

This is a complete transcript of the oral history interview with **Arthur Frederik Glasser (CN 421, T2)** for the Billy Graham Center Archives. No spoken words that were recorded are omitted. In a very few cases, the transcribers could not understand what was said, in which case “[unclear]” was inserted. Also, grunts and verbal hesitations such as "ah" or "um" are usually omitted. Readers of this transcript should remember that this is a transcript of spoken English, which follows a different rhythm and even rule than written English.

... Three dots indicate an interruption or break in the train of thought within the sentence on the part of the speaker.

.... Four dots indicate what the transcriber believes to be the end of an incomplete sentence.

( ) Words in parentheses are asides made by the speaker.

[ ] Words in brackets are comments by the transcriber.

This transcript was made by Bob Shuster and Kevin Emmert and was completed in January 2011.

**Please note:** This oral history interview expresses the personal memories and opinions of the interviewee and does not necessarily represent the views or policies of the Billy Graham Center Archives or Wheaton College.



**Collection 421, Tape 2. Oral history interview with Arthur Frederick Glasser by Bob Shuster on September 14, 1989.**

**SHUSTER:** Okay. You were saying...you mentioned the scout troop...

**GLASSER:** I'll say being that...the pull of that scout troop meant the pull of the Presbyterian church in which I had been brought up. I can remember when...

**SHUSTER:** Even after you were...

**GLASSER:** ...when I was at Cornell, I broke an oar, rowing. So, we glued the thing together and turned it down and hung it up on the wall of the scout troop. Whether it's there today I don't know [Glasser chuckles]. But, everything was...the scouts were...because during the summers...well, one summer I was in garbage disposal, maybe (I don't remember which summer that was), and in engineering you had to go to an engineering camp for one summer, and then I got a job working at an engineering camp the second summer. Well, you had projects like they'd drive a stake here and they'd drive another stake a mile and a half away, and you'd have to...and through very up and down country, and you'd have to lay the line for a railroad track. Or you'd go to a lake and they'd want you to survey at the bottom of the lake. Or do...oh, do various exercises that meant that you were out in the open all day long. Well, I was there one summer and the second summer I was sort of the handyman, drove the truck, purchased the food, helped the students around. So that was a...that was one of the ways I tried to get away from going to that farm...one of those farms that my father... Later on, Father gave one of those farms to Fuller. A very beautiful, lovely farm, and Fuller, I'd imagine, accrued quite a lot of money from it. But that's another story.

**SHUSTER:** You mentioned that Barnhouse made an impression. Of course, Daniel Fullerton did...

**GLASSER:** Donald.

**SHUSTER:** Donald, I'm sorry Donald. Were there other Christians, well known or not well known who made an impression on you.

**GLASSER:** Well, yeah, Dr. Robert McQuilken was always in the background because each summer we were trying to go back to Keswick and that was always a very refreshing time. I got my younger sister, she became an active Christian as a result. And there was older brother. He...my brother, he went to Princeton and graduated in 1933 and went right to Johns Hopkins Medical School, and he was always the honor student, the...this and the that, and the one that my father's affection naturally gravitated...focused on. They were much closer. They would go on vacation together, strangely enough, and I would be somewhere off, I would...but I not even invited. You know, it was just...and it wasn't that I resented. It was something, that well, it's the way it is, you know. When you're the number-two person, you kind of are that way. Mother used to squabble and I used to say, "You shouldn't say that." But I'd say, "Mother, face up to it." You know, so forth. But that was the way it was.

**SHUSTER:** You mentioned how at your own conversion the thing that reached you and moved you was somebody saying, "God has a will for my life."

**GLASSER:** Yeah, "God has a plan or your life."

**SHUSTER:** God has a plan for your life.

**GLASSER:** That was at Campus Crusade, the first spiritual law, "God loves you very much and has a wonderful plan for your life."

**SHUSTER:** As you were going through Cornell, entering manhood, did you feel that God had a plan for your life? Did you know...?

