

This is a complete transcript of the oral history interview with **Arthur Frederik Glasser (CN 421, T3)** 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 April 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 3. Oral history interview with Arthur Frederick Glasser by Bob Shuster on September 14, 1989.

SHUSTER: This is an interview of Dr. Arthur Glasser by Bob Shuster for the Archives of the Billy Graham Center at Wheaton College. This interview took place on September 18th at a quarter after 9 in the morning in Dr. Glasser's office at Fuller Seminary in Pasadena, California. Dr. Glasser, we'd just been talking about your time at Faith [Seminary], and there was one question I wanted to talk to you about. You had mentioned how as a boy you had become a...the Boy Scout troop was so important to you and you had become a trail leader. And when you were at Moody [Bible Institute] you had been introduced into leadership. Later after you joined China Inland Mission, you were one of those who participated in the conference in England, which decided the fate of the mission, even though you had been in the mission for a few years. It seemed that you very quickly were...began...were put into leadership positions in the different schools, organizations that you had been involved in. Does that seem accurate to you?

GLASSER: Well, I think that you're correct in this, that very often responsibilities were put to me to accept leadership of one form or another. And this I generally agreed to do, although I never felt myself congenial in a leadership position. You know, a leadership position is a lonely position, and there is a sense in which there are pressures on you to produce. And you're not always just sure of what you are to say or what you are to do because very often the issues you are facing are issues you haven't previously had contact with. And also, you are asked to bring messages from the Scriptures that apply to situations to which the organization is at that particular time. This is when...that is when one becomes a leader in terms of a Christian organization. And this puts a lot of pressure on you, and it's a pressure that the family naturally came to be...come aware of. And it meant that there was a...a sense in which one could...one wished at times when one could just be a member of the team, and not...and not do this. But really the leader is a role of serving. It's a servanthood role. And very often you are not able to do the things you'd like to do. Doctor Phillip Howard, the editor of *The Sunday School Times*, he once drew me aside, and said, "Now that you have a place of leadership in the OMF," (he was a member of the North American Council in Philadelphia, and I had just been appointed the home directed for the account of the United States for the OMF), he said that, "Don't forget as a leader you must keep things in priority. First, you must do the things that you've promised other people that you would do. A leader cannot be a person that doesn't keep his word. Secondly, you must do the things that you're paid to do." [Laughs] In other words, the routine activities. "And thirdly, when you have time do the things you'd like to do" [Both laugh] Well, this meant that a lot of ideas that one wanted to pursue, studying on the side, researching this, researching that...I feel that as a leader my life is just littered with things that on occasion I felt very ardent to explore and track down, but because of the pressure of these other two elements, my promises and my official duties, I was never able to get around to them, so that they.... So that when it comes to publishing (I'm thinking now of publishing a book that contains a lot of biblical reflection) I turned to this again and again, and again and again, I've been unable to complete it. Why? Just because of this business of being a leader. And even so, I don't know as I...that leadership ever was congenial to me, maybe it's because I'm physically tall or because I'm lazy. Well, anyhow, when people select you to be a leader, they are not always wise, and I think that Lord often has to pick up the pieces and say, "Well, because you chose this guy to be a leader, now we're gonna have to try and work with him although we

recognize that he's not really a round peg in a round hole. He's more of a square and ill-conceived for this particular...or that particular responsibility." But enough of that.

SHUSTER: Well, just on something that you mentioned, why did you think that these leadership positions sought you out? Or that people wanted....

GLASSER: I think that most people like to fade into the wallpaper and let George do it. I cannot feel that the decisions that were made for me to move forward into leadership positions were very often the result of a great deal of careful thought. For instance, I might even speak of the time when Dr. [David] Hubbard contacted me to join the faculty of Fuller [Theological Seminary in California]. At that time, I had two invitations, one from Gordon Conwell [Theological Seminary in Massachusetts] and one from Trinity [Evangelical Divinity School in Illinois]. And I was....

SHUSTER: From the east coast, Midwest, and the south...the Pacific [coast of the United States].

GLASSER: Yes. Well, well, I didn't have one from Fuller, but I did have one from Gordon Conwell and [William] Nigel Kerr had written to me, and...and you know, I was interested in that because I had always been interested in the [unclear] rich Evangelical history...is, has it's interesting points to me. And then I like the weather and the changing seasons. Here in California there are no seasons. It's a miserable sort of part of the world. But...and then Trinity to work alongside Kenneth Kanzer with whom I went through seminary and that was a temptation. But in both of these places I was thinking now really I don't know as I could swing the leadership of the department on mission, and be the only profession of mission in a theological context. I...I really want to become a member of the team, and it was a real...with a real measure of relief that Hubbard asked...stopped me in New York City when I was...I was spending a year out studying there in various schools when he said would I be willing to come and work with Dr. [Donald] McGavran. Well, I had a few contacts with Dr. McGavran personally; I was drawn to him. And the thought of being on a sizeable team where I might interact and really discuss thoroughly the issues and come to the collective sense of the mind of the Lord. You know, that was something interesting. You know, the Apostle Paul in his epistles never said, "I have the mind of Christ." He says rather, "We have the mind of Christ." And to me the difference in pronouns is very significant. I don't believe in individualistic Christianity. I believe in the collective. I believe that church growth and personal growth and all types of growth depend on Christians working together 'cause no one has 20/20 vision. We all see through a glass darkly. We all know in part. But it's only as we come together.... Now, the reason why Hubbard really wanted me was not that he wanted me to enrich the team, but here, at the risk of...they were aware of the fact that IFMA [Interdenominational Foreign Mission Association] missions were not sending their members to the School of Missions to study. After all, McGavran was a World Council [of Churches, WCC] person. Not that he was pro-World Council. He's often been a [laughs]...one of the burrs under their saddle. But, because his denomination is a World Council-related denomination and Ralph Winter was a Presbyterian. And Chuck Kraft [Charles H. Kraft] was a member of a...of another denomination. They needed IFMA missionaries [laughs]. They needed that presence and that's why I think they asked me to come. Now, later on, why they asked me to be the leader was, well, because I had been a leader elsewhere. They knew not one thing about my leadership ability and my inclinations toward it. I wasn't gasping for more of that. But when I got to Fuller, although I tried to develop courses on the



side I thought were extremely important, but again, I always had to put aside...put back before the research necessary for those courses to get myself to the task of minding the storm. You know, and that's.... So this business of leadership I, I realize that I had been placed in the leadership again and again but that...for the life of me I sometimes wondered, "Lord, why has is happened to me?" And you know that I really...[pauses] I'd much rather be alone in a corner working on some little project, and then meeting with someone like-minded and then chewing it over with him or with her, and in that way grow to an understanding of what the missionary task was all about [chuckles]. So....

