

Museum Association of East Muskingum

Operating the

John and Annie Glenn Museum • National Road & Zane Grey Museum
in partnership with Ohio History Connection

Ohio House of Representatives
Federalism Committee

The Honorable Nickie Antonio and Leader Strahorn
Proponent Testimony on House Resolution 193

Barbara Hansen, Ph.D. John and Annie Glenn Museum
Executive Director Museum Association of East Muskingum

November 1, 2017

My name is Barb Hansen and I currently serve as Executive Director of the John and Annie Glenn Museum in New Concord. I am here in behalf of the Trustees, staff, and volunteers of the museum in support of House Resolution 193, co-sponsored by Leader Strahorn and Representative Antonio, to urge Congress to pass legislation awarding the late Senator John Glenn and Mrs. Annie Glenn, a congressional Gold Medal.

It is, indeed, my privilege to speak in favor of this resolution for the Glens. Two different professional positions in my life have awarded me incredible opportunity to personally meet and have meaningful conversations with both John and Annie Glenn. One position is serving as a trustee with the museum for the past 18 years and the other is having been the superintendent of the East Muskingum Local School District, whose high school, built in 1962, was named for hometown hero, John Glenn. John often said that of all the honors he had ever received, having the high school named for him was the most meaningful.

I would like to briefly share three examples from those many conversations which I think speak to their character, humanity, and humility.

FIRST - is my experience as a trustee of the museum- If you haven't been there, the Glenn Home sits along Main Street in New Concord, and is John's boyhood home. It is locally operated by a board of trustees, staff, and large contingent of passionate volunteers and we have recently become a proud affiliate of the Ohio History Connection. The idea for some type of site began when a group of local leaders who were determined to honor the Glens in some manner began to brainstorm ideas. The conversations were also fueled in part by repeated incidents where tourists traveling along Interstate 70 exited into New Concord and drove through the village looking for some indication that this was their home town and they departed very disappointed. Often stopping at the one grocery store, the one drug store, the pizza shop, etc. they couldn't imagine why we wouldn't do something to honor them.

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That same group of determined leaders turned into a board of trustees some 18 years ago and on Memorial Day of 2002, the museum opened to the public. We spent at least one year convincing the Glens that we wanted to honor them. Numerous conversations occurred in which John repeatedly said he and Annie had been accorded many honors and recognitions and they did not need a monument or museum for themselves. We determinedly tried various strategies to get their permission and the one that finally worked was when we talked about the museum as a learning lab for children to experience a home from the Great Depression era. John and Annie both held a great love for learning and this seemed to sway them. On various occasions, John and Annie returned for celebrations with the media present and when questioned always talked about how the home was for kids to learn about life in that time period. Today, to honor their wish, we offer programming for children at various times of the year and the Glens were very happy with that.

SECOND - As the superintendent of schools, I had the privilege of inviting the Glens to numerous events and whenever their very hectic schedule permitted, they attended. They were gracious participants, good sports, and perfect role models for students.

New Concord High School was the school from which they graduated and is now New Concord Elementary. They had a particular affinity for that building. One year the fourth graders who were graduating to the middle school invited the Glens to speak for their “graduation.” They delighted the students, the parents, and the entire community by being there to speak. Following the ceremony, I think every student and all parents got in line for autographs and pictures and it was John and Annie’s custom to meet and greet and sign as long as anyone was left in line. It lasted well over an hour. They graciously spoke to each person and included their names in the autographs.

Another time when they were in the district we had scheduled an assembly for middle school students who were seated on bleachers in the gym. John told the principal that rather than his making a speech he would like to make a few remarks and then have a few questions from the kids. John made opening remarks congratulating the kids on their good grades and the success of the girls’ volleyball team, wished them well on upcoming tests and a few other comments. So, then they opened it up to Q/A with a few students who the principal had selected. The first question brought the house down as the student said something like, “How do you go to the bathroom in space?” The principal was mortified, but John laughed and laughed and said it was the most popular question asked of astronauts. He briefly addressed it and explained it was part of their training.

THIRD - They had a way of just showing up if they were in the area. They never forgot anyone and could quickly connect with someone’s cousin or a previous neighbor or whomever. Word seemed to travel quickly in the village that they were around and there were people who somehow always managed to arrive. One such person was the head cook at the high school, who

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was their high school classmate. The three of them always glad to reconnect would talk, laugh, and go down memory lane like it was yesterday.

They had an undying respect and admiration for each other that was unquestionably genuine. With great strength and trust that all would be well, Annie watched the love of her life, at age 78 return to space, even after he had promised never again. The picture of their embrace upon his return is one for the ages. John understood the reality of Annie's speech disorder and the amazing strength it took for her to endure in the very public life he had created. As a pilot, John flew missions too numerous to count and as an astronaut ventured to places where no other human had gone and yet he said Annie, enduring and conquering her own silent problem in a very public life, was the bravest person he had ever met.

Someday, perhaps it is already in the works, a movie, the Love Story of John and Annie Glenn will win the Academy Award for best picture of the year and a scene in the movie will be the awarding of the Congressional Gold Medal.

Barbara Hansen, Ph.D.
Executive Director