

This is a complete transcript of the oral history interview with **Torrey Maynard Johnson (CN 285, T4)** for the Billy Graham Center Archives. No spoken words which 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 of the speaker.

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

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

[] Words in brackets are comments made by the transcriber.

This transcript was created by Marissa Lemmen and Paul Ericksen and was completed in April 2001.

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 285, Tape 4. Oral history interview with Torrey Maynard Johnson by Robert Shuster on February 13, 1984.

SHUSTER: This is an interview with Dr. Torrey Johnson by Robert Shuster for the Billy Graham Center Archives of Wheaton College. This interview took place on February the 13th, at 10:30 at the offices of the Graham Archives. Dr. Johnson, before we started the tape, you were just telling me about a comment someone had made about the early influence of Youth for Christ. What was that again?

JOHNSON: Within the last week someone whose name I don't recall was making some observations about our time and the contributions that Youth for Christ made to the Evangelical situation today. He said that probably Youth for Christ did more to bring various groups of Evangelicals together for whom there'd been barriers in the past than anyone else. Youth for Christ under God was able to bring the Pentecostals on one hand and the Presbyterians and the Episcopalians on the other hand, the non-liturgical and the liturgical, the Arminian and the Calvinists, the Free Methodists and the Christian Reformed, was able to bring all these people together under a single banner and for a particular single cause. They did more along that line to break down the differences and concentrate on the things upon which we agreed than any other particular group. And I think that's true in this respect: that in our leadership we had men representing all of these different groups. For instance, we had Watson Argue, who had the leading Assembly of God church in Canada, as our director in Winnipeg and also the regional director or vice president for western Canada. On the other hand, we had Canon Tom Livermore of the Church of England, a very distinguished clergyman of the state church, as our president for Youth for Christ in Britain. In Seattle, Washington, we had Myron Boyd, who later became a bishop of the Free Methodist Church, as our Youth for Christ director in that city while he was also pastor of the College Church, which is a Free Methodist school, at the Seattle Pacific College. So we could break down all these different barriers between, and we were united on a single cause, and that was to bring young people face to face with the claims of Christ upon them, win them to the Savior, channel them into the local churches of their choice, and establish them in the work of the kingdom of God. I think that's one of the great contributions that Youth for Christ made to our time so that even today denominational persuasions and affiliations are secondary, I think, in the life of most Evangelical believers.

SHUSTER: When...at what point in Youth for Christ did you attempt to start doing this, did you attempt to bring in the...all different repre...views from Evangelicals?

JOHNSON: I was raised in the Evangelical Free Church. The Evangelical Free Church has pretty much that same philosophy. The Evangelical Free Church is constituted in such a way that moderate Calvinists, moderate Arminians, people who are moderate in regard to the Holy Spirit can find a common fellowship there. I presume that's a part of my background. Plus the fact that I was greatly influenced by the Moody Bible Institute, the Moody Church, the work of Paul Rader, and other interdenominational and nondenominational people in my background and in my experience. I think I brought that with me to Youth for Christ. But more than that, the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit raised up men from all these different persuasions who suddenly became aware in a

new way that the things that separated us were secondary and sometimes peripheral, and the things that could unite us were supremely important, and we got down to the supremely important things.

SHUSTER: In the early days of YFC was there ever any...anyone who felt the opposite way, that the outreach was too broad, there were groups that should be restricted or should be excluded?

JOHNSON: I can't say that we had much difficulty along those lines. [bumps microphone] Whatever difficulty we may have experienced would have been personality-wise for one thing. People may have had private ambitions for their own group, and per...also perhaps some denominational leaders that were afraid that we would disturb their religious organizational structure. But otherwise in Youth for Christ we never inquired as to a man's background. We never talked about, "He's a Pentecostal, and he's a Presbyterian, and they belong to the Assemblies of God, and that's a Plymouth brother." Those things didn't even occur to us to talk about that. We loved Jesus Christ supremely. We had an overwhelming burden to win people to Christ, and we were pretty occupied with that kind of a job so the other never really occurred to us.

