

ning for president about as low-key and unexciting as possible.

To be sure, the former senator's journey is a stirring one. He grew up in New Concord, Ohio, a town so small it didn't have a Boy Scout troop. Glenn and his buddies started their own version called the Rangers, a club that lasted for years until an interest in girls slowly superseded the boys' hankering for hiking.

Another burgeoning hobby was flying, a passion fueled by the time Glenn's plumber father paid for them to be taken up by a barn-stormer. Actually learning to fly seemed impossible for a child of the Depression . . . until World War II came along.

Engaged to his high-school sweetheart, Annie, Glenn delayed their marriage for a bit so he would still be eligible for flight training. That led to the Marines, action in World War II and Korea, and a post-war career as a test pilot.

All of this — dogfights with enemy planes, shattered wings, fellow airmen trapped behind enemy lines — is presented in a dull, matter-of-fact style. And when Glenn teams up in Korea with the legendary baseball player Ted Williams, about the most colorful anecdote he can offer is that they nicknamed Williams "Bush," as in Bush League.

"He was a fine pilot," writes Glenn, "and I liked to fly with him." Surely Glenn's career as a test pilot and his quick ascent up the military ladder was more dramatic than he paints it. Glenn made national headlines by setting a cross-country flying record in a supersonic jet; he appeared on "Name That Tune" and won the grand prize; and he was one of the first men selected as an astronaut for the Mercury program.

There are a few touching moments. His wife, Annie, suffers from a debilitating stutter,

and Glenn's quiet acknowledgment of the difficulties it creates — and how his very public life exacerbates those problems — is quite moving. We do get a glimpse or two of Glenn's ire when he discusses nasty re-election campaigns and recalls being painted as one of the Keating Five in an S&L scandal.

But clearly it will take an outside biographer to do justice to this classic American life — one that can celebrate his aw-shucks demeanor without being limited by it.



John Glenn: A Memoir, by John Glenn with Nick Taylor, Bantam, 422 pages, \$27.

Modesty is an admirable trait. But it keeps John Glenn's story of small-town life, fighting in World War II and Korea, rocketing into space and run-