fair use," that user may be liable for copyright infringement. This institution reserves the right to refuse to accept a copying order if, in its judgment, fulfillment of the order would involve violation of copyright law. The copyright law extends its protection to unpublished works from the moment of creation in a tangible form. Direct your questions concerning copyright to the reference staff.

**Transcript of Oral History Interview**

These electronic documents were created from transcripts available in the research room of the John F. Kennedy Library. The transcripts were scanned using optical character recognition and the resulting text files were proofread against the original transcripts. Some formatting changes were made. Page numbers are noted where they would have occurred at the bottoms of the pages of the original transcripts. If researchers have any concerns about accuracy, they are encouraged to visit the Library and consult the transcripts and the interview recordings.

**Suggested Citation**

John H. Glenn, Jr., recorded interview by Roberta Greene, June 26, 1969, (page number), Robert F. Kennedy Oral History Program of the John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION  
JOHN F. KENNEDY PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY  
DEED OF GIFT

**Legal Agreement Pertaining to the Oral History Interview**  
of John H. Glenn

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 21 of title 44, United States Code, and subject to the terms, conditions, and restrictions hereinafter set forth, I, John Glenn, hereby give, donate, and convey to the United States of America all my rights, title, and interest in the recordings and transcripts of the personal interviews conducted with Roberta Greene on June 26 and June 30, 1969, for deposit in the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

This assignment is subject to the following terms and conditions:

- (1) The transcripts and recordings shall be available for use by researchers as soon as it has been deposited in the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.
- (2) I hereby assign to the United States Government all copyright I may have in the interview transcripts and recordings.
- (3) Copies of the recordings may be provided by the Library to researchers upon request.
- (4) Copies of the transcripts and recordings may be deposited in or loaned to institutions other than the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.
- (5) The transcripts and recordings may be placed on the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library's web site.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Interviewee

9-13-10  
Dated

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Assistant Archivist for  
Presidential Libraries

11-30-2010  
Dated

John H. Glenn, Jr. – RFK #1

Table of Contents

<u>Page</u>	<u>Topic</u>
1	Meeting Robert F. Kennedy [RFK] at the White House
2	RFK's interests in the space program
3	Discussing the potential of a political career with RFK
4	RFK's comments on personal relationships after a tragedy
5	Vacations with RFK and his family, including life at Hickory Hill
7	Comments on the people RFK had working around him
8	Discussions with RFK about Bedford-Stuyvesant
8	RFK's feelings about the state of the U.S. in late 1967 and early 1968
9	RFK's opinion about campaigning in the Southern states
10, 12	Appearances at universities and response from students
11	Comments on draft deferments
11	Support for Eugene J. McCarthy in the South
12	Campaigning for RFK in the Midwest
13	RFK's response to the assassination of Martin Luther King
13	RFK's feelings after the Indiana and Nebraska primaries

Oral History Interview

with

John H. Glenn, Jr.

June 26, 1969

New York, New York

By Roberta Greene

For the Robert F. Kennedy Oral History Program  
of the John F. Kennedy Library

GREENE: Why don't you begin by telling how you met Robert Kennedy [Robert F. Kennedy] and how your relationship developed?

GLENN: I think the first time I met Bob was at the White House one time before my flight. The flight of Friendship Seven orbital flight was in 1962. It was a year and a half or so before that when I was there for something, and I had seen him on several other occasions around Washington.

GREENE: Well, at what point did you develop a closer friendship with him?

GLENN: Oh, I think really the first real close association with him was later—well, just immediately before my flight, then, in February of '62. I was there to see President Kennedy [John F. Kennedy] just about a week or ten days before the flight and give him a lot of detail on what we expected to do. Bob was there at that time. And then after the flight in the summer of 1962, he invited me to come up to Hyannis Port for a weekend. So, we were there as a guest of he and Ethel [Ethel Skakel Kennedy], and President Kennedy was up there that same weekend. And so that's really the first time we got acquainted very well when we were just with them by ourselves. We had been to a party at Hickory Hill not long after the flight and had become a little better acquainted

[ -1- ]

then, but there were a couple hundred people around there that night, I think. So really at Hyannis Port was the first time we had a chance for a very close personal relationship. We also were at Camp David for a long weekend with Bob, Ethel, their children and ours, David [John David Glenn] and Lyn [Carolyn Ann Glenn].