SHUSTER: Let me read you a quote from a *Time* magazine article from February 4th, 1946, about Youth for Christ. It's about four columns, and it describes all the meetings that are going around in the United States and in Europe too and the outreach of Youth for Christ. And the last two paragraphs read, "According to Torrey Johnson, President...." "According to Torrey Johnson, President Truman, after a YFC rally in Olympia, Washington, said, 'This is what I hoped would happen in America.' But not all Americans.... 'This is what I hoped would happen in America,' end quote. Not...but not all Americans are so sure. Some view with alarm the pious trumpeting of the Hearst press on YFC's behalf, also in support of right-winged, rabble-rousing 'nationalists' like Gerald L.K. Smith. Of this kind of criticism, Johnson says, quote, 'Maybe he [Hearst] saw a million people across the country coming to YFC rallies every week, and he decided to get in on the selling end. I've never gotten a dime from him, and we've never met. We don't want anything to do with Gerald L.K. Smith or anyone with a political ax to grind. YFC is a hundred percent religious movement,' end quote. Criticism of YFC has been religious as well as political. Associate editor Harold Fey of the *Christian Century* has scathingly compared its, quote, 'milky abstractions,' end quote, with the, quote, 'solid meat,' end quote, of the great evangelists in the American religious tradition. In Youth for Christ, quote, 'A great deal is said about salvation, but nobody attempted to define it,' end quote. How do you react to these kind of criticisms that...from that quote from *Time*?

JOHNSON: Well, I could make two or three observations. First of all, you learn to live both with your compliments and with your criticisms. And secondly, those who criticize you might be a compliment to you if you understand that. In other words, we're as proud of our enemies as we are of our friends. If..."Woe when all men speak well of you." [Luke 6:26] The...the...if I was to do into a deeper level of some criticism of different kinds when Mr. Fey of the *Christian Century* mentions that we're not in the tradition of evangelists of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, he really is speaking from ignorance rather than from any studied evaluation. It is true that Jonathan Edwards was profound. It is true also, with his legal mind, that Charles Grandison Finney was quite profound. At the same time, D.L. Moody was very simple, and also Billy Bray, the Cornwall miner evangelist was very simple. The church in those days had men with profound intellects but a



warm heart, and it also had men with a warm heart but appealed to the general multitude in a different kind of way. So it was in Youth for Christ. We had some that were intellectually very strong, well-trained. Others were very simple. And if you put it all together, it was more or less about the same so far as those things were concerned. The...naturally, anything coming from the *Christian Century* at that particular time would look with disfavor upon anything thoroughly Evangelical because basically, the *Christian Century* was a liberal, Protestant magazine, and from their point of view they'd have difficulty with us.

SHUSTER: What was the involvement, if any, of William Randolph Hearst with the early days of YFC?

JOHNSON: That's an interesting thing. I never met William Randolph Hearst. I would like really to have met him just out of curiosity because he's a very famous American and quite a mysterious American actually. He lived out in San Simeon, California, up on a mountain in a castle, removed from the public. And he did his work primarily from that castle. I doubt that he ever visited his newspapers (not never)...but rarely visited his newspapers or his people. But he was an autocrat. He was a dictator. And he ruled with an iron hand. He saw what happened in Chicago Stadium when thirty thousand people attended a rally. He heard about what was going on across America and how this thing was spreading through servicemen to different parts of the world. I think he may have had a two-fold motive. On the one hand he may have had, and I like to think he had, a good motive of doing something helpful for his own country. He was a great patriot. He was a loyal American. He supported those causes that he felt were...that held traditional American values. So I like to think at that...from one point of view he wanted to help. On the other point of view, I think he saw the possibility of widening the circulation of his newspapers. He sent a telegram to the editor of the *Chicago Herald Examiner*, which was the morning paper in Chicago. He had two papers in Chicago at that time: the *Evening American*, and the *Herald Examiner* in the morning. And he sent a telegram to the editor of the *Herald Examiner*, which came into the hands of a very good friend of ours, Wesley Hartzell (H-A-R-T-Z-E-double L)...Wesley Hartzell, who was a friend and a supporter of Youth for Christ. And so I came into touch with that particular telegram when he said, "Puff Youth for Christ!" And at that time we hit the front pages then of the Chicago papers, and we hit his papers. I think he had about thirteen or fourteen daily newspapers in large cities across the country including Boston, New York, Seattle, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and so on. And so he puffed us in big papers and Sunday supplements and so on all across the country and no doubt greatly increased the circulation of his papers because then the other newspapers began to pick it up. And when Billy [Graham] came along later and in Los Angeles and then also in Boston, and more particularly in Boston than in Los Angeles, one of the papers in Boston picked him up, and they had a great deal to do with the circuit of meetings that Billy Graham made in New England following his Boston campaign because the newspapers followed him to every city and gave a report daily in the paper of what Billy was doing. So I think they sort of got on the band wagon in that respect.