SHUSTER: Well, I'd like to pick up where we left off before around 1942 when you were graduating from Faith. Also, in that year you married Alice Oliver....

GLASSER: Yes, that's the point that....

SHUSTER: How did you meet...?

GLASSER: Yes, now Alice Oliver has brought a tremendous...brought a tremendous dimension to my life and so I appreciate your opportunity...the opportunity you've given me to speak concerning her. While at seminary, I did not date. I was too busy trying to...to do the work and to be busy weekends. Weekends, of course, as I earlier mentioned, I think, involved going to New York City and pounding the pavements and distributing Scriptures for the New York Bible Society, working with another man. And this was during the time that Hitler was stuffing Jews into ovens, and we encountered all sorts of crossfire. And that's what I did weekends. However, in the course of this, I was asked to speak at a student group that had been recently formed at Upsala College. That was an Augustana Lutheran college in East Orange, New Jersey. And the one who had extended the invitation was the mother of Al...was Alice's mother. She and her husband (they had this one child), they were quite active at the Madison Avenue Baptist Church in Patterson. My mother knew them, although I did not. But Alice Oliver had been told by her parents that she could go to any u...any college she wanted to, as long as it was Wheaton [both laugh]. They felt that....

SHUSTER: That's like you could have a Model T in any color you wanted as long as it was black.

GLASSER: Yeah, well [laughs] very much the same way. So that when she went to Wheaton, the college, in a sense, had a bit of a rebel on their hands, and although she liked certain aspects of Wheaton, at the end of two years of Wheaton she started to climb the wall and left. And this...this has always been rather interesting because I try to persuade her to attend the latest Wheaton Alumni Association meeting in southern California. And she always has to say, "You know...you know my rather murky past as Wheaton College." Well, she was quite intellectually oriented and for some reason she didn't want to go home after refusing to go to Wheaton for the third year. So she went up to Nyack (in New York] where an uncle of her's was a pastor of a Presbyterian church. And he suggested to her, "Why don't you go up and...into the Christian Missionary Alliance Bible school up there [in Nyack] and see what's going on. Well, the result was that that year in Nyack exposed her to biblical Christianity in a different sense from the way it was being presented at Wheaton. I don't know really know what the difference was but it was a transforming experience from...for her. Turned her right around, and she made a commitment, and made a commitment to

missionary service at one of their...what they call Congress of the Bands in New York City. And this...this meant that instead of going back to Wheaton at the end of that...that interlude at Nyack, she went to Upsala College, which was adjacent to her home. Actually when her parents moved they gave the...the property or sold it to the college for the expansion of their area. And so while it was...while she was there she started a Bible study group. It wasn't a InterVarsity group, it was just something of that sort. So that here was a person who was now interested in being a Christian witness in an atmosphere. Of course, Augustana Lutherans are okay. She said that all those Swedes in that place, they taught her how to drink coffee and to enjoy Swedish pastry [laughs], so I guess she got something there. But anyhow, I was invited to go and speak at that group, and so I went down to their home in East Orange, early just to...just to talk things over to get ready for the meeting. And there I found her reading Van Til's epistemology. Now, in those days, Dr. Van Til, Cornelius Van Til, was a professor of apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary. And the Westminster Theological Seminary boys were attempting to establish an Orthodox Presbyterian Church in East Orange. And lo and behold she was a member of this little church that was struggling to get started because here was...it was through the Orthodox Presbyterian Church that her mind was really turned on to Christian truth, and the consistency of Christian truth. And, well when I met her...there was this woman, very attractive, all that sort of thing, but here she was engaging in study on how to make the world safe for the Reformed faith [both laugh]. Mission work was much more specific in its objectives and I had previously thought just about getting people converted and getting churches planted, etcetera, etcetera. So we had an argument. But was the first encounter. I don't know as we spoke much about the meeting that there with the students, but we did have an argument.

SHUSTER: You mean about Christ and missions?

GLASSER: No, an argument about Van Til, because after all, I was going to Faith Seminary and Van Til was the man who was always talking about the evils of Immanuel Kant and everything was very intellectual and very hostile to just plain old evangelism and Evangelicals. He didn't believe in Evangelicals. He had all sorts of, you know, problems with simple-minded biblical Christianity. So...and I had picked up some of this. After all, I was reflection of all the biases and weakness of Faith Theological Seminary at that juncture. But that's how we met, and I was quite concerned. I was quite drawn to her, and...and we had sort of causal correspondence. She would hear of my going to New York City and since East Orange was not too far away occasionally I would drop in and see her. But down in my mind and my heart I felt that her understanding of the Bible was inadequate. And I also thought of Dr. Robert McQuilkin, the head of Columbia Bible College, and he had just established a Graduate School of Bible and Missions at Columbia [in South Carolina]. And I thought, now this young lady, whether or not she is for me I can't say, but if she is, I think she needs further training. I'm not going to speak to her about Columbia Bible College, but you put that into her mind and that would be a sign." And that's the way I prayed. And so when the time came for her to graduate from...from...

SHUSTER: Upsala?