**GLASSER:** I, I began to have an in... instinctive feeling that somehow my life would be related to the church. But I also had this terrible desire to be a fr... I was so poor during college, you know, I can, you know. Father would send me enough money for food and things, but it was tough. I would apply for a scholarship and make a design for something and make two hundred dollars or something like that. So that...there were things of that sort. I was so financially circumscribed that I had an intense desire to be on my own, that somehow I could be earning something. That was a natural desire, but whether or not it was Christian, I didn't think so much about that. I think I was praying about my life. I...I had a funny feeling that eventually I would become involved in Christian work, but that was sort of back in the sum...my subconscious, back really in my thinking. I knew that as soon as I graduated I had to relieve my father of financial drain, because he still had my sister and my brother was in medical school and these things cost money. And so there was that desire.

**SHUSTER:** So you knew you had to support yourself?

**GLASSER:** I had to support myself. I knew that and that was...that was.... I knew how hard he.... Father was really diligent in the land, which he sought to educate us all. He didn't want to educate my younger sister, didn't want to educate women at all. My mother absolutely made him. He didn't think women should be educated. Get 'em married...that's enough for them. Typical, but that's a generation ago, you see.

**SHUSTER:** Yeah, sure.

**GLASSER:** Well....

**SHUSTER:** So, after you had graduated from Cornell, where were you thinking...what were you thing of doing with your life at that point?

**GLASSER:** Well, you see, when graduated from Cornell, just before we graduated these people from these various firms came to interview graduates. And I was an honor student, and I had athletics and I had, you know, certainly in the external credentials I sounded pretty good. So I was interviewed by a lot of guys. And the wonderful thing was that I was selected to be an engineer by



a firm in Pittsburgh called Dravo...D...R...A...V...O. Dravo Corporation. An outstanding firm. My father was immensely pleased 'cause he immediately checked up in Dun and Bradstreet [a reference work on the financial assets of American corporations] and you know this and that. Dravo was French Huguenot and the whole staff, the man who became my top boss was a very active Presbyterian elder who provided the new location for Pittsburgh's Union Theological Seminary. It was a quality firm.

**SHUSTER:** You mean he gave them the site?

**GLASSER:** He gave them the site. He was that sort of a person. I got to know this later, but...and it was...here was a man, top engineer whom I could respect as a Christian too. That was quite something. Now a very busy firm. The firm actually became a multi-million dollar operation with the war, 'cause it had a...it did...we did a lot of flood control work on the upper Mississippi Bridge, piers, dams and this and that. And we also built boats, barges, for the Mississippi, and this meant building landing craft for the operations in the South Pacific. And they just zoomed...the war, really. So the Dravo was a big enormous building downtown in Pittsburgh, etcetera, etcetera. But going to Pittsburgh was...so that...it was hardly had I finished Cornell and was on the train for...for...for Pittsburgh. And I drew on my salary, you know, to keep alive so I didn't ask my father for a cent after graduating. And of course, he was very pleased. And I the engineer started studying engineering night school at the University of Pittsburgh and got used to technology. Engineering, more in the field of reinforced concrete design and some courses in mechanical engineering...taking courses. And...

**SHUSTER:** So you were planning to become an engineer?

**GLASSER:** Well, I was going to...I was a Christian engineer you see. Give the Lord my spare time, that's they way we used to describe it. Became very active in... I lived in Sewickley... S-E-W-I-C-K-L-E-Y, which is down the Ohio River about thirty miles from Pittsburgh, and Dr...our firm was...Dravo, was on Neville Island, which is an island in the Ohio about halfway up to Pittsburgh. I started to go to the Presbyterian church in downtown Pittsburgh where Clarence McCartney was the pastor, great friend of...of [J. Gresham] Machen of Westminster [Seminary] fame, and so forth. And...and that '36, [sic] hardly had I gotten there when we heard that Machen had died. But here was a Presbyterian who was really evangelical, but not evangelistic. He was just orthodox but a very warm, great preacher. So I became active while he was there. I taught a Sunday school class down below in Sewickley, the Presbyterian church there. I had no thought of breaking with the Presbyterian church. Here were Presbyterian churches who really believed something, you see, and so he...and Dr. McCartney when he knew that I was thinking later about leaving engineering, he wanted me to go to Princeton and all that sort of stuff. But it was in that...