SHUSTER: So a kind of a parallel of what happened earlier with Youth for Christ.

JOHNSON: Yes.

SHUSTER: I've got a list here of some of the people who seem to have been major figures in the early days of Youth for Christ, and I wonder as...as I mention each name if you could just give me a brief description of what they did in the early days and your impressions of them. And if you... also how they first became involved in Youth for Christ. The Palermo brothers, Louis and Phil.

JOHNSON: Louie and Phil Palermo, two of the most wonderful young men (now have grown a little older) of our time. One played the accordion. The other played the mandolin. They were members of what they called the Midnight Brigade, a group of young fellows off on the streets of Chicago that went around in the slum areas, the areas of deterioration in the city, and held street meetings, oftentimes in very tough neighborhoods where gangs and gangsters were. And out of that work there, they got into more formal evangelistic work. They worked with an evangelist from the Evangelical Free Church up in the Dakotas and Minnesota and so on. And these two Italian boys married two Scandinavian girls. Two black-haired young fellows with blond girls for their wives, and they became a quartet of singers and players. And they settled in around Minneapolis. And having settled in around Minneapolis, they came in touch with Youth for Christ in Minneapolis under George Wilson, who is now the executive vice president of the Billy Graham organization and was then the head of Youth for Christ in Minneapolis. And George came to me and said, "Torrey, we need these fellows. They've been helping us up in this area. We need them to go to Italy." And I said, "Well, if they can raise their money, we'll send them." They raised their money. They went to Italy. George Wilson and I met them in Italy, so we had meetings in Rome, Naples, and other cities in Italy where we were welcomed by the mayors and leaders of the community. And from that time on the singing Palermos found a great call to countries around the world. So they traveled the world over for a whole lifetime under the sponsorship of Youth for Christ. They spent over thirty-five years until they retired in the work of Youth for Christ and in Billy Graham campaigns. Neither one of them were formally trained in music. Neither one of them were great musicians. Neither one of them were very articulate in preaching. We used to say about them, "They can't sing. They can't talk. They can just draw crowds and bring blessings" [Shuster laughs].

SHUSTER: Andrew Wyzenbeek.

JOHNSON: Andrew Wyzenbeek was an inventor and a manufacturer in Chicago. He was a Hollander from the old country, and to his dying day he had an accent. He lived to be about ninety-five, I think, years of age, just died a few days ago...a few months ago. And he was a...he came to this country as an atheist, and I believe found the Lord under the ministry of Paul Rader. So he was a great admirer of Paul Rader and supported his work. And then when the Paul Rader tabernacle disintegrated and finished its work he went back to the Moody Memorial Church. He had a flute that he played, and he played in a band and ministered in that way. His children were musicians, and he had a daughter that played the violin very well. He was a supporter of the Christian Business Men's Committee, the Breakfast Club movement, and a great supporter of Youth for Christ. He used to say about me when I would come and visit him in his factory and speak for his men, "Well, Torrey, how much do you want now?" He felt every time that I went there that I was expecting a check for the work. And he had his pen out, wrote his check, and was a good supporter from the very earliest days.

SHUSTER: Charles Templeton.

JOHNSON: Charles Templeton of Toronto, Canada, is a most unique person, multi-talented, in some ways the most talented Christian leader I ever knew [door closes]. When I first met him, he had recently been converted to Christ in the Nazarene movement. He had been a cartoonist for one of the big papers in Toronto. Then when he was converted he began to use those cartoons in meetings, testimony meetings, youth meetings, and so on, have an easel and chalk or paint, whatever it was, and illustrate what he was talking about. He fell in love with a Mexican girl, Connie, was a great singer. He also could sing so they sang duets and so on. They married. They sang duets and so on and from giving his testimony he began to preach. Then he came into a church in Canada, downtown church in Canada, which occupied an abandoned sort of cathedral that others had given up on, seating I think perhaps fifteen hundred, maybe two thousand people, and jam-packed it, week after week for the soul-winning ministry. He came to Chicago.

SHUSTER: He was the pastor there at the...?

JOHNSON: He became the pastor there. He came to Chicago for a campaign at the First Nazarene Church on the South Side of Chicago at the time of our Chicago Stadium rally.

SHUSTER: That was about 1944.