GREENE: Was he very interested in the space program?

GLENN: Extremely so. I think one of Bob's biggest characteristics was his curiosity about things, and what impelled people to do things, and what their motivations were, and what led them into certain things. This seemed to hold a real fascination for him. And I think this wasn't just in the space program—he was very interested in it and what we were going to do, and what led people into a program like this—but he was interested in other fields, too, in that same way. I've seen him, or been with him when he would question people, for instance, on their thoughts on education, or urban problems, other things where they had an expertise; and he was very curious about what led people into certain areas of endeavor.

I think a lot of great people have one thing in common, but I seem to think that most people that are really preeminent in their field are people who are very, very curious about everything. And I think it was sort of this curiosity about what led people into their vocations, and why they had become preeminent, and searching for sort of a common denominator. I think this was something Bob had to a large degree.

He was very curious about people and what motivated them, and how we could solve some of our problems. And along with this, he had a very great empathy for other people, an inordinately large empathy of being able to sort of feel what other people were feeling. And perhaps this is one of the things that led him into the political area, and led him into his very deeply felt concern for the problems of others. In some ways it may be a little unusual, too, because he was a wealthy man, of course. But he didn't just take that wealth and just go off and use it for his own enjoyment of he and his family. He felt that he had a responsibility to help improve other people's lot also. And I think that came in a large part from this empathy for the feelings of others and their problems. This showed up, well, when we were campaigning shortly before he was killed, of course; he was extremely concerned about these problems.

GREENE: Was he very interested in the personal experience aspects of your flight? What it felt like?

GLENN: Yes, very much so. He was interested in the personal experience of what it's like. What does it feel like to be weightless? What did you think about just before the booster lit off to

[ -2- ]

start the whole flight? What did you think about during reentry? What was the personal reaction to it? What were the problems during flight? What did you do about them and think about them? He had a thousand and one questions about things of that nature. And this same curiosity about how people react or are involved in their particular situations was evident, too—when he'd talk to, say, Jim Whittaker [James W. Whittaker] for instance, who was the first American to climb Everest [Mt. Everest]. He was very curious about Jim's experiences and why he wanted to climb Everest, and what things he experiences on the way up, and what he thought when he was on top, and just the whole experience.

In other words, he, in a way, wanted, I guess, to sort of vicariously experience many of these things himself. I guess we all have that same type feeling, but he didn't hold his questions back as many of us do when we're with someone who has done some of these things. He was always very pointed in his questions, asked direct questions, and usually got direct answers, too.

GREENE: Do you remember his feelings at any points during the attorney generalship during different crises? Were you with him at any of these times?

GLENN: No, not very often. I really wasn't involved in any of those things. I was in and out of his office a few times during some of those periods when other people would be there, but I wasn't really there enough that I was part of what was going on.

GREENE: Did you discuss a possible political career for yourself at all?

GLENN: One time, in mid 1963 he had talked to me once about the possibility of running for office and of wanting to support me if I did decide to do anything in that line. I thought it over for a couple of weeks at that time, and then decided I would not do it then. I would stay in the space program a little bit longer. But then in the fall of '63, when President Kennedy was killed in November, that was a rather cataclysmic thing for everyone in this country, of course, and I was no exception. I guess, with a lot of other Americans on that occasion, I reassessed what I wanted to do with much of my life and the responsibilities we have to our country. And so I decided then that I would run; and my decision on that came very late in '63—it was in December.