**SHUSTER:** Princeton Seminary?

**GLASSER:** Princeton Seminary, yeah. While...and it was in that situation there of...of you know young people's activities and...and things, we would go and work with the Russians' kids. We would do all sorts of things. We were an active bunch of young people and....

**SHUSTER:** What do you mean work with the Russian kids?

**GLASSER:** Well, the Russian district in Pittsburgh, a Sunday school started there so we would go out and help there. You know, we did things of that sort. It was...we would distribute the Scriptures, we would preach, pass out tracts; it was an active Presbyterian group. And...and tied to the elitist Presbyterian church of Pittsburgh. It was that sort of...gave you a sense of social acceptance or something. You could say, well, you know, "You fundamentalist...." "What do you mean fundamentalist! I belong to McCartney's church!" you know [Glasser laughs].

**SHUSTER:** Well, can you recall some of these tract-passing-out days and what?

**GLASSER:** Not necessarily, just a, you know...here I'd be working and the evenings go at least four nights a week to evening school, working. And so there'd be a brief something on a Sunday. We'd do something here, go down to a park. I don't recall anything startling ever happening, but we were active, and he made sure that we were active. He was a bachelor and....

**SHUSTER:** McCart...?

**GLASSER:** Huh?

**SHUSTER:** Who made sure you were active?

**GLASSER:** Oh, this fellow McCartney.

**SHUSTER:** McCartney.

**GLASSER:** Yeah, yeah. And so forth. So those were almost two years, [pauses] but the...you know, the Italians were marching into Ethiopia and Hitler was becoming more truculent and there...there was the Munich affair. You knew the world was drifting to war, and the world was coming apart at the seams and what under the sun...why be an engineer? You know, this...so I prayed about it, and then for the first time really specifically came under the sense that...the feeling that I had to think about resigning and preparing for missionary service. It was just like that, quiet, on my own. I didn't tell anybody at first but I wrote letters home. My father didn't pay much attention to it, and...and he didn't think I would. He just thought I was talking, you know. That's what he thought...didn't pay much attention. Mother was sort of concerned. But suddenly...well, I heard that...I didn't know what to do and I thought maybe I just need to learn something about the Bible, 'cause I didn't know much about the Bible. So, maybe I ought to go to Moody [Bible Institute in Chicago, Illinois, USA]. I heard they had a night school that would begin in s...in January, new classes. So, I c.... I had warned the family again and again that something was brewing all that fall, and...and then....

**SHUSTER:** This is the fall of '37?

**GLASSER:** No, the fall of '30...the fall of...the fall of '37, yeah. I liked engineering. I thought it was exciting, but I...it just didn't seem to be for me. I think, you know, to work and as I was there



they gave me a raise. They were encouraging me. They had a lot of things like that that seemed to be indicating that, you know, "Settle down, you have a place here." In fact, when I left this boss, this engineer, a very fine person, he said, "If you even think you've made a mistake, come back." You know, he was that sort of....

**SHUSTER:** What was his name?

**GLASSER:** It was J...J...Jay S...Jay S. Miller. Miller. A very fine...later on I used to send him my letters from China. He'd occasionally comment on them, you know. Well, anyhow, I did make the break. I went and placed a.... They...we were bidding on big projects and we were not getting them and we knew they were gong to cut out some engineers.

**SHUSTER:** Uh-huh.

**GLASSER:** They just had to cut down the staff. See this is Depression. And we bid on the Bronx-Whitestone Bridge. I remember working on the bridge pier problems. There were some problems. They wanted to make a bridge pier...a bridge pier in Wilmington, Delaware, float it up the...the...the coast...