GLASSER: ...Upsala College, she sa...I said, "What are you going to do next?" She said, "I think I'm going to go to Columbia Bible College." And that was the confirmation that I felt she was the

one the Lord had selected for me, and so we were engaged during the...toward the end of my senior year at Faith. And as I think I earlier said, I desired to be free from Dr. McQuil...Fullerton, the one who had exercised such a helpful and yet an oppressive influence on me. And when I heard that there was an opening, that the Navy was gonna do something very unwise, and that is open their doors to an experimental class of people coming right from seminary and going into the chaplaincy, I applied and I was accepted. And that's why a week after graduating seminary I was in the Navy. And at the end of the seminary train...of the chaplains training school down in Norfolk, Virginia in...toward the end of August, we got ready. And we got married in early September [1942]. So, we just celebrated this past Wednesday our 47th wedding anniversary.

SHUSTER: Well, congratulations.

GLASSER: Yes, it was...we have enjoyed the grace of the Lord and it has been a very happy marriage, and I'm grateful for my wife for putting up with me as most men, you know, in their more sober moments. I've come to realize it takes a lot of grace on the part of a woman to live with a man. But that was the...the.... Now the influence that she brought upon me has been...she is an extremely disciplined person in her thinking, and I have again and again found that if I take a sequence of thoughts and run it past her she'll be able to pick the flaws better and more quickly than I. She is always cautious about my enthusiasms and that's been helpful too; cautious about my enthusiasms for the Jews right now. For this that.... But she has...she was a missionary volunteer before I met her and that was of course a condition I set before the Lord and she has remained very loyal to me in connection with my work ever since.

SHUSTER: You...you've described how you met. What was it that drew you to her?

GLASSER: Well, [pauses] it's hard to say, you know. The chemistry was always very mysterious. I wouldn't say that she appeals to one as a very sensual person. She was physically attractive, but very bright and very interested in reading. For instance, in recent years she would take each successive summer and read through all the writings of some particular prominent woman author. So that she was amazingly widely read in matters pertaining to women's affairs without being a shrieking feminist, and that...and yet at the same time very conscious of the validity behind many of the concerns of women today in the church and in society. She is very much interested in art, and I have been very grateful for way in which she has stimulated the thinking and study of our children. She's been...she's held before them an intellectual tradition of her...her books, her scores upon scores.... You think there's some books in this office, there are a lot of books at home, but a lot of them just of women authors and of women who are making significant contributions. All of this, you know, rather held in check. She was an avid reader of the *New Yorker* magazine. As you know, the *New Yorker* magazine has very serious articles in it, and I think the one she's been reading just lately is a...is an article on one of the issues facing the people of Peru. And that's the sort of wife I have, one who.... I think she has a real facility with words but I've never been able to encourage her to become a speaker or a writer. But I think she has...has the potential for both of those...those things. She's...she's a very gracious person. She's very womany [sic]. And she and my mother clicked, my mother being somewhat of the same sort. You know, you're always supposed to marry someone who's like your mother. [Glasser laughs] And although my mother didn't have the training that Alice had, yet at the same time there was.... Well, it's hard to the say what are the basic elements in the...that which has drawn us together. She ga...she was drawn to me because our

family, my brother and sisters...family seemed to be.... Here she was an only child. Here was a large noisy family [both laugh], and that seemed to be exciting to her [laughs]. She didn't realize she'd have a lot of headaches with these Glassers. But the....

SHUSTER: You were talking about the collective and the important, so that she was joining the Glasser collective.

GLASSER: Oh, well yes. [laughs] But the Glasser collective in generally each one is going off on his or her own.

SHUSTER: You mentioned joining the chaplaincy program of the Navy reserve. Do you have any hesitancy, or how did you come to join?

GLASSER: Well, that is, if you're going to preach Christ where Christ is not named, certainly the Marines would be the crowd. Now, I didn't join the Marines. I joined the Naval reserve and was...Alice and I, we were sent immediately to Pensacola [in Florida], the Naval air station. And after being there five months I was sent overseas, and she went...to, well, sent overseas unattached, and they sent about twelve of us going to take up a shop in San Francisco and go out to the South Pacific. Alice joined a group working among children in New York City. Almost immediately this was a class that opened to her, and she continued at that work throughout the time that I was in the war. She lived in New York City with her parents. Fuel I remember became expensive so they just moved from East Orange to New York City where her father's office was. He was an importer of textiles from Europe, and the family would go to Europe for several months out of the year while he would be picking up things. He became...he taught himself how to speak Italian because of his need to deal with factories in Italy. And think that he had a secret admiration for Mussolini, although I never really pressed him on this [laughs].

SHUSTER: A lot of people in Mussolini's early career admired him for making the trains run on time.

GLASSER: Oh, the trains went on time, yeah, yeah. But then going out to the South Pacific....

SHUSTER: Well, if we could just go back for a second. Do you remember much about the training program you had for the chaplaincy program before you... [went overseas]?

GLASSER: Well, here I was with a group of forty, and among them two people with whom I had maintained contact ever since. Harry Boer, the Christian Reformed Church missionary who in northern Nigeria became distinguished and who is now one of the editors of *The Reformed Journal*. A brilliant man, Dutch in background and just a lovely person in many ways. A bachelor and a close friend of Lewis Smedes, one of our faculty members. And he would come here from time.... It's too bad he doesn't still comes here. He lives in Grand Rapids, but whenever we get together we speak of our times in the chaplaincy. On one occasion the two of us decided to hold a meeting and I preached the gospel among service personnel in Norfolk, and he said, "You know, you take different texts but you always preach the same message." By which he was telling me subtly, "You know, you're very lazy intellectually [Both laugh]. Let a text speak what the text has to say," and I would come back, "Well, I'm just trying to preach the gospel." But that was a rebuke