JOHNSON: That was October 1944. He called me up. He said, "I'm a preacher and I've got a campaign on the South Side. I hear something about what you're doing. Could I come to that rally?" I said, "You not only can come, but you sit on the platform." So he came. He sat on the platform. He saw the place jammed with people. He saw the Holy Spirit working. He was greatly impressed. At the close of the meeting he said, "I'm going to call Toronto immediately. I'm going to rent Massey Hall," which is like the Carnegie Hall in New York or the Philharmonic in Los Angeles or Orchestra Hall in Chicago, "and use that for Saturday nights." He did. He went home. He rented it. He filled Massey Hall for years. Beside that, he and his wife went out on campaigns, had their church, was in Youth for Christ rallies, was vice president of Youth for Christ in eastern Canada. He went with Billy Graham and Straton Shufelt and myself and others on our first tour and crusade in Europe, and he was one of the speakers there. Since that time he went on to other things. He's now out of the ministry. He professes to be an agnostic at this moment, but I believe that there are evidences that the Holy Spirit is working and hopefully before he departs this life we'll hear that he's come back to the faith of those earlier days. There's a long story to be told about his career in between, but I don't know if you want me to occupy with that now.

SHUSTER: Well, let me ask you this. How would you describe him as a speaker, as a preacher? What were his most striking characteristics?

JOHNSON: In Youth for Christ probably...or in connection with Youth for Christ, we probably had three most eloquent men. One was Jack Shuler of Los Angeles, the son of Robert Shuler, who was pastor of the Trinity Methodist Church in downtown Los Angeles. His father was a great preacher, soul-winner, also interested in social issues, reformer, fought for prohibition in California. I think he ran for governor maybe on the prohibition ticket and just lost out being

governor. This was the son, Jack. He was a dramatic preacher. Charles Templeton was eloquent in a different way. I think those were the two best speakers we had in the movement. Now Jack Shuler was not in the movement, but alongside of, and we were the vehicle for many of his campaigns. Charles Templeton was in the movement. They were the two outstanding preachers we had and probably Charles Templeton was the most versatile of all of our preachers.

SHUSTER: And what do you mean by that, most versatile?

JOHNSON: He could adapt to the situation very well. If it was evangelistic, he could preach an evangelistic message. If it was devotional, he could be devotional. If it was on what we call the deeper life...deeper Christian life, he could give something along those lines. He was not an expositor of the Word. He did not know his Bible as thoroughly as some others. He loved it. He preached it, but I wouldn't call him a Bible teacher.

SHUSTER: Do you recall any examples or illustrations of that versatility?

JOHNSON: [Pauses] No, I can't really. I think...I think he had a danger. Maybe that will help a little bit. The danger with Charles Templeton as I think of him as a preacher was this: that he was so eloquent, the danger was that you were taken up with his eloquence more than with the substance. For instance, I remember in Glasgow, Scotland. He preached one day in Glasgow, and he gave a marvelous message on the cross, but he never quoted one single verse of Scripture in that particular message. So we talked with him later on, Billy Graham and Strat Shufelt and I, and we said, "Charles, why don't you identify that more particularly with passages of Scripture. God has promised to bless his Word, and maybe God's Word is best preached in his words." So, when we got to Aberdeen, Scotland, he gave the same message. But he took that counsel and put a lot of Scripture into it, and it seemed to be much more forceful. So far as versatility, I can't give you much more than that.

SHUSTER: You said there were three eloquent...three really eloquent speakers associated with YFC: Jack Shuler, Charles Templeton, and who was the third?

JOHNSON: The third would be Billy Graham.

SHUSTER: Were you surprised when Templeton said he had become an agnostic?

JOHNSON: Let me say I was disturbed. While he was with us we had many discussions about education and formal training and so on. All he had was two years of high school, and he began to recognize that he could use some education. And so in the course of time we advised him...I personally advised him very strongly and I think Billy Graham and others did too to go to the Moody Bible Institute. On the basis of having two years of high school at that time he could have gone to the Moody Bible Institute and gotten some good Bible training. And then we felt from there he might go on and finish his college and perhaps go on to seminary if he felt that was God's will for him. Instead of that, because the National Council of Churches had no evangelists [pauses], he was enticed by them and went with them. And through certain machinations that I don't have the detail of it was arranged for him in spite of the fact that he was not a high school

graduate, he was not a college graduate, he could become a special student at Princeton Theological Seminary. And he went to Princeton, and I think his background of convictions concerning the basic doctrines of the church may have been disturbed or maybe even more so, more deeply so shaken. And he became an evangelist for the National Council of Churches and went around and drew great crowds of people both because he had the right to have crowds, he could speak, and secondly on the basis of the momentum that had been developed for him in Youth for Christ and in his church. But he didn't stay with them. He went to the United Church of Canada and became their evangelist, and then gave that up for various reasons and went into newspaper work and became the editor of a paper and then the editor of the largest magazine in Canada, then radio and television, and the writing of books and novels, and very versatile in those kind of talents, very successful. But I think his faith was shaken when it wasn't well grounded.

