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ORAL HISTORY OF GLENN PRESLEY

presented by
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FORT HAYS STATE UNIVERSITY
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CHAPTER II: INTERVIEW WITH GLENN PRESLEY

Glenn Scott Presley, 1996 recipient of the Christa McAuliffe award, is a firm believer in complete and total honesty in life. This is the key to earning the respect of youth, peers, students and self. He believes that kids will live up to your expectations if they know that you are there for them.

Glenn was born in Wichita, Kansas February 8, 1948 to Glenn C. and Ruby E. Presley of Arkansas. His parents moved from Arkansas to Wichita for employment due to the poor economy of Arkansas at the time. Although his parents had only an 8th grade education they were believers and supporters of higher learning. Glenn's mother was a homemaker in order to raise he and his brother who was three years younger. His father had worked several different jobs while in Wichita including aircraft manufacturing, Coca Cola Co., Ark Bakery to name some notables.

Glenn attended Carter Elementary and Brooks Jr. High, both located in northwest Wichita. During his two years at Brooks he was constantly ostracized by his peers. He was also battling asthma attacks and other health problems. This combination of problems caused Glenn to become introverted. Sensing this dilemma his parents decided to leave Wichita in order to protect his health and sanity. They moved to

Salina, Kansas. His dad proceeded the family about a month early to secure housing and employment. Again his dad was destined to take general labor jobs due to lack of education and skills. Through hard work and diligence he was promoted to supervisor at the Holsom Bakery. By thrift and frugality they were also able to purchase a modest home in Salina.

While in Salina Glenn attended and completed high school at Salina Central. During his four years of education Glenn was able to tackle his problem of being introverted. He also remembers the event that changed his life forever during those very important years. The event was the Vietnam War. He remembers watching TV at the high school with a number of friends and fellow students. The program they were watching was not a traditional show but rather it was the draft lottery. Viewing the lottery elicited numerous emotions from not only Glenn but also his fellow students. He also remembers reading about some of the prior seniors that he knew that had gone to Vietnam and returned in flag covered pine boxes. At that point it hit home that he was nearing exit from high school and would be entered into the lottery. He had limited options at his disposal. Those options included becoming a conscientious objector, fleeing to Canada or get a college draft deferment. That night Glenn made up

his mind that he would not be just another statistic but rather a productive part of society. He decided to attend college. To ensure his acceptance into college and receive a school draft deferment he began to work much harder on his grades. By the end of high school he was able to graduate with a 3.84 GPA thus receiving the coveted deferment. Glenn attributes moving to Salina as a new beginning to life and the Vietnam War a new perspective to life.

With the newly acquired deferment in hand and goals in view Glenn set out for Kansas State University in Manhattan, Kansas to study electrical engineering. He chose the program because that is what his parents envisioned for him. He and his parents realized that not everyone can be a doctor or a lawyer. While at school Glenn learned more about life than education. He felt that his social and educational needs were were not being addressed at KSU. For instance he recalls paying another student fifty cents per day to sit in his Economics I class where most of the grade was based on attendance. Glenn also recalls organizing a protest on the 7th floor of Moore Hall where he had been elected president. It was the general consensus that the food being served left much to be desired. He and his group of followers dressed in suits and proceeded to bury a "deceased student" on the

conveyor belt leading into the dishwashing unit. The protest was regarding using parsley and other non-edible food products that were not palatable. Needless to say the menu was changed to satisfy the majority. Another notable feat that Glenn was instrumental in achieving was to secure a place in the Guinness Book of World Records. He and the other males of the 7th floor arranged to conduct an extended phone call to the girls dorm and carried on a continuous conversation that lasted well over 600 hours.

While Glenn was attending KSU his parents accepted a team management position with Stuckeys along a stretch of interstate highway which would become known as I-70, twenty miles west of Salina at Beverly, Kansas. Glenn would drive home on the weekends to manage the gas pumps for his parents. Since they were one of the few gas stations between Denver and Salina along the interstate it was a very popular stopping point. Through very hard work and business acumen this particular Stuckeys store became the number one producing store in the nation for two years running. At that point they were selling one full semi trailer of fuel daily. He recalled numerous vehicles would make it to the station on vapors or run out at the base of the exit. Many times one of the eight Stuckeys gas station attendants would have to

run cans of fuel to those cars just to get them to the pumps. On one unusual and unexpected occasion he was approached by an FBI agent looking for an individual. This particular perpetrator had passed through the station two days prior. He was the nations third most wanted fugitive and Glenn had sold him gas and food. Glenn learned a tremendous amount about life and this work experience was instrumental in contributing to his maturation process. He learned management skills, communication skills, and how hard work produces results.