I needed, and you know, of course each text is going to bring out something distinctive if that text is given the critical examination and prayerful meditation that it warrants. The other man was Jim Goff [James E. Goff]...Jim Goff who became a Presbyterian missionary to Colombia, served a congregation in Bogota for many years, and became quite active in the...in the liberation movements in...in...in Presbyterian circles. I would say, "Hey, Jim, what about the gospel?" You know, typical Faith Seminary response. How does the gospel fit into all this talk about liberation. But Jim has been a very good friend. Now, I haven't seen him as much recently, but that was the other kind of.... There were others members of our forty...group of forty. But most of them I found very...very...very disappointing. Here were people from Yale and from these various eastern seminaries...Boston, this and that, and, oh when we'd talk while at school about matters pertaining to theology, naturally, here I am from Faith Seminary and talking about the resurrection, and they'd say they don't care whether or not Jesus Christ rose from the dead, it's irrelevant. When you know, my...it was...it was a sense of a face-to-face encounter with the...with some of the liberalism of some of the seminaries. Now, amongst there were those who really knew their Lord. David Bircham [?], I got know him from San Anselmo [San Francisco Theological Seminary in California]. He's currently pastoring a church down in Long Beach [California]. And we had some...there were some good Evangelicals who had come from what I would have described as liberal seminaries, hopeless beyond the pale, and that was the beginning of a bit of awakening experience. But most of them I felt weren't really...didn't have good news to men who were going to be destroyed in war. That was the thing that concerned me. So....

SHUSTER: What about the training you received in the school? How were you...?

GLASSER: It was just orientation, just orientation.

SHUSTER: Orientation.

GLASSER: There was no, no training. It was just about how if you go into the ward room and there everyone's drinking beer. Now, to drink beer that's okay, but don't drink too much, you know, [laughs] be one of the boys. The one in charge of the discharge was a Roman Catholic priest, a chaplain. And he was a great guy. As I said it was an eye opener for me, who had been so confined ecclesiolstic [sic]...ecclesiastically by going to Faith to get out into the broader world. Because you know, the Apostle Paul is always speaking...speaking of the importance of learning with all the saints. And that doesn't mean all the saints in the local congregation of which you are a part, but to try and listen to people who confess Jesus Christ, and whose confession you must take seriously, but whose understanding of truth may be miles away from your understanding of truth. In other words, it was my first contact with a sequence of experiences, which had brought me to the present, which I would call the whole ecumenical tangle. The point at which...which points up the question, what do I do with a person who seriously confesses Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior, but with whom I serious disagree? Do you automatically excommunicate him? Is there any warrant in Scripture for automatic excommunication? Do you ignore him? No, you have no biblical right for that. What do you do? Well, you have to enter into the arena and talk with him, and talk with him, ideally, with an open Bible between you. And so, as Paul says in Romans 15, "Receive one another." And to receive people and to listen to them and then to share with them, this is wha...what I call the essentiality of ecumenical encounter.

SHUSTER: I remember, I think it was one of your reports...report on your attendance at the WC [World Council of Churches] Commission of Evangelism in Melbourne [Australia] in the 1970s, talking about the Bible studies there, which you would have with Russian Orthodox and Coptic Christians, and Evangelicals, Roman Catholics, people all around the world who just sharing the same text and how interesting that was.

GLASSER: Yes, that was 1980 in Melbourne. The wor...the Commission on World Mission Evangelism. Krister Stendahl, the...who had been the dean of the...of the Divinity School in Harvard, he was the leader. He had such a range of people, and it's stimulating, it is stimulating. In fact, Bible studies at ecumenical gathers are more interesting than Bible studies in Evangelical gatherings [laughs] because there is a sense you say, "Well, I know what he's going to say," you see. But then when someone goes and takes the same passage and says something different, then you want to say, "Well, why does he say that, put it that way?" What are his hermeneutical principles? And am I...do I have all the answers to this text?" Now mind you, I have heard a lot of nonsense in my day, as you can well believe. But I also heard...heard a lot of what I would say unimaginative examination of the biblical text, you know, among Evangelicals. It was in 1973 at Bangkok that I had my first Catholic Bible study, but the one in 1980, another ecumenical gathering, that was more enriching. Perhaps because I was more able to cope with the...the obligation of participating responsibly in a Bible study facing a circle when I had to do, you know, be more deliberate in my determination to listen and think no...yes, what should we do about that? And how can I respond to it in a way that would keep the discussion moving? In ecumenical circles there's much more emphasis on process, that is coming...trying to think through together what a particular problem is and then in the end draft something. In the Lausanne movement the tendency is to have things all drafted beforehand and then have a lot of sparkling addresses in all different directions, but the attendants don't themselves participate in that which in the end is going to eventuate in a...in a...in a statement. I think that in terms of process, Evangelicals could learn something. But in terms of insight and biblical loyalty, well, of course, I'm an Evangelical because I think that the basic principles of the Bible touch in the mission of the church. You find Evangelicals facing much more comprehensively than you would find elsewhere. For instance, no...at Lausanne II [in Manila, the Philippines, 1989] we talked about the unreached and I remember at...at Melbourne one of our [Fuller] School of Mission guys was there, Waldron Scott, said we had to think about the unreached, and someone said, "What do you mean unreached? [Glasser adds emphasis] Unreached by God? Isn't God everywhere?" And just dismissed the whole thing, not facing...not to the implications of Romans 10, "How should they hear without a preacher, how shall they preach except they be sent." You know, the difficult categories were just forgotten and, well, this guy was just giving a terrible put down, and later on in his review of Melbourne he speaks of this. Well, this guy is in my opinion one of the most perceptive Evangelicals when it comes to participating in the ecumenical debate. He's more like...he is more like Orlando Costas in the sense that he could hold his ground as Evangelical but always asked the tough questions and always made sure that...that diffused conversation would come to something specific. Waldron Scott had been with the Navigators [an American evangelistic organization] for years, yeah.

SHUSTER: When you went out to the South Pacific as a chaplain, you were there until the end of the war?