SHUSTER: Well, what about Billy Graham?

JOHNSON: Well, he's my dear friend whom I love so dearly. What shall I say about him?

SHUSTER: How...how did you first meet?

JOHNSON: My recollection is that while I had a church in Chicago called the Midwest Bible Church, and I had a broadcast on Sunday afternoon, the *Chapel Hour* from five to six on Sunday afternoon [bumps table holding microphone], that Billy Graham listened in on that broadcast. And I think he was attracted to my preaching. My preaching was what you call down-to-earth, straightforward, direct, evangelistic preaching, calling hell "hell" and heaven "heaven", and using the terminology that you find in the King James Version of the Bible. That attracted him, being a Southern...Southerner, not a Southern Baptist at that time, but a Southerner. It appealed to him in that way, and he came, and we got to know each other. And he began to do some speaking for me, and we began to associate together. He loved me. I loved him. I suppose it was love and admiration at first sight on the part of both of us. Then a mutual friend, Robert Van Kampen, Sr., came to me one day. He said, "Torrey, Billy loves you, and Billy is greatly influenced by what you tell him." He put it even stronger than that. He actually said, "Billy will do whatever you tell him." Well, that wasn't true, but he might be influenced by what I said. He said, "We'd like to have Billy as our pastor at the Village Church in Western Springs, and if you say so Billy probably will come." I talked to Billy, and I thought it was a good opportunity. It was a basement church. They were going nowhere and had already arrived there. So I thought it was a good thing, and I don't say Billy did it because I recommended it to him, but there were others also, including Bob Van Kampen, and he went to that church in the basement. And our friendship continued and grew. My friends became his friends. His friends became my friends. So when we started Youth for Christ I said, "Billy, we want you to speak at the first rally." That was the confidence I had in Billy. I might have called on one of the great preachers of Chicago or some other place, but I just felt that Billy was God's man. So I called on him to preach at the first rally, and he did, and there were forty or more people in response to the invitation that night. That was God's indication of favor upon Youth for Christ, upon me, upon Billy Graham in that way. So Billy continued with us. He went on to different rallies here and there. That was in the spring of 1944, in May of 1944. In the fall of 1944 after our meeting in Chicago Stadium, Billy and Ruth Graham and Mrs. Johnson and myself went to Florida. Billy had an attack of mumps, and it looked as though it might be something quite

critical. So he went down to rest up after all the hard work of the weeks before because...becau...before the Chicago Stadium rally, Billy went out on meetings every night. He even has his associates now do preaching and also promoting the big rallies. So he was tired. He and Ruth went down....

SHUSTER: These were mostly meetings at single churches?