At that time I went back to Bob again and talked to him about the possibility of running and what he thought about it. And he felt that it was too late at that time, that I didn't really have time to organize properly for a political campaign. He advised against my running at that late date. I made my own decision, then, to go ahead and run anyway and announced that I was running in January of '64.

[ -3 - ]

But then I fell and was hurt, and was knocked out of everything for about a year while I recovered. So we had some contacts back and forth at that time, some mail. In fact, Bob kept in touch all during that time when many other people didn't see any need to communicate

with me when I was sort of knocked out of things. I appreciated it very much. That was one of the things that led to a much closer relationship later on.

GREENE: Did he discuss with you what you might do now that the political race was behind you, and the space program was eliminated, what possible things you might do in the future?

GLENN: Oh, just in general terms. We had no definite plans or anything like that. We had grown to be better friends, of course, through the years. We visited back and forth many times. I've been to Hickory Hill many, many times and I've stayed there and visited Hyannis a number of times. Oh, we'd spend vacations skiing together at Sun Valley [Idaho], for instance, and had been on some sailing trips in the summer and had been on a float trip down the river, the middle fork of the Salmon River in Idaho.

We had a lot of fun that summer. It was, I don't know, about a hundred-mile float trip down through some of the wilderness area in Idaho. And that, of course, was a lot of fun. On things like that where you sit around a campfire and share thoughts and experiences, you get very well acquainted with people. I think it's only through shared experiences like that that you really develop close friendship. Seeing people in moments when they're not in the public eye or on guard—swimming in a swimming hole in a river someplace, or going over rapids in a raft, or building a campfire or, you know, there are just a thousand and one little shared experiences that really lead to a closer friendship. And it was through the years that things like that developed that we became very close friends.

GREENE: Did he ever mention the fact that he felt like you did after your accident, that many people—once his brother was dead and his power was somewhat dissipated—the friendships seem to disappear, and people were no longer available who he had considered close to him before?

GLENN: The only thing that I recall that might apply along that line was when he was declaring his own candidacy later on. As I remember, he was quite disappointed that some of the people he thought were his very close friends and who had encouraged him to go ahead and do things—that once he had announced, then they wanted no part of it. There were a couple of the people in Washington who he thought were very close friends of his who did not support him in his candidacy. And this disappointed him very much.

I commented on this once, and he said, well, that he guessed that in politics you had to realize you rarely made close friends, that usually it was an arrangement of alliances or arrangements at a time when you were working toward a common end. And it was that type of thing more than a lasting personal friendship, and you just

[-4-]

had to realize that that's the way it was. But on the other hand, I think he was a realist enough to know that people, elected officials in particular, are responsible for their own people back



home, too. And so some of the things they do, or most of the things they do, have to be based on that premise as much, or even more than they do on a personal friendship where you would normally expect support if you were in a different line of work than politics. I also remember him laughing about how, when he declared his candidacy, he started hearing from people he hadn't heard from since the president's death.

GREENE: Who were some of these people in whom he was disappointed?

GLENN: Well, I don't want to.... I'd just as soon stay out of that area.

GREENE: Really? Were they elected officials?

GLENN: Yes, they are. And they're still in government now. And so I'd just as soon stay off the names.

GREENE: Do you remember anything about his mood during this post assassination period? Anything that you could add about what he was going through?

GLENN: I saw him some during that period. We were not really close friends yet at that time. So I didn't see him too much during that time period. He was very low and, I guess, introspective would be the word, at that time. For the first year or so after President Kennedy's assassination, though, I didn't see Bob too much during that period. We saw him occasionally. That would be during much of the year of '64.

GREENE: Was it after he was already in the Senate that you started to get much closer?

GLENN: Yes. We were back and forth quite often then.

GREENE: What do you remember about the Salmon River and other trips of that nature, about his whole attitude of daring-do? Was this something that....

GLENN: Well, everything was a challenge. There was a feeling of wanting to try everything that was new. If there was a rapids there, he was curious as to how it was going to be taken and how we could go over the rapids. There was a feeling of always wanting to push on and have as many and as widely diverse experiences as possible. I think this was a way of life with him. And I like this; I think it's good. Whatever you're going to do, do it all out. And that's great. I'm all for it.