While working at Stuckeys Glenn met his lifelong partner and wife to be, Linda J. Walker. She was a student at Brookville High School and worked at Stuckeys as a bubbly-outgoing waitress, who was later promoted to hostess/cashier. During this time, Glenn's friends had told him of this girl who drove a tractor in a bikini and that he should see it for himself. So, one day he drove to this specific location to find that it was Linda, the girl who works at Stuckeys, that drove the tractor. Over time they became friends and started doing many things together. Since Glenn was the Stuckeys gas station manager and made out the work schedule he always made sure that he and Linda had time off together. They would spend their days off exploring Kansas from east to west,

north to south. They would get up early in the morning, flip a coin, and take off in the designated direction.

By the end of Glenn's first year at KSU, he and Linda were engaged. She had just completed high school and was offered a full ride scholarship to McPherson College. At this time Glenn decided to transfer to McPherson where he eventually finished his college career. The first semester of his then sophomore year Glenn lived in the dorm while Linda stayed with her brother who was also a student at McPherson. On New Year's Eve of 1967 they were married. They decided to wait before starting a family. He firmly believes that because they waited seven years to bond and enjoy each other they will be together forever. Now married, Mr. & Mrs. Glenn S. Presley felt they could get on with the task at hand which was education and their lives. Glenn was reminded that married life is great but not without difficulty. He recalled living in the campus housing for married students with some amusement. The apartments were refurbished military barracks, which shared a twenty gallon hot water tank for every two apartments. They had to plan hot water usage with the neighbors so it would not conflict. On weekends Glenn, Linda and the couple next door, whom by now were best of friends, would collect bottles from the

highway ditches for extra spending money because finances were crucial. Glenn and Linda developed a lifelong relationship with their college neighbors. Eventually, Linda quit school to get a job because their monetary resources would not suffice.

At McPherson College Glenn received something that was lacking at KSU. He received the personal attention that he felt he needed. If you were not in class at McPherson the professor would ask why. He felt at KSU he was just a number. Again, he was elected to a position of representation at the College Courts, the married couples residence. He was elected president for three consecutive years. During his residential tenure he was instrumental in procuring mailboxes and laundry facilities to be placed on the premises. He also decided on changing his degree direction from electrical engineering to industrial arts education. There were several reasons contributing to this decision. The main reason being he was unable to pass Calculus II until his third attempt. A secondary reason was his being a devout follower of John Dewey's philosophy of "learning by doing" so he began to look for an alternative profession. As he scanned the McPherson College curriculum looking for something he could manage, teaching seemed to be

the only choice acceptable. He then further narrowed his choice to industrial arts..now known as technology education. Now that he had decided on a purpose, direction, and complete dedication, his next goal was to find a mentor.

He spent the next three years at McPherson College under the tutelage of Dr. Williams, learning all aspects of industrial arts education. Dr. Williams was highly inspirational, motivational and a role model. He could always offer the prime solution to any problem. He was a great mentor and tremendous confidant for Glenn.

Glenn did his student teaching at Canton, Kansas under Mr. Johnson. It was a small school where the superintendent and principal were one in the same person. Glenn was assigned to teach welding and woodworking. On the third day of his student teaching assignment he found a note on his desk which read: "Glenn, have gone to the hospital, be back in four weeks. Good luck! Mr. Johnson". Glenn panicked and proceeded to the superintendent/principal's office for an explanation. The superintendent responded by saying that Mr. Johnson had complete confidence in Glenn's ability and that he, the superintendent, also was confident that Glenn was capable of handling the responsibility. He was given carte blanc for the program. He looked around and analyzed the

situation. He noticed two things. First, the students were dying in their tracks due to boredom of doing the same projects, little stepping stools. The other thing he noticed was there were no bleachers at the football field, so he commandeered his welding class and proceeded to build a bleacher framework. In woodworking class the students were allowed to expand beyond just building stools. If the parents would pay for materials the students could build gun cases, china hutches, dressers or any other projects of interest.

As Glenn began to look for employment at mid-year of 1971 he located only one job opening in the state of Kansas for industrial arts education. That job opening was offered at Fort Larned USD 495. The interview was set up on a Sunday morning and only two applicants were interviewed. Glenn was concerned that his poor college GPA of 3.34 would hinder his chances of employment. He was to find out later that he had earned the position because of his GPA. The response was that the administration did not want a teacher who was a perfectionist, rather they wanted a personable teacher with hands-on ability. Bill Curtis was the principal at Larned when Glenn was hired. Although he and Bill disagreed on many topics, Glenn developed a high regard and appreciation for

Bill's intellect, insight and ability. Glenn acknowledges that Bill Curtis is another stone in his strong foundation.