GLASSER: No, I was sent out unattached. We went first to Auckland, and funny, we were out in...

SHUSTER: New Zealand?

GLASSER: ...Auckland, New Zealand. We were out there, a whole division of Marines were sent out in one ship and I was on that ship detached, just a chaplain with no specific post. And it was rather interesting, to arrive in Auckland and have Radio Tokyo announce our arrival, [Glasser chuckles] We thought we had snuck across the Pacific. Then we went up to Noumea, by the way, ran into a Japanese submarine along the way and that caused a bit of excitement. But then, in Noumea in...on a rainy day in a muddy situation under a...in a little tent I...our group of twelve chaplains went in to meet the man who was to make the decision, and....

SHUSTER: Decision as to where you would be sent?

GLASSER: To where we'd be sent. And we just stood around. Catholics, Protestants; we had come to know one another though this trip and now there we were. And we all thought we'd be given crisp orders to do this and do that. So he said, "Well, fellows, what do ya want?" [both laugh], which brought us up. And someone said, "What do you have?" "Well," he said, "I got a hospital in New Zealand. Who wants to go there?" And a Catholic priest took that one. And please don't misunderstand, I'm not saying that priests want to be far behind the lines. Priests were good chaplains in that sense. They had courage. But he said, "I have a post with the Marines. Who wants that?" And nobody spoke. And I had been sea sick on the trip out and the thought of being on a ship further, no that isn't for me. So I said, "Give me the Marines." And so that's how I got in the Marines [laughs]. And I got on a Dutch ship and was sent down to...to Melbourne, Australia, and there was the First Marine division. The division had just been pulled off Guadalcanal, badly shot up, full of malaria. And they had very few chaplains in the Guadalcanal. And here I was, fresh out of seminary and that was my responsibility. I was attached to an engineering unit, strangely enough, and had...having engineering background I knew the guy, the officer, who had gone to Dartmouth and various schools who studied engineering as I had studied engineering. So, that there was a certain congeniality and I remember with them we went from...from Australia to the d'Entrecasteaux Islands, off the tip of New Guinea. A place called Goodenough. And from there were went over to New Guinea for a while. And then we combat loaded (that is they put a little bit of each thing in each ship so that not all the tanks are on one ship, or gasoline on the other, you know how it is) and we landed in Cape Gloucester, New Britain, and that operation. And by this time, I was the senior chaplain of the division. There was a certain amount of turner...tone...of turnover. And then....

SHUSTER: When was this? '44?

GLASSER: Yeah, this is getting on to, yeah, late '43, '44. No, it was '44, and they were just getting ready to go to Peleliu of the Palau group, which...for another assault. And then for some strange reason I was called home. Actually, I was considered a successful chaplain, and they wanted to use me in promotion. And so I came home and was sent here to Southern California and attached to Terminal Island, a small craft-training center, which was a great opportunity. I became familiar with the Navigators, and the *Old Fashioned Revival Hour* [radio program], the whole

Fuller complex. But at the same time, I had to travel all over the place trying to contact young men who were already in the ministry to persuade them to become chaplains. So I was chaplain recruiter while serving on a base, and did that until the atom bomb was dropped. And then I...since I had been in the chaplaincy early, I was released early, and immediately applied to the China Inland Mission.

SHUSTER: On August, 1945, then, you were....

GLASSER: Yeah, I was getting out. I guess I got out by September 1945.

SHUSTER: What stays most in your mind in your service as a chaplain?

GLASSER: Well, of course the thing is that I was ill prepared for that type of ministry. To get people to listen to me teach the Bible, that wasn't very difficult. We could have Bible study groups all over. We did have a lot of little Bible study groups, and some of those groups were just wiped out in the subsequent fighting. But the...to get people to carry on on their own, to become disciples of Jesus Christ, witnessing disciples, that was something I did not know how to do. And the Lord in his grace brought me into contact with Dawson Trotman, the Navigators, you know, and to build reproducers, you know, his idea of reproducing yourself in the lives of others. And so for a while I became an enthusiastic Navigator. We had a service one summer down on Long Beach. The city was just jammed with troops, Navy, military, Army, Marine, this, that, all picking up ships going out to the South Pacific War, and we...there we were right in the heart of town and I was nearby on my base. This was sort of a Navigators center. So that when I resigned from the chaplaincy, I immediately went into that full-time while going through the process of applying to go to China as a missionary. So that the latter part of the war I spent working the service men outside as a civilian and came to realize I could do far better work as a civilian than as a military person. I didn't like chaplaincy because of the...the gradations of... you know, you're junior, lieutenant, lieutenant junior, then you're a captain, you're a senior lieutenant, and you're a commander lieutenant, all that business. Rank, I think...I think the chaplaincy would be great if the churches took it over, and churches supported it and there was no rank at all, that you carry on just as a representative of the church. And maybe that's an idealistic thing, but I'm not so sure I approve of the chaplaincy as it's conducted. It's hard for a person all decked out in military...you know, officer splendor talking to ordinary G.I.s. It'd be better if you had a uniform that was just completely neutral. Anyhow, I...that's what I found out, and...and I always had a lot to do with helping young fellows get established quickly in the faith. One of the wonderful things was that a lot of the attack transports were being brought down from the shipyards as soon as they were built, and their crews were being put together in the Long Beach Terminal Island complex, so that we were in touch with crew after crew (maybe two, three hundred people would be the crew), and a lot of them wouldn't rate a chaplain because they were too small. But we would try to get a Bible study started so that before the ship left out...left for sea (they would have their, you know their several months of training off the coast), well, all the time we'd be working with the Christians so when they went to sea they had a group that knew how to carry on quite apart from the chaplain. That was an exciting work, and during this time we were planning to go to China.

SHUSTER: When...when you were a chaplain in the combat zone how did the men regard you? Did they come to you freely with their problems, or were you irrelevant to them, or how...how did you fit into the...?