[-5-]

If you're playing touch football, it was usually a hard touch football game. There's been so much written about those famous touch football games that you hate to even say anything else about them. But, you know, if you're going to play touch football, then let's play it hard. And if you're going down the river, why, let's go through the rapids. And if

you're going to climb a hill someplace, well, let's all go really all out to get to the top. It was that type attitude that I think is good and is quite common in people who have excelled in any line of work, whether it's politics or space or whatever.

GREENE: Did you ever get the feeling that he took unnecessary risks which were somewhat unwise, or did he simply have a greater capacity than most people did?

GLENN: No, I don't recall him taking what I would consider foolish risks. I think he had a pretty good judge of his own capacity on what he could do, physically and otherwise.

GREENE: You spoke of his feelings about friendship. Who would you judge were the people he considered his friends because they were his friends rather than for political or other reasons of convenience?

GLENN: Oh, I don't know. I think that probably should come from Ethel or someone else. I think she might have a better feel for that than I would. I wouldn't want to list who I think he thought were his very best friends. I think that should come from someone closer in the family probably.

GREENE: Well, what about your recollections of life at Hickory Hill? Could you give a description of. . . .

GLENN: Well, Hickory Hill's a great place, of course. With the size of the family there, you never lack for activity at Hickory Hill. The children are extremely active, and Bob and Ethel both encourage them to be that way, of course. There are a hundred and one activities going on, and they both loved to have people in their home as guests who. . . . I've never been anywhere where you ran into a more widely diverse group of people than you do at Hickory Hill. You go there for a small dinner party, and you may—well, you'll have a Supreme Court justice, and maybe a student militant from one of the universities, and maybe a civil rights leader from the South, and somebody who just happened to be in town that they knew from some time back that wasn't well known, and this is what made things so interesting. Ethel of course has continued that now. But I think it was from associations and wide acquaintances like this with all walks of life and with all types of people who are leaders and preminent thinkers in their field, that Bob got a lot of his interest in life and his ideas.

[-6-]

I don't think he'll go down in history as being a tremendous scholar and original thinker on his own, but this empathy and curiosity that he had about other people and what they thought and felt. I think he was a tremendous organizer and administrator, and one capable of taking the excellent ideas that many other people might have and then working to

put them into effect. Now, I don't mean he just parroted their ideas. He had a way of getting other people to work together that is a tremendous facility.

The thing that pops to mind—I never really quite thought of this before, but I guess...it comes to mind, some of the things that have been written about Robert E. Lee. Douglas Southall Freeman, who started out to do the biography of Lee as a great man, wound up with the conclusion that Lee was not the man that some people thought he was personally. But his great strength lay in the fact that he could attract other people and get them to work together and organize them and put the whole program over that individuals could not do themselves. And so Douglas Southall Freeman wound up writing Lee's Lieutenants which was a whole series about the people around Lee, and how he organized them, and got them to accomplish the things that they did. In some ways, Bob was like that. He was tremendously effective at taking the ideas and the people and putting them together to get things done. And that's a great capability. I think if he had been president of the United States.... I think he would've been fantastically effective in that area.

GREENE: Did you ever see members of his Senate [United States Senate] office staff at the house, or were they. . . .

GLENN: Oh, yes. I used to see Angie Novello [Angela M. Novello] occasionally and Tom Johnston [Thomas M. C. Johnston], people like that that were on his staff. And Adam Walinsky, and Peter Edelman [Peter B. Edelman], and Fred Dutton [Frederick G. Dutton] were out there quite often, although Fred wasn't on his regular Senate staff.

GREENE: You didn't get the feeling that he compartmentalized people, friends, in the same way that the president is said to have done? You saw great mixes of staff with personal friends and political associates?