JOHNSON: Single...single rallies and churches, whatever doors opened, mostly rallies. At that time we could hold rallies any night. The movement of the Holy Spirit was there, and you could call a special rally anytime. So we went to Florida together, and we were wrestling with what Billy should do. Ruth, I think, wanted Billy to go to seminary or preferred that he go to seminary. Billy also had the opportunity of going into the chaplaincy of the military. And there was Youth for Christ. Well, I saw certain dangers. I saw on the one hand that a seminary can be very helpful to you, but a seminary can also take away the sharp edge of your evangelistic knife or sword if you're not careful, and I was concerned that Billy would lose that sharp edge. Secondly, I was concerned also that if you go into the military you have to live within the restrictions that the military has, and you can't have perfect freedom to do exactly what you want. And here was Youth for Christ with a wide open door. So I prayed that God would lead Billy in the direction of Youth for Christ. And he came on then, and he was vice president, first vice president, and he was the first full-time employee. You see, I was not a full-time employee. I was heading a church, and my support was from my church. My time was voluntary. So Billy became the first full-time evangelist of Youth for Christ, and then he went on from that in various ways with his work. I think one interesting observation that could be made is this: that as Billy went along, he developed more and more campaigns. We went to Europe, and when we went to Europe we wondered...we knew somebody had to go back again. This was the first invasion of Europe as it were. We knew somebody had to go back. And on the basis of Charles Templeton's preaching, my preaching, and Billy Graham's preaching, the Holy Spirit seemed to indicate definitely that Billy Graham was the man to go back to Europe. So Billy went back I think the following Fall with Cliff Barrows, and that was an awful Winter: snow, cold, difficult, the immediate post-war period. People didn't have coal for their stoves. They don't have central heating so you have to have a heating...heater in every room. And those dear fellows.... And food was scarce, so their diet was sparse for one thing, and many of the places they slept were cold. And there was many a night when they slept with their clothes on as it were and a shawl over their head and so on. And they went through the whole Winter in campaigns in little obscure places and other places, and the Holy Spirit moved. And out of that came the other campaigns that finally led up to Harringay and Wimbledon and so on. But long about 1950, into there, (whatever it was, I forget the date), we had a committee of the Christian Business Men's Committee in Los Angeles that put on a tent campaign every year. And they'd had some good campaigns with Hyman Appelman, Paul Rood, probably Bob Jones, John R. Rice, evangelists at that day that were in their prime. Now they were casting about for others. They looked over the Youth for Christ fellows and those that were with them. But they didn't think that our men had matured enough or didn't have enough as individuals to carry the load. So they decided to have a campaign with two men together as a team. One preach one night, the other fellow preach the next night and so on. I was responsible for Billy's schedule. So they wanted Billy Graham and I think either Charles Templeton or Merv Rosell, I forget, for that campaign. One man take one night, the other man the next night. And I said, "No, you can't have Billy Graham." I said, "I don't believe in



those kind of campaigns.” One man preaches on one subject one night. The next man comes in the following night and preaches on another subject, and he can’t build like building blocks. There’s nothing...[pauses].

SHUSTER: Consistency.

JOHNSON: Con...yeah, consecutive about it. I said that one...one of these fellows has got to come for the whole time. Well, they felt otherwise. So they had a campaign I think with Charles Templeton and with...with Merv Rosell, which was good but nothing unusual. The next week they came...next year they came around, and they said, “We’ll take Billy Graham.” And so Billy Graham came the second year [1949], and that was when he had his big campaign. And I’ve often wondered if Billy had gone the first year and alternated night by night if that could have changed the whole picture at that time. That’s something, of course, that lies in the mystery of God. We’ll never know, but those were the facts anyhow. And of course Billy’s gone on through the years as we all know, and you have the records of all of that. And his humility is unchanged. The directness of his message is unchanged. He told me one time, he said, “Torrey, God’s given me one great gift.” This was way back before. “God’s given me one great gift. I have a gift of bringing people to Christ. And that I’ve got to do.” And he’s done a better job at that one thing than most of us put any one thing that we think we do especially good. He has been undeviating. And there’s been many distractions and many pressures to get him into the field of education, to get him into the field of politics, to get him into other things which are good and for some people would be primary, but would have turned him aside from the one thing that he believes and I believe with him God’s called him to do, and that’s to bring people to Christ.

SHUSTER: You mentioned Jack Shuler a little while ago. Why don’t we talk about him for a little bit?

JOHNSON: I didn’t know Jack all that well. Jack was a student at Bob Jones University. Whether he ever graduated or not, I don’t know. I know he had problems there. His father and Bob Jones, Sr., were both Methodists and good friends. They were in the Evangelical, somewhat right-wing segment of the Methodist church, and I know that his father had to intercede for Jack at times because Jack was very strong-willed and strong-headed. I rather think he probably did graduate ultimately but had difficulties along the way, and I think his father had to intervene for him maybe on occasion to keep him back in school. But he was dramatic. He had all the qualities of being an actor. In fact, I think that Hollywood was very much interested in him, and he may even have done some things for Hollywood, and I think he could have made...they could have made of him what they call a star: dramatic, forceful, young, handsome, attractive, warm-hearted, eloquent, a great preacher, and a good promoter. He died very suddenly, I think, in his early forties rather mysteriously, I think, either a heart attack or something on the streets of Los Angeles, cut down right in the midst of his campaigning.

SHUSTER: When you say a good promoter, what do you mean?

