

# John Glenn – “MiG Magnet”

**BLUF:** John Herschel Glenn Jr. was a United States Marine Corps aviator and astronaut. He served in the Marine Corps from 1942 to 1965, flying nearly 150 missions during World War II and the Korean War. In 1962 Glenn was the first American to orbit the Earth. Following his retirement from NASA, he served for 25 years as a U.S. Senator from Ohio. In 1998, Glenn flew into space one last time at age 77. Glenn received the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Congressional Space Medal of Honor, and the NASA Distinguished Service Medal during his military career. He passed away in 2016 at the age of 95.

**LEADERSHIP TRAITS DISPLAYED:** Justice, Judgment, Dependability, Initiative, Decisiveness, Tact, Integrity, Endurance, Bearing, Unselfishness, Courage, Knowledge, Loyalty, and Enthusiasm.

**SETTING THE STAGE:** John Herschel Glenn Jr. was born on 18 July 1921 in Cambridge, Ohio. He was the son of John Herschel Glenn Sr., who worked for a plumbing firm, and Clara Teresa Sproat, a teacher. Flying in his first airplane at age eight, Glenn was hooked on flying. He was very industrious as a child, washing cars and delivering newspapers. As a member of the Ohio Rangers, he helped restore a historic house and education center. Glenn was a natural athlete in high school, playing numerous sports throughout the year. Following high school, Glenn attended Muskingum College, where he studied chemistry and played football. In 1941 he earned his pilot's license through the Civilian Pilot Training Program. Because of the start of World War II, Glenn did not complete his senior year of college.

**THE STORY:** John Glenn enlisted in the Army Air Corps in 1941 but was not called to duty, so he enlisted in the Navy's Air Cadet program in 1942. He first trained in Iowa City, and later Glenn attended advanced training in Corpus Christi, Texas. It was in Texas that he transferred to the Marine Corps. By 1943 Glenn was flying R4D transport planes. He also married his childhood girlfriend, Annie Castor, that same year. As a first lieutenant, Glenn transferred to the VMO-155 squadron and began flying F4U Corsairs. Between 1944 and 1945, Glenn's squadron was stationed at Midway Atoll and the Marshall Islands. Throughout the year, he flew 57 combat missions earning two Distinguished Flying Crosses and 10 Air Medals.

After his Pacific tour, Glenn spent the next couple of years serving at training airbases in the U.S. and China. He also trained for six months at Quantico with the Amphibious Warfare School. Training on new jet aircraft in 1951, Glenn was ordered to Korea in October 1952. On 3 February 1953, Glenn was flying missions with VMF-311 out of K3 Airbase in South Korea. In June 1953, he was assigned to USAF's 25th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron. During his tour in Korea, Glenn shot down three MIG-15s, all using the Sabre Jet. He never shot down an enemy plane using the Marine F9F Panther Jet. For his service in Korea, Glenn received two more Distinguished Flying Crosses and eight more Air Medals.

**AFTERMATH:** Glenn became a test pilot following the Korean War, joining NASA as one of the Mercury 7 astronauts on 9 April 1959. He was the third American in space, while at the same time, Glenn became the first American to orbit the Earth on 20 February 1962 in the *Friendship 7* spacecraft. Glenn is among fewer than 30 Marines to go into space. From 1974 until 1999, Glenn served as an Ohio U.S. Senator. Following his political career, Glenn was a business consultant and returned to space in 1998 with the Space Shuttle *Discovery*. John Glenn passed away at the age of 95 in 2016.

## QUESTIONS

1. What aspects of John Glenn's leadership traits most fit the Marine Corps mission?
2. Why is John Glenn an excellent example of "The Greatest Generation"?
3. How did John Glenn's Marine Corps career prepare him for his life after the Marine Corps?

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