GLASSER: Well, the...that's a...you know, how [pauses] I think of an experience...we were moving up, the Japanese were badly assaulted and the position was being secured, the victory was in sight when lo and behold a co...a Marine was brought to me under guard and...and he says, "Chaplain, I need help." I said, "You surely do." [chuckles] You know, "What's your problem? What do these guys...you know, what do they got you under?" He said, "Oh, that's not my real problem." [Both laugh] An insight into the Marine mind. He said, "I have a problem. Can you help me get some money to the States?" I said, "Sure. I can transfer the money. We can transfer that through the...through the...through the government or we can transfer it through the Red Cross." "Well," he said, "you know, I got to be careful here, I just as soon the government not know about it." And [laughs] I found out here in a bottle, you know, trying to secure, this guy had ninety thousand dollars of cash in his pockets, and there he was [both laugh], you could see he had been a private first class, but that should have been ripped off. He was reduced to private. And he said, "Well, you know, in Australia I got into a little game." [Both laugh] And he told me about his getting into a little game, and he was betting with a man, and this man became more and more desperate. After a while he turned over his hotel in the pot, and he said, "I own the hotel." And then the man got really desperate and threw in his home, and he said, "I won his home." But he said, "Don't take me wrong, chaplain, I gave him back his home." [Both laugh] I've often used him, that man as an illustration of that text, "No man that wareth entangles themselves in the affairs of men." [2 Timothy 2:4; both laugh] Here was a guy who was supposed to be in a war.... Well, Marines you would have...they would have to get...first is you would go to casualty clearing tents. We didn't have helicopters to take people away, and you would go and minister to them, go from bed to bed. We had so many that were sick with malaria that I was to just go...just the beds you know, there might be several hundred, and just go along talking to one after another. I would spend whole days just going from bed to bed talking to people and getting to know them personally and speaking to them about Christ. Did a lot of that. It's an evangelistic job. People don't rush...oh, you have problems that...they come with the.... [Recording is stopped and restarted].

SHUSTER: You were saying you had to....

GLASSER: You had to go...you have to have some understanding of people. You have to be able and go out and engage them in conversation. And that was something you didn't get in chaplaincy, you know, personally. You get that in seminary, but fort...fortunately in New York City I could talk to Jews as total strangers and so I had a certain amount of experience there. They didn't say.... I think that a person should not go into chaplaincy until that person has several years of pastoral experience, and know something about people and about how to talk to people and...and that was a sort of instruction that we did not get in chaplain school. They assumed that since you had been prepared by your church and endorsed by your church that there was no problem. They didn't have to train you to do that. They just had to train you to fit into the military system. Yeah.

SHUSTER: Did you ever find any...you mentioned a little bit about it'd be better if you didn't have any kind of uniform or insignia when you were meeting with men but if you were just there as

a representative of the church. Did you ever find a conflict between your Christian faith and ministry and your duties as a chaplain?

GLASSER: Well....

SHUSTER: Or as a military officer?

GLASSER: You mean.... Well, you see, World War II was so different from the Vietnam War, to use another war in context, because evil was on the other side. We were the good guys, and so we never had to pr...give them a speech on...on the validity of fighting in a war. I would have a hard time giving a talk like this because, you know, grown up a great deal since the simplicities of the Hitlerite period. And kin...kind of didn't like the idea that you always had to go to the officer's mess to eat, and you were expected to conduct yourself as an officer. And that was sort of onerous. I found...I found out that I was a nonconformist in many ways, and I found also that among chaplains I think we tended to be unwholesomely in...influenced by matters of rank and things of that sort. So that as I say, those memories are distant memories. Now these recollections, I have long since forgotten most of them. The big thing is that God worked through the teaching of the Word of God and our church...the Christian movement and our unit kept growing. And...and on one occasion after the battle, after the big victory in New Britain, I suggested, "Well fellas, what are you gonna do to express our gratitude to the Lord in bringing us through this safely?" And they decided, let's make a gift to those who are seeking to serve God in China. So we sent a great big financial gift of a thousand dollars to...to China Inland Mission. [Glasser chuckles] It was things like that. It was...well, we saw...we saw...we saw some very wonderful things. And apparently one of the officers reported my experiences so positively that that's why I became a recruiter of chaplains.

SHUSTER: Anything else you want to add about your wartime experience before we move on?

GLASSER: No. No.

SHUSTER: You mentioned meeting Dawson Trotman. How did that come about?

GLASSER: Well, I had heard through Peter Stam.... Peter Stam was a classmate of mine at seminary. Peter Stam the third. He later became the home director of the African Inland Mission. He's now retired.

SHUSTER: Uh-huh.

GLASSER: A great man. Warm. His father was a professor of music, etcetera at Wheaton College and he was a Wheatonian par excellence. But Pete and I were old friends. We were roommates at seminary, etcetera, etcetera. And...and Pete said, "You know, there's a guy you ought to meet some day. He gave a terrific talk at Wheaton's chapel." That was Dawson Trotman. That was the first time I ever heard of Dawson, and then later through our CSO (which are Christian Servicemen's Organization in Long Beach where I work with my students), we heard about the Navigators that had a little...what the thing they called B-Rations, which were four verses of Scripture that a new

convert should learn and memorize. Well, I found that tremendous. I wish I had a thousand of those overseas. What I took overseas were hundreds of copies of the Gospel in Japanese, thinking I would run into a lot of Japanese [laughs] but we couldn't get...we could not get the Marines to take prisoners. They'd generally shoot 'em. So the...I did distribute some Japanese Gospels to Japanese prisoners but there always were very few Japanese. But I should have taken a lot of B-Rations because how to deal with a brand new Christian on matters of faith and assurance, and this and that, and temptation, you know there are few verses. Well, somehow during this we would go up to this...The Church of the Open Door, downtown Los Angeles for rallies, servicemen rallies, and occasionally I would speak. And in the course of that I got to know Dawson Trotman. My experience from there of meeting Trotman was very interesting because at that time he was under savage attack by a key Navigator named Orrin Bell.

