Senator Recalls Bravery of Fellow Marines

Glenn Tearfully Supports Korea War Memorial

By DON SHANNON,
Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON—Sen. John Glenn (D-Ohio) broke down in tears Wednesday describing the death of a friend during the Korean War as he and other legislators testified in favor of creating a national monument to the conflict, which some veterans contend the nation has forgotten.

After the normally impassive Glenn resumed his testimony with difficulty, Rep. Mary Rose Oakar (D-Ohio), chairwoman of the House subcommittee conducting the hearing, promised speedy action on a bill to authorize construction of a memorial to the 5 million living "Korean War veterans and the 54,000 U.S. soldiers killed in the conflict." A full House vote is expected within a month.

Recalling Friend's Bravery

Glenn, one of a group of legislators who testified, recalled his service as a Marine aviator in Korea and paid special tribute to Marine ground forces who fought their way out of surrounding Chinese and North Korean armies at Chosin Reservoir.

He said he had a friend serving with the beleaguered Marines as a forward air controller observer, calling in air strikes against the enemy. "While he was standing on this ridge, he was shot right through the neck," the senator said. "He fell down, got up again and was still trying to give directions..."

For a long moment, Glenn was unable to speak. Then, struggling to control his tears, he haltingly resumed his statement and declared that despite the lack of public support for the Korean and later Vietnam conflicts, American troops fought in both with bravery equal to that shown in any other U.S. war.

"I hope we do have this memorial...to pass on to our kids and grandchildren an appreciation of this heritage—that freedom is not free," the former astronaut said.

No Opposition to Bill

Oakar said the bill, which has the support of 107 House members and no apparent opposition, would seek to avoid the "pitfalls" encountered by the privately financed Vietnam Veterans Memorial, which engendered substantial controversy before it was built.

Under an amendment already agreed to by members of the House Administration subcommittee on libraries and memorials, the bill would assign responsibility for the memorial to the American Battle Monument Commission, a federal agency that supervises monuments both here and abroad.

Col. William Ryan Jr., the commission's director of operations and finance, told Oakar the project's cost should be less than $5 million. If the bill passes, Ryan said his group would choose an architect, rather than conduct a competition as was the case for the Vietnam memorial, and the design would then be submitted to the federal Commission of Fine Arts for approval.