**SHUSTER:** Delaware [River]?

**GLASSER:** ...and start putting concrete, just make it a...like a cone of steel. And the whole thing, a cofferdam [a concrete enclosure lowered into water and then pumped out to allow work in a dry environment] [pauses], more of a caisson [similar to a cofferdam] in fact. And then they were going to start s...putting concrete in one end of it and in the water, so here, in place. And they wanted know much concrete had to be placed into this end to tilt it, and then how far down in the water would it be. That was a complex problem. And there would be 13.8 feet of concrete into the bottom. This thing was about eighty feet, and about forty feet square. Eighty feet with great big holes to do the.... You know, a caisson is like a pier, and you would empty... pull out the gook through tubes inside and you seal the whole thing over. But I remember to work...I had four unknowns [unknown quantities for his equations] and I remember we had to plot curves, and eventually they hit and then hitting.... Today using computers you can solve it all by mathematics, and so forth. But that was when we came in second, and that we came in second on several things. And we knew the ax was going to fall, and several were being called out and some with families. And so I said, "I don't feel.... I think you should know that I'm thinking about Christian service, serving with the church overseas. And here I am single, I have no financial obligations. Some of these others do and you ought to know it, and could I be released?" Well, it was a testimony throughout the whole firm. "This guy doing this for a religious thing."

**SHUSTER:** It did what throughout the whole firm?

**GLASSER:** Well, they made some of the...this top man announced it you see, a newsletter to all his stockholders and this and that. [Glasser laughs] It was one of those things. So that...then I...but the family...Father was furious, absolutely furious. And for some years I had the...he wouldn't speak to me, and it was one of those very awkward situations.

**SHUSTER:** Because?

**GLASSER:** I left engineering. "You...all the money I've wasted on you. To what end?" You know. And so there it was.... I was doing student the thing. My mother wasn't very happy about it either. My brother, he wasn't so sure. The family was torn up over the decision. It was a very lonely thing, but my father's brother, a man whom I always felt was very...was kind of a legalist, his second wife was a Roman Catholic and I've always liked her. She was a fine woman, and she was the only one in the family who said, "Let him go, he's doing the right thing." You know, Catholics believe in the will of God [Glasser chuckles]. So that gave me a very positive influence...attitude toward the...toward the [Glasser pauses] Catholics. And then all the Plymouth Brethren, all the Germans and all, dear me. "Imagine going to school! You don't need to go to school, just.... [to go into ministry]." You know, very anti-intellectual when it came to Christian things. Very intellectual when it came to professional activities, but you know how it is.

**SHUSTER:** So they approved you going into Christian work but not going into school...

**GLASSER:** Oh, yeah, yeah, "Schools [said in a contemptuous tone]," so forth. So, I suddenly landed on the doorstep at Moody, and still had to be taken in. And it was then that Fullerton realized that he had a problem on his hands. Here was one of his charges suddenly making.... I hadn't discussed it with him, said, "Hey, I'm going to Moody." And then he started to...he started to help me while I was at Moody to keep afloat financially after.... I had saved all my money very carefully during the time, because I...you know I...I just was rather frugal. I used to go down to a bakery and pick up the stuff that had dried out, and buy, you know.... I had learned a lot of these tricks while going through Cornell. Once lived on apples for a couple of days. So, there was that. The Depression, you know, there was people who realize the Depression years today, at least we adopted a lifestyle that was pretty hard pressed. At least we adopted a lifestyle that has hard pressed. And I remember trying to...contacts with the family were very awkward, very difficult.