SHUSTER: About '45, '45?

GLASSER: The war was still on.

SHUSTER: Oh.

GLASSER: That would be still I maybe the end of '44 after I got back from the Pacific and in the beginning of '45. But anyhow, Orrin Bell out in the Pa...out in the...Hawaii was challenging his leadership. That's what it amounted to. As you know in the Scriptures when every...any man is elevated to a place of leadership immediately, or soon afterward, he's challenged. His leadership is challenged. Achan challenges Joshua's leadership and the Sons of Korah challenged Moses' leadership. That's a pattern. The people try to test a new leader to see whether or not they can bend him to their will or whether or not he really is going to be aggressive in...in his obedience., so forth. So that...anyhow, this fellow Orrin Bell was...was writing to Dawson lengthy letters, complicated letters, quoting verses of Scripture. They say Orrin could quote two hundred verses from the Book of Proverbs alone giving you the references. He had...you know, this was a great thing. Memorizing Scripture was more prominent in Navigator circles then than I think it is now. But anyhow, Dawson was terribly burdened by this and I said to Dawson almost very early in our experience, I said, "Dawson, let me see one of these...these...this guy's letters. Perhaps I could help you." And...and Dawson tossed me a letter and I read it and I said, "Yeah, this guy is not thinking biblically. Let me write and answer." And so I started to, as it were...the letters that were criticizing Dawson Trotman...I would answer from the Scriptures, and that sort of drew Dawson to me and he...he really helped me. Now, he would have helped me anyhow because that was the kind of guy he was, but it was a great experience to be close to Dawson and yet not a part of his organization; sort of at his elbow and not at his feet, you know. Alice used to feel that he exercised an inordinate influence over me, sort of like Fullerton had exercised over me earlier. But listen, Dawson was...was...he was a...gave me a great...a great boost in my own Christian service, and later on in China at our language school in Anking, Anwhei, we...we started a Navigator class. I was the one who taught them and did all that sort of thing so that our missionaries all became...well, we were all exposed to Navigator work.

SHUSTER: What was...what was he being criticized for? Was there one thing...?

GLASSER: Well, I don't know what we called it. It was just a lot of nebulous stuff, but behind it all was [pauses] claiming there was...he was making unwise personal decisions. Per...cu...not personal but per...in terms of personnel. People that he was putting into key places, this and that. I thought Dawson was a very...very wise when it came to sizing up a person. But...Dawson was not a reader. You would go to his office and there were no books. He wasn't that sort of person. He would read the story of Hudson Taylor [missionary to China, founder of China Inland Mission], but more likely that he'd be reading the...the book of Isaiah to get some verses that he could apply. I thought that his applying verses of Scripture, you know, was very much of a proof text without taking into consideration the context and this and that. So that, you know, I used to argue with Dawson. I said, "Dawson, you're good on individualism, but you have no concept of the church." We used to have big debates about that, and I think that....

SHUSTER: What would he say to that?

GLASSER: Well, you know, he would say, "You can't follow people up in a group. It has to be man to man. I've tried it again and again. That's the way the Lord did it. Twelve people, he had twelve." And...and those discussions were never...never resolved. I don't think I could sa...can say I ever changed anything of Dawson. Dawson Trotman, he was on the Olympian heights and boy, he was...he was...he was a person who was so able to enter into the fruit of his labors. Seeing that Navigator movement grow, that was very hard for him to think that on some basic premise he could be wrong. And when he...he sought with his successor and...things, you know, Dawson was a great guy. He was a great gift to...certainly a great gift to the military because here we had hundreds of guys, and the government started talking about a G.I. bill following the war, you know, that they could get help to go to college. And we were signing up...we were working on guy after guy: "You've got to get an education. You've got the ability." And so forth. "And you've got to think about going into the Lord's service." I think Dawson Trotman was a tremendous force in recruiting guys for the service of the Lord following World War II. Went into all sorts of schools, Christians who had been in the war. They were disciplined because the whole Navigator principle was based on discipline. They were disciplined and they were a new kind of student in the Christian schools. Here were guys who were a bit...you know, leather skin. They had seen a lot and they were much more serious, and Dawson had worked on them. Why the...Dawson's lieutenants, of course, didn't have the Dawson touch. It was just wonderful what...what that Navigator movement did in recruiting people for. And you see, it's just like the Navy. They...the whole structure, it was totalitarian. Dawson's movement was just as totalitarian as the Navy. You know [laughs], the top boys, and I remember one of his lieutenants (I won't mention his name), he said, "You know, I'm not going to do this B-Ration stuff for the rest of my life." Speaking in a...Dawson Trot had an enormous capacity for friendship. He had an enormous capacity of getting alongside of people. He was...he didn't come across as an intellectual, speaking from, you know, mountaintop. He was great human being and the humanness of him was very wonderful. He would tell you a story. I remember the first time I was in his office. He said, "Let me tell you a story. This is something that happened. I was reading my Bible, that the Lord would provide streams in the desert for that day," he said, you know. "And I thought, "'Isn't that wonderful. Streams in the desert.' The Lord is able," and he'd tell me how [?]'...had he read this passage from Isaiah and it quickened him. Okay. Then he got on his motorcycle and went down to San Diego because there was going to be a meeting with a lot of G.I.'s down at the Naval base down there, and they were going to meet at a certain friend's home and have a Bible study and he was going to come back that