JOHNSON: In his ca...for his ca...for his campaigns, he had certain devices by which to attract crowds of people. For instance, I think he had one sermon one time that comes to me now. He had

one sermon entitled "The Greatest Preacher that Ever Lived." At the time he was preaching that sermon...oh, he said this...he said, "Tomorrow night, the greatest preacher of all time will be here." People then thought he was referring to Billy Graham. So they would come on the second night, expecting to see Billy Graham. Actually, he talked about the Holy Spirit, and He is come. He will convict you of sin and so on. I thought at the time that that subject was a little bit deceptive because people would come and they'd be disappointed, and they'd be turned off from what he had to say later. But be that as it may, he had other things of...gimmicks and so on that probably were legitimate. And I remember he'd bring his father to his meeting who was well-known, and his grandfather who before him was also a Methodist preacher. So he'd announce that tomorrow night I'm going to have my father, and I'm going to have my grandfather, and I think his grandfather was maybe in his nineties already. Little very innocent thing, but wholesome, to attract a crowd.

SHUSTER: You mentioned that you thought he was a very dramatic preacher.

JOHNSON: Yes.

SHUSTER: You can think of an illustration of that or...?

JOHNSON: Yes. I can think of Simeon that bore the cross of Christ. And he would walk across the stage imitating how he thought Simeon was. When Christ seemed to falter under the load of the cross, Simeon, this man who was supposedly was a black man, came and took that cross and picked up that cross from the shoulders of our Lord and bore that cross. Very dramatic and very beautiful. Then he could also dramatize Pilate when Pilate washed his hands in a basin of water and said, "I am free from the blood of this man." And he would wash his hands in that fashion, and you just felt like you were seeing Pilate right there before your own eyes.

SHUSTER: You also said earlier that he was not really in Youth for Christ, but was kind of parallel with it. What do you mean by that?

JOHNSON: Yes. Well, we had certain men that were that way [bumps table]. We had certain men that were that way, most evangelists, educators, and businessmen and women that they were our friends, and they were sympathetic and supportive for our cause. At the same time, they saw Youth for Christ as a vehicle to be a blessing in what they were doing. Jack Shuler was one of those. He was an evangelist, campaigning. He was alongside of us. He was sympathetic to us. He supported us. He preached at Winona Lake at our big conferences and so on. And one day he...when he would preach for instance at Winona Lake, someone from some city would hear him and say, "Gee, we ought to have him for a campaign." Then the Youth for Christ people in that city who had connections with all of the Evangelical forces of the city, from the liturgical to the non-liturgical, from the Holiness to the Calvinistic, he would organize those people behind the campaign, and Youth for Christ became the catalyst to tie together all these elements for the campaign for that particular man. And Merv Rosell and Jack Shuler and others like them got a lot of campaigns sponsored by Youth for Christ in many cities. So they were alongside of us. They were supportive of us. We were supportive of them. We had a common ground upon which we could work together. It was beautiful. The same thing was true of the educators. Our early supporters were Dr. [V. Raymond] Edman of Wheaton College, Dr. Bob

Jones, Sr., Dr. John Brown of John Brown University, Dr. Louie Talbot, the president of Biola College in California, men of that kind. They were supportive of Youth for Christ. They helped us in many, many different ways. At the same time, we became the field of opportunity for them to get students. And some of those schools in those days really built their schools on Youth for Christ. Bob Jones, more than any other perhaps, built in those days when he was struggling in Cleveland, Tennessee, and when he moved to Greenville, South Carolina. In Greenville, Ten...no, in Cleveland, Tennessee, the school was rather a small school, but our Youth for Christ men were enamored of Bob Jones, Sr., and he preached in our rallies, and then he promoted his schools...the school. And many of our rally men felt that that was a good school to send their students to, so they sent them there. And there are some places that sent as many as forty or fifty students in a single year to that school, to the Moody Bible Institute. They were very supportive of us. Very interesting commentary there. I think I mentioned that to you before that Dr. Wil Houghton was the president of the Moody Bible Institute, and he was very wary of us to begin with that we might be, not only non-church, but anti-church. He felt that maybe we had a philosophy the church isn't doing the job, so we got to do it for them. Well, we never had that idea. Our idea was, the church is doing a job. We're going to help them do it. When he saw that, he got behind us. And he also got a lot of students as a result. So the Christian schools of America prospered as they supported and cooperated with Youth for Christ.

SHUSTER: Now, of course, Bob Jones is...one of the things he's remembered for is being very much of a separatist. Did any...did he show any indications of that in association with Youth for Christ? Any objections to your very wide range of people that you attracted?