GLENN: Oh, yes, very much so. I don't think he looked at his staff as being separate from the friends that he would invite to his home. Quite the opposite in fact. I think the people that he worked close with at his office were very much caught up in the whole stream of things as far as being at the house and working with him.

GREENE: Did you discuss his career with him very often, how he felt about the Senate?

GLENN: Oh, not in general terms like that, no. Usually, it was on some specific thing that was up, that he was considering, or some program he had under way, or something like Bedford-Stuyvesant here in New York, or some specific thing like that. I don't recall speaking of his general views toward the office he held, no.

GREENE: Do you recall any of these conversations about Bedford-Stuyvesant or other projects he was interested in?

GLENN: Well, he was very much caught up in that one for instance, because it was one where he had been able to do just what I was talking about a moment ago—put a lot of people and ideas and acquaintances and influential people together to help solve a specific situation which he hoped would show the way, maybe, to how many of our ghetto and urban problems could be solved. He had the personal friendship side of the people who were very influential of course, who were people like Douglas Dillon [C. Douglas Dillon] and Tom Watson [Thomas J. Watson, Jr.] and people of that caliber in the business and financial world. Along with that then were some of the political people that he had organized, and people he knew that were very capable such as John Doar [John M. Doar], and others here in New York from his own staff, and or people like Tom Johnston and people that were very involved in it. So he put together quite a variety of people as well as getting the community leaders in Bedford-Stuyvesant themselves to be participants in this, and that was one of the biggest differences. So he was very much caught up in that one and what it could do, and what effect it might have, and even more importantly than Bedford-Stuyvesant itself, if it was successful, the fact that this same technique could be applied maybe to many other areas in the country, too, and might have a very big effect.

GREENE: Did you get involved personally at all in this?

GLENN: No, I wasn't in Bedford. I had nothing to do with Bedford-Stuyvesant at all. I was interested in it because I thought it did have great promise of being something that could hold out maybe more effective hope than we've had held out in some of these areas.

GREENE: Well, what do you remember about his feelings in late '67, early '68, about the way the country was going, particularly the war and the pressures that were on him at that point?

GLENN: Well, he was extremely concerned, of course, that we'd been overcommitted in Vietnam, and had gotten in too deeply. Some of the problems of race, education, well, all the same things that are current problems these days—he was concerned about all of them, particularly, about the war, because he thought it was crucial to solving many of our other problems, that we get that over first and get it out of the way so we would have some time and energy, and money in particular, to devote to some of the other problems rather than putting so much of our money down a rat hole in Vietnam.

So he hesitated to run, of course. We talked about that many times. We had rather lengthy conversations around a table up at Waterville Valley [in New Hampshire] after skiing one night, for instance, and quite a lengthy discussion, a couple of hours. It was at a time when he'd been trying to make up his mind what he was going to

do and what he should do. He was afraid at that time, of course, that if he did declare himself as a candidate for president that he would split the Democratic party even further than it was already split. And he felt that was a real danger. So he did hesitate. But I think after the New Hampshire primary, any doubts that he might have had concerning the split in the Democratic party he saw had already occurred. That split was there whether or not he was a candidate. So I think that, plus his feelings on the war.... At the same time as the New Hampshire primary, there were some polls came out that showed quite a wide split in the Democratic party across the country. And so with that as a background, he went ahead and declared his candidacy.

GREENE: At what point do you think the decision was actually made? How soon before the primary?

GLENN: I don't know. I don't know when he actually made the decision on it. I had a call the day before he was going to announce. He called me to say that he was going to announce the next day—which he did. And he asked me to go with him on the.... Well, he went out to Kansas, I think, after he announced, made one talk and then the first real swing he made down through the South. He asked me to go with him on that one, and I did. I went down with him on the first campaign swing—that was to the University of Alabama, and then up to Vanderbilt [Vanderbilt University] in Tennessee with him. He had speeches both places, and then I gave a little talk at both places along with him that night in support of his candidacy.

GREENE: What do you remember about his feelings of going into the South, particularly, to the University of Alabama?