night, and so forth. “They told me this...” (Here he is just telling me this story.) He says...he said, “I’ll tell you how things went. We had a great time. We were studying the Bible and the Lord was good to us. And then the idea is, let’s have some refreshment. So the hostess, the lady of the house, she said, ‘Hey Dawson, don’t have enough ice cream. Go on out and get some more.’” And he said, ‘Sure, I’ll go out and get some ice cream.’ And I went out and bought some ice cream by the money I had, put it down and...and...and then we had the meal. It was a great time and I got...said goodnight. Then I got on my...on my motorcycle and come back up here to Long Beach.” He said, “Then I realized that money was for gasoline, and I didn’t have a tank full of gasoline to get me back up here.” And this was wartime. He said, “I didn’t think about that when I was still in San Diego.” He said, “I was rejoicing the things that God had done that night. Got my [unclear] and said, here I am coming up north along that coast road, and I realize I don’t have enough gas in the tank and I don’t have any money. And where do you buy gas in wartime? Wartime gas is very restricted. I said, ‘Lord, streams in the desert. That’s what you promised.’” I’m going up to San Fran...to Pasadena.” And so he stepped on the gas and I went.... But he said, “You know, I got a place, was a high hill and the ...the motorcycle conked out. But we started to coast, coast way down.” And he said, “Lo and behold, I stopped right in front of the gas tank...a gas station, but there were big boards across the doors. No one was...everything was closed down and here it was late at night. And he said, “The devil won’t tempted me, you know, ‘Well, see how your God is.’” But he said, “No, streams in the desert.” “And so I fought off the devil and I said, ‘Now, Lord, I’m looking for your solution.’ And so then there comes down the road I’ve just coming...I see the lights of a truck or a car. ‘Should I stop them or no?’” Well, he said, “You know, Hudson Taylor wouldn’t ask questions. Ask for help.’ And so I didn’t. Said, “Lord, you know about my need.’ And lo and behold, what is it? It’s a great big gas truck. And the guys stops over and says, ‘Hey! Buddy, what’s wrong?’ Said, “I’m out of gas.’ The guy says, “No problem at all. Open your tank.’ And he said, ‘You know, instead of taking the hose and putting it into the hole of...in my...the opening of my tank, he stood at a distance and he just sprayed my...my [laughs]...my motorcycle with the [unclear]...

SHUSTER: Sounds pretty dangerous.

GLASSER: [Laughs] “With the results that there were streams in the desert. And that’s...the whole thing stank with gasoline. I had to wait until the thing evaporated before I climbed on it.” He told me the story. Well, you know, a fella tell you a story, “Boy, this guy’s in touch with God.” You know, it was that sort of...you were just drawn to Dawson Trotman.

SHUSTER: We talked a little bit about leadership. How did you...what kind of leader was he?

GLASSER: He was very autocratic. You...you did what you were told. Absolutely no questioning his decisions. It was tightly knit...it was like a vessel. Tightly knit..no...but you see, all of us having...we’re in the Navy at the time so that was very natural.

SHUSTER: Uh-huh.

GLASSER: Now later on like this guys said, “I’m not going to do this...this B-Rations for the rest of my life.” But I said, “You realize the lives that are being transformed by this.” “Oh,” he said, “it’s

such simple A-B-C stuff.” But you know in Christian work you ought to recognize there are the A-B-Cs. The A-B-Cs must be modified and adapted to each individual, and that takes a great deal of creativity. Well, Dawson Trotman was a great...later on he wanted me with Dick Harris to do something big, leave OMF in China and become Navigator representatives in China when it was going international worldwide. And Dawson really gained tremendous worldwide visibility when Billy Graham asked him to take care of the follow up in his protest. But by that time Dawson and I had...you know I was into the CIM and the church. And Dawson was great on individuals to surrender to the will of God but...and for young people that’s great, but then you got to point ‘em to the church and enter into the life of the structured community.

SHUSTER: Anything else you want to add about Dawson Trotman?

GLASSER: No. Except later on, I asked Waldron Scott about Dawson. He was a fellow that would spend his time with an electric thing, you know....

SHUSTER: Trotman would?

GLASSER: Trotman. Carving verses of Scripture into wood and learning how to paint. He wasn’t a person who in his later yor...years did much to contribute, you know, to ideas. It was his lieutenants that took his ideas and went to school and wrote dissertations and things on it. But he was certainly tremendous. But his latter years weren’t as...as significant and creative as his early years, although he certainly built up and organization and gave it stability and, you know, you dare not analyze the Evangelical movement in our day and leave out the Navigators. They have been significantly used. And Dawson was very much into as...put...he was put on the board of the Wycliffe Bible Translators so that the Wycliffe Bible Translators became Navigators, and that was something. You know, so that while they were studying all this esoteric stuff, you know, phonetics and phonemics, and syntax, morphology and all of that, yet down underneath there was old, you know, basic biblical discipleship that made them face up to the toughness of going into a tribe and putting up with all of the inconvenience and the difficulty of slinging away until eventually a translation came forward. Wy...Wycliffe Bible Translators needed that Navigator input, and he gave it. He was very serious about that. He also brought a lot of help to Mission Aviation Fellowship. See, these organizations were all started here in Southern California. And Charlie Mellis and Jim Truxton of MAF, boy, they were...they were Navigators. And so that there was that...a stream of something that was injected in Evangelical Christianity here in Southern California that I think has made...has had...has had an outreach beyond...beyond what we would normally think...think. You know, Southern California has produced a lot of creativity in terms of Evangelical thinking, and behind a lot of it would be some of the impulse that Dawson Trotman gave. I...I’m willing to give him a great deal of credit, and as I say, he was my senior brother and I...I obeyed him. I became his official representative in Long Beach in the interval between being released from the Navy and going to China.

SHUSTER: Well, I’m afraid that’s all the time for today. I want to thank you again for this interview...

GLASSER: Well, Bob...

SHUSTER: ...and a chance to talk to you about your experiences.

GLASSER: ...well , I think that the...the Navigators...are you getting their archives?

SHUSTER: No. Well, we did get some records, mainly dealing with relationship with Billy Graham. But they've started their own archives at their headquarters.

GLASSER: Yeah, you know Betty Skinner's book on Daws?

SHUSTER: *Daws*, yeah.

GLASSER: Yeah. Yeah.

SHUSTER: Well, thank you again.

GLASSER: Okay.

END OF TAPE