Glenn has taught all twenty-six and one-half years at Larned. His first year and one-half was spent rebuilding the department and the program. He replaced a teacher that was literally placed in the Larned State Mental Health Facility by the high school students. Along with that feat the students had broken, destroyed, stolen or dismantled anything that previously worked in the shop. Glenn was facing a monumental task. After he rebuilt the program he was scheduled to teach seven different classes a day. He found that the students wanted discipline and structure but due to the great amount of peer pressure put on them they would lose focus. He also believes that most students will listen if you first tell them the truth, make no promises you cannot keep and discipline them while at the same time allowing them to save face with their peers. He also believes that the "swat" through limited usage was an intriguing and effective means of returning students to the path of focus and direction. He emphasized that he never had to swat a student twice. He feels that students need hugs once in a while but due to the social environment that has changed so drastically, neither swats nor physical contact of any kind

can be allowed in the school setting.

By sheer chance the homes Glenn began building would eventually be sold by the school. A local resident who experienced a severe heart attack was needing help completing his unfinished home. Glenn took the school carpentry class over to finish this home. From that point on, the project evolved from simple beginnings to a full-scale project. The building of the home allows all the different disciplines of industrial education to participate, including carpentry, drafting, electrical, plumbing and heating. In addition to incorporating all of the different disciplines it also includes the emerging concepts of education including relevancy, applied education, team teaching, learning by doing and CAD. He believes that these concepts have a valid place in education. He is doing all in his power to promote these concepts and educational techniques. The school district has sent him to numerous conferences across the country to learn more about the concepts and techniques. Glenn does not want his students to leave the program and become a part of the "twelve o'clock society". The world of technology is changing so fast the if you are not re-educated every three years you will begin to fall behind. He is also an advocate that vocational/technical schools are best

equipped to meet these demands.

Due to the educational success of his home building program and the change from industrial education to technology education there have been numerous changes. The most notable being approximately fifty percent of the class is composed of girls. Also, due to the success of the home building program, he has been asked to assist and establish the same type of program in other school districts. When designing and implementing programs he explains that this is purely an educational tool for the students and not a financial endeavor. In addition to this, the house must be functional and by no means should it be decorated upon completion. The explanation given is the home sells much better when the buyer gets an \$80,000.00, 2100 square foot home for \$35,000.00 when they have the advantage of spending another \$10,000.00 for appliances and carpeting of their choice. And finally, he emphasizes consistency. His classes have built the same floor plan for the past twenty-one years. This is convenient when it comes to cost of construction and time. He knows to the exact foot the amount of wood and sheet rock, the number of light fixtures and doors and how many pounds of nails will be needed to complete the project.

Glenn's program has become so successful that numerous

local construction and electrical businesses employ his students for part-time summer help and permanent full-time help after graduation. So the student not only gets the hands on experience, which is a desirable attribute for businesses but also a financial reward for being one of the top performers in the class. This process resembles real life and is a bonus to the educational process and to the local community.

Finally, Glenn has been honored by numerous awards and sponsorship opportunities. He has been the only teacher in Larned history to receive the teacher of the year award. In twenty-six and one-half years he recieved this award twice. He was also asked to be the commencement speaker for the graduating class of 1982. He has been junior class sponsor since his employment at USD 495. In addition, he and his wife have accompanied many school trips as class chaperones.

The highlight of his career to this point is the prestigious Christa's Teacher Award presented in May of 1996. The Christa McAuliffe Award is presented to two teachers of each state every year. The award recognizes teachers for their constant spirit, passion for excellence, inspiration, determination for understanding and a shared enthusiasm.

Glenn S. Presley has a great enthusiasm for life. He

truly believes in living life to the fullest. Moreover, he understands children and can walk the fine line of professional, mentor and friend without losing focus of his goal. Glenn understands that the world, including education, is not a static environment but rather a growing, ever changing universe. He believes in maximizing the opportunities at hand. This is apparent by the way he conducts himself as a teacher, member of the community and a business owner. Glenn has found the ingredients required to make a well rounded person including education and constant re-education, communication, practical knowledge, self-reliance, interaction and problem solving. These are the components necessary for becoming a productive student and a part of society. His personal motto is: "never end a day without learning something new".