GLENN: Well, I think he felt that he had been so widely criticized in that area for his civil rights stand earlier, and that if there was one part of the country that did have a personal dislike for him, that that was probably it. So he felt that it would be best to approach that and try and tell the people there exactly how he felt about his candidacy and try and get their support right off the bat, because that was the area where he would have the most opposition. I think that was a realistic assessment of things. I know he got a far better reception there than he anticipated or than I had certainly anticipated. They were very, very enthusiastic crowds and very great evidence of support. I don't know whether this would have been carried out in the general election or not, but at least his first swing down through there was very heartening.

GREENE: Just to back up a little bit, do you recall discussions with him about his feelings towards the president, President Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson], and the overall administration at this period before he announced? There's been so much written about his so-called feud with the president. Are you aware of how he actually felt?

GLENN: No, I think some of that feud thing has been overdone. I never had any real lengthy discussion about it. There were things that he didn't like that the administration was doing—the way things were going in Vietnam, for instance. But no, I don't have any real personal knowledge of anything that would indicate any more feeling than disagreement with policy things like that.

GREENE: During this trip to Alabama and Vanderbilt University, were there political contacts at that time?

GLENN: Oh, sure. All the local political, all the Democratic leaders that he had known before during his support of President Kennedy in 1960, during his running of the campaign then, and people in all areas that were in the political field were there. So there were many, many political contacts along with the speeches that he gave, yes.

GREENE: Were you present for any of these discussions? Do you know how successful he was in winning support?

GLENN: Well, the people he was with, of course, were the people who were there to support him. So all the discussion we had that night in Nashville after the thing was over—and we stayed there all night—were rather lengthy political discussions. It was natural that they were all of a friendly nature and people that were supporting Bob, or they wouldn't have been there on the first swing. So it was just a matter of assessing what the feeling was in the area, and who would do what, and what the best, most effective means of support for him would be.

GREENE: Who were some of these people?

GLENN: Oh, there was a whole bunch of them. And there was a big reception for him at one of the homes and I don't know...I'd have to go back and dig. I think maybe I have a list of those somewhere in my notes, but I don't recall the names right now.

GREENE: What was your feeling about his appearances at universities? I know you made a number of other appearances at universities during the campaign. How did he react himself to these appearances, and how did the students react to them?

GLENN: He generally had a most favorable response from students. Probably one of his strongest audiences was always a student audience because they seemed to identify with him. And he was able to talk to them and share views with them that other politicians could not do. I don't know quite why that was. I think a lot of it was that he expressed himself so they understood him. He felt that they really were the hope of the future, that maybe in many ways, the older generation had not come through

for them like it should have. Although he recognized at the same time that many of the problems we face as the

[-10-]

society are not something that's really the fault of the older generation. It's something that has developed and we must do something about. But he felt that in getting the drive and enthusiasm and support of the young people, that this was a very important thing. He talked to them just on those terms and they responded fantastically. It was just that response that you'd get at a university talk when he would talk to them. It was just outstanding.

He always wanted to share views, too. That was another thing that I think is different, that Bob did almost every talk he gave. He always wound up by having the audience, whether it was students or some other group, he always wound up with a question-and-answer session so there could be a dialogue back and forth with the audience, which was very valuable, too. And it was particularly effective with students because they always had many questions and didn't hesitate to ask them.

GREENE: Do you remember any back and forth on the draft deferments? I know that was a big issue at the time.

GLENN: Oh, there were always questions on the draft deferment and his stand on that, on what he thought about Vietnam, what his approach to problems of the cities was, and the whole gambit of questions that everyone was concerned about at that time, and still are. There was no one thing. The draft was always one that came up, of course, but along with other questions, too. Vietnam was always a question—what should be done there?

GREENE: Was there evidences in these southern schools or the universities later, of the McCarthy [Eugene J. McCarthy] support? Did that seem to be a problem?