**SHUSTER:** With both your...both your parents and with your brothers and sister...

**GLASSER:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, it was difficult. Went out to Moody and....

**SHUSTER:** Now you mentioned that Fullerton realized he had a problem. Why was it a problem for him?

**GLASSER:** Well, because they would see that...my father would say, "Fullerton got you to do this." Yeah, that's when Father became very.... You see, Fullerton would always be invited to our home for a meal if he was anywhere near. And he...and so we took care of him. So he was a bachelor, and we all called him "Pop Fullerton", you know, "Pop". But as I say, there was that strange uneasiness on my part. And there was also that, I don't like to be dependent on people, and, you know, I had been than way. So I tried to earn some money. I drove a bus while I went to Moody. I didn't really like Moody. Trouble was, here was a person from Cornell and so they made something of me, and really I didn't have the Christian background or the Christian nurture that so many others had. So I would be there and going to Cook County Jail at least every Sunday morning during...well, active there. I worked for a group. We divided the city of Chicago into units, and I

was given a unit. And early...when I wasn't at the jail I would spend all Sunday morning, generally into the early afternoon, going up and down every street looking for Chinese laundry shops, and Chinese restaurants, and distributing tracts to them. Chinese. Did that...

**SHUSTER:** Why Chinese?

**GLASSER:** ...did that....

**SHUSTER:** Why Chinese? What was the attraction, what was the interest?

**GLASSER:** It was just the interest in, you know.... I was moving in the direction of Asia, didn't know where I was going. But I had no clear.... I was active in the Muslim prayer band, not in the China prayer band. But it's funny that. So that when I perhaps should have been at church being, you know, being strengthened in my Christian faith, there I was either at a prison or...or visiting Chinese laundry shops and talking.

**SHUSTER:** You say that because you'd been at Cornell they made...

**GLASSER:** Well, they thought, "He was at university."

**SHUSTER:** ...made something of you.

**GLASSER:** University, yeah, university.

**SHUSTER:** So they forced you into leadership position?

**GLASSER:** Pushed, yeah, I was put in leadership position. I...I look back now and thought it was very unwise.

**SHUSTER:** As far as looking back on what you studied at Moody and the training you got, how would you evaluate that as far as your later experience as a missionary?

**GLASSER:** Well, of course, naturally out on the street.... [Glasser pauses again] You lose you fear of people. You realize that people are approachable if you approach them the right way. Get used to...did a lot more of this later on. On one occasion Sam Moffat.... You know Sam Moffat, he came to Moody...was there for a quarter. So he and I became real pals. "Sam, did you ever preach on the street corner." "No" "Well, let's preach in a street meeting." He said...I said, "The two of us will do it. I'll gather the crowd then, then you...you preach to them. You talk to them." And he said, "I don't have a voice, you don't want me." So I remember we got out there [Glasser laughs] on LaSalle Street somewhere down a bit and looked like a nice place to say, you know, I called the people together. [Glasser claps hands and laughs] we got a crowd, and Sam Moffat, he likes to tell this story, because he says, "And what did you...we came up with but a three-point Presbyterian sermon!" [Both laugh] We had great times and that, and I remember that Sam Moffat was real friend. I got to know the Barnetts from the African Inland Mission. Got to know some very wonderful people at....



**SHUSTER:** William Barnett?

**GLASSER:** No, Paul Barnett. Paul and Ruth and their two brothers...twins, Arthur Barnett. It was quite a missionary family for the African mission. You know, I...I think that some of those contacts from Moody days I've retained. I lived with a student who became a real problem, a fellow named George Martin...Harold George Martin, who had a lot of personal presence. He was a Plymouth Brethren from...from Montreal, but he was very...oh, ambitious. He...he went and did some things not immoral but in the money wise [sic]. Started to cl...make appeals for money, and use the money for personal ends, and that sort of thing. And that...that came to light later. But he was my roommate and so forth. And he was interested in Cornell, so I gave him my Cornell jacket and I... [both laugh], you know, all that sort of stuff. But that's...but, I don't know as I really liked Moody. I realized at the end of it that I wasn't ready for the Lord's service. And Fullerton knew this. He knew that, so he arranged for me to go to Faith Seminary. And I went to Faith Seminary in Wilmington, Delaware for three years. And, looking back now, I could wish my whole Christian education had been planned so much...so differently, you know.