GLENN: Yes, well, there would always be McCarthy signs in the crowd and things like this. And he always had some comment about them, you know. There would always be some joking references to, you know, like being glad that they had come out and he'd make some jokes about it as to... He'd see a McCarthy sign and say that, you know, that he was sorry that fellow hadn't learned to spell Kennedy, yet, or something like that. And he had the sign printed wrong, the word was K-E-N-N-E-D-Y, you know, or something like that, and make some joke out of it. But then he would always, after that, he would always seriously tell the people, even though they were McCarthy supporters, he was glad that they had good sense enough to be participating in our system, active and making up their minds and doing things, and they weren't just sitting back letting things drift on to the future. And that, while he might not agree with them on their choice of candidate at the moment, he encouraged them to keep active and be interested in what's going on in politics and the government, and told them that quite seriously, so that he always left a pretty good feeling with them even though they might've been in opposition politically.

GREENE: You know there's been so much written since the campaign about how sad it made him that he felt that he had lost the student support. Did he ever discuss this with you, that he felt he'd come in too late?

[-11-]

GLENN: He felt he'd lost some of them by coming in late, but he was always quite encouraged when he got big student support. He didn't lack for student support—he had a tremendous amount of student support. A lot of the very strong student feeling about Vietnam had been siphoned off into the McCarthy campaign, I guess. But I don't think Bob lacked for any student support. He had a lot of that everywhere we went. In fact, that was one of the strongest groups supporting him, I think, the tiradent element and they were great because they were the ones who were really willing to go out and act and do things—ring doorbells and be active in the campaign. So it was good.

GREENE: How involved did you get in the Ohio situation in '68? Were you out there at all in his behalf?

GLENN: Well, I was overseas on a business trip when he made his one swing into Columbus, and so I wasn't there for that. But I've talked to other people who were there, and they said he got a big, wonderful reception there. The only thing I did do in Ohio was when the Indiana campaign was on and I was with Bob. One day we went down and he gave a talk on foreign affairs at the University of Indiana. They were trying at that time to get some of the university students organized to come out and work weekends in his campaign in Indiana. And so on a spur-of-the-moment decision, they asked me if I would go back to Ohio State [Ohio State University] and talk to a student rally and try to encourage some of the students to come over and work in Indiana that weekend. And I did that. I flew back into Ohio and gave a little talk at a rally on the Ohio State University campus that day and then I went back to Indianapolis and met again that night. But that was the only appearance I made on his behalf in Ohio, just that one trying to get some students out there.

GREENE: And there were no political contacts with people you knew in Ohio?

GLENN: No, that day I just flew back in and then left as soon as I was done speaking. There was really no campaign mounted in Ohio, because at that time all the emphasis was on the primary effort, of course—the primary states.

GREENE: Were you with him, or did you speak to him after the president's withdrawal on March 31? Do you remember how he felt about that?



GLENN: Oh, yes. He was very surprised that this had occurred. And of course, it gave his chances a boost, too. But he was extremely surprised at that turn of events.

GREENE: But he considered it something that would work in his behalf?

[-12-]

GLENN: Well, yes. He felt this made the whole thing more wideopen. An incumbent president is quite a formidable obstacle, obviously. So he felt this opened the thing more wideopen than it had been in the past.

GREENE: What about after the death of Martin Luther King [Martin Luther King, Jr.]? Did you see him at that point?

GLENN: Some time later. I was out of the country when that occurred. He had worked very hard, of course, as attorney general in civil rights and felt that King was a real leader in that area. So it was quite a blow, and he was very much afraid right after that that this was going to cause many eruptions all over the country. And I think his speech that he gave in Indiana at that time right after the death of Martin Luther King was.... It was an impromptu speech. I didn't hear it at the time, but I read it later and heard excerpts from it later. And it was quite an eloquent appeal to the people to remain calm and not lose their heads, and not go off and do a lot of things in retaliation that we would regret later. And he was one of the few I think, who could talk to people of all races along that line and be effective.

GREENE: Do you know anything about requests from civic leaders in other large cities for Robert Kennedy either to go on television or to come personally and try to appeal for calm and compassion?

GLENN: No, I don't. I wasn't aware of any of those. As I said, I was out of the country at the time that occurred.

GREENE: Well, what about the Indiana and Nebraska primaries, your own appearances, were they mainly just in a supportive role, or did you do any actual. . . .

GLENN: Well, I did both. I would travel with Bob sometimes and be on the platform with him and give a short talk of my own as sort of an introduction to him and what my feelings were with regard to him and my support of his campaign. There were a couple of times I went off on swings of my own where they set up an itinerary for me to be at three or four different rallies during a day someplace. Sometimes I was on my own speaking on behalf of him, and other times I was with him personally, but usually with him personally. Most of the time I traveled with him.

GREENE: How did he feel after the Indiana and Nebraska primaries? Did he feel this was about what he had hoped for or was he dissatisfied with the results?

GLENN: Oh, you always hope for better than occurs, of course, obviously. Yes, he had these things pretty well assessed. He was dissatisfied, of course, after the Oregon primary,

[-13-]

dissatisfied that it did not come out better. He was really overjoyed, he was very happy after that night of the California primary, of course, because that was really the big hurdle. And he was particularly happy that day because South Dakota had come through that same day in support of him, and he really was happy that he had both of these because these were quite diverse types of people. One is strictly a rural farming area and the other, of course, California, encompasses just about everything that's in this country. So there were two. To have both of those come through in support of him the same day was quite a thing. And he felt that was really a hump, that he could really use that as a springboard to go for a real campaign from there on into Chicago convention.

GREENE: What was his reaction to traveling in Indiana and Nebraska in the rural communities?

GLENN: Well, he remarked many times about the.... He'd be riding along in the airplane, and he didn't seem to be able to get over the fact that it was so green, and everything was so beautiful and so.... And he remarked many times to me and to Annie [Anna C. Glenn], too, traveling along, "Just look at the fields, and look at the...." He mentioned this a number of times. And it was something that apparently he was quite taken with, just the plain physical beauty of the countryside and the square fields, and the plowed patterns, and the greenness, and the.... Spring out in the Midwest is a beautiful thing, and he was quite impressed with it. He remarked about it many times.

GREENE: And enjoyed the people as well, the rural people?

GLENN: Yes, very much so. And he got a good reception wherever we went. Of course, these were basically Democratic rallies set up for him. But he would always have a few obnoxious questions, too, along with the good ones. So it wasn't all onesided.

GREENE: Did he enjoy dealing with those questions? Was that a challenge to him?

GLENN: Yes, I think that was. I think he enjoyed the question-and-answer periods more than really giving a set speech because it was not only a challenge, but it's where he also got a feel for what the people were really concerned

about, what they were thinking about. So it wasn't just the challenge; it was the idea of learning what they were really concerned about, too. This is a two-way street, of course.

GREENE: Can you recall any interesting stories from these primaries, anecdotes?

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[-14-]

John H. Glenn, Jr. Oral History Transcript – RFK #1  
Name List

**D**

Dillon, C. Douglas, 8  
Doar, John M., 8  
Dutton, Frederick G., 7

**E**

Edelman, Peter B., 7

**F**

Freeman, Douglas Southall, 7

**G**

Glenn, Anna C., 14  
Glenn, Carolyn Ann, 2  
Glenn, John David, 2

**J**

Johnson, Lyndon B., 9, 12  
Johnston, Thomas M.C., 7, 8

**K**

Kennedy, Ethel Skakel, 1, 2, 6  
Kennedy, John F., 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 10  
Kennedy, Robert F., 1-14  
King, Martin Luther, Jr., 13

**L**

Lee, Robert E., 7

**M**

McCarthy, Eugene J., 11, 12

**N**

Novello, Angela M., 7

**W**

Walinsky, Adam, 7  
Watson, Thomas J., Jr., 8  
Whittaker, James W., 3