**SHUSTER:** In what way?

**GLASSER:** Oh, you know going into...the Faith Seminary.... Mind you, in our class, well, we had Kenneth Kantzer, and then there's Francis Steele, there was Joe Baily, there was [Glasser pauses] Fran Schaeffer.

**SHUSTER:** Oh, really?

**GLASSER:** Not in the same class, but they were all there at the same time. There was Jack Murray, there was [Glasser pauses].... Who's the president of Denver Theological Seminary? The...he was the original president. And yeah. [Glasser is probably referring to Vernon Grounds, the first dean and second president of Denver Seminary.] Oh, dear, it's awful, I'm not thinking of these things...these people. But very prominent people. We had only ten members in our class, and Bragdon [?], and George Bullerton [?]. We had some fine fellows. But we were caught up in an ultraseparatistic mentality. Carl McIntire and that movement. And frankly the training wasn't well balanced. Whether or not one could have gotten balanced training in those days. You know, I've had to go through so much mental revolution since, through the sheer pressure of the experiences that I've had. You know, Roman Catholicism was utterly suspect and the Ecumenical movement was a consp...conspiracy of the Devil and, you know, and that the...you could decide if a certain church at a certain time had gone apostate, etcetera. Nothing about the social responsibilities of the church. Nothing about the cultural mandate. A terribly distorted picture of things. An understanding of church history that was absolutely.... Well, I...looking back at it now, boy, hopeless. Really. [Pauses] So, but, I learned the basic languages, Hebrew and Greek, and started to give...the thing that really gave me a lot of joy was to start working with the New York Bible Society. So that weekends (this was under the direction of this man Fullerton)... weekends I would catch a train going up to New York, and we would distribute Scriptures to the Jewish people. A wealthy person had given the New York Bible Society a special gift for the Jewish people. And this was transformed into Gospels of Matthew with a special cover - Star of David on it, red. And [unclear] pages, and there were some sixty, eighty thousand of these things, and so we...he and I



decided to distribute them. And so weekends during the fall, winter, and spring, and the summers all along giving....

**SHUSTER:** How would you...how would you do that? How would you approach people? How would you...?

**GLASSER:** Well, that was you'd go down the street, and you have this thing...have you ever...you...parts in Manhattan those days, not now, but in those days, the you know, the population they may as well...the people were Jewish in certain segments. And you'd say, "Have you ever read the life of Jesus by a Jew...by a man who knew him?" You know. "Well, why should I read the life of Jesus?" "Well, he was the greatest living Jew." It didn't mean much, you know. And we said sorts of things. But the idea was, a friendly word, and not try to just distribute them but to give them to people who would be willing to read them. And I wasn't interested in giving them to people who'd tear them up. And occasionally they'd tear them up and throw em back at you. But that was...and looking back...you see in those days Hitler was stuffing Jews in the ovens and thee we were pounding the pavements. The year '39, '40, '41.

**SHUSTER:** Well, I promised you this would just be ninety minutes this morning

**GLASSER:** Well, Well, yeah, yeah, I'm getting...I don't know whether this is helpful, but, to you, but you know...

**SHUSTER:** It is very helpful...

**GLASSER:** 'Cause, I think of myself, and I'm not some...I'm not the product of a nice Christian Sunday school training. I'm not the product of a lot of things that would normally produce a kind of a person that we need in the church today.

**SHUSTER:** Oh, I don't know, I think you've met s...quite a few needs in the church, and it's when you hear biographies like this of real people as opposed to stereotypes...

**GLASSER:** Oh yeah.

**SHUSTER:** ...you discover more of the mercies of God's love and the ways that real people deal with the frustrations and the hopes and the leadings of the Spirit.

**GLASSER:** Well. Well, we're willing to help as, and....

**SHUSTER:** That will conclude it for today.

**GLASSER:** That will conclude it for today, and I'll just....

**END OF TAPE**