JOHNSON: In the first days that wasn't true. In the first days of Youth for Christ, Bob Jones, Sr., had no problems whatever with Youth for Christ and all the different elements that were identified with Youth for Christ because we had all of those elements from the very beginning. Later, when prominence came to some of these younger men, it may have been difficult for some of the older men to gracefully realize, "We were center stage before. Now our position has to be secondary, and these younger fellows have to come along." I can illustrate that for you very vividly by a campaign that took place in Chicago under the Christian Business Men's Committee. It was held in what they call the Chicago Roller Rink, which was, I think, at Ohio Street and Lakeshore Drive in Chicago. That campaign, sponsored by the Christian Business Men's Committee, ran for several weeks under the direction of Mr. Frank Sheriff who was the chairman of the committee. He had one week with Paul Rood, another week with John R. Rice, another week with Bob Jones, Sr., probably a three-week campaign. The Saturday nights were reserved for Youth for Christ. They didn't want to compete with Youth for Christ, which was center stage in the Evangelical movement in Chicago at that time. The campaign didn't go too well, and the great crowds would be on Saturday night. And I remember very vividly, personally, standing in some corner there at the place when they discussed the Saturday nights. And they wanted the Saturday night for Bob Jones.

SHUSTER: When who discussed, the executive committee or...?

JOHNSON: The executive committee and with...I remember with John Rice among others particularly. I've other occasions with one or two of the others, but this particular time, they wanted the Saturday night because that's when the crowd was there. And the rationale for what

they said was, "Well, these young fellows can't carry it." But at the same time there was also, in my perception, a feeling, "Well, if the big crowd came for the young fellow on Saturday night, it sort of shows up the rest of us who don't get the crowds on certain other nights of the week." So that was definitely an element there that...of tension. And I think it was harder for the older men sometimes to move a little bit on one side and make room for the younger fellows coming along. And I rather think, for instance, in *Sword of the Lord* magazine, John Rice very strongly and disparagingly spoke of Youth for Christ because we used airplanes to get around. We had to. We were moving fast, and those were the early days of air travel. We were wasting God's money going by plane. And also that we used gimmicks, like they had a trick horse, you know, that could count the number of disciples and so on, little things of that sort. We never had that. Those were people that came in. But later on he used planes and later on he used the trick horse and so on. So I think there could be perhaps, and God forbid if I'm wrong, a little jealousy that came in. And if jealousy comes in then you have to justify your position. And you justify your position even by exalting yourself or denigrating somebody else. And I think that is the juncture where the cleavage came between certain ones and Youth for Christ and certain ones and Billy Graham.

SHUSTER: You mean people like John R. Rice and Bob Jones?

JOHNSON: Yes. I don't think the issue, if you press it right down, was fundamental. I think it was otherwise. However, I want to...I don't want to be unkind.

SHUSTER: Uh-huh.

JOHNSON: You know, Scripture says that God's the judge.

SHUSTER: What about Bob Pierce?

JOHNSON: A great man. A truly great man. He was smarter than he knew. He was wiser than he perceived. He was a generation ahead in the field of what we call holistic gospel. He knew back in those early days of Youth for Christ that if you were going to effectively win certain people to Christ and penetrate certain cultures for Christ, there was more that was required than simply preaching the gospel. There was the living of it, and there was the provision that Christian compassion can provide over and above. That's how he got into the work of World Vision. He saw these orphans that were dying without food.

SHUSTER: Where?

JOHNSON: In China. He saw them there. He saw the widows, the old people. He saw the general populace in need of food and clothing. He knew you couldn't talk to a man that Christ could satisfy his need while he had a hungry stomach. You'd better put something in his stomach and then tell him Christ could meet his need. And now, we've come a whole generation beyond that, and we've discovered that Bob Pierce was right, that when you've preached the gospel there are certain elements involved in it that'll make it so much more effective.

SHUSTER: How did he become involved in YFC?

JOHNSON: Well, Bob Pierce came to my office in Chicago one day broken in spirit. He had had disappointments in gospel work. He said, "I'm through. I've had it." He said, "I can't go on anymore." He says, "You've got to give me a job." I'd never met him. I said, "What can you do?" He said, "I'll do anything you want." He said, "I'll carry your suitcase. I'll polish your shoes. I'll do anything. You've got to give me a job." We prayed. I said, "Well, why don't we start selling magazines." We had a little magazine. "I'll start you out in San Diego. You can work your way up the coast," because he was from California. So he went to California, and he started with those magazines in the south and preached a little bit here and there. He had gone to, I think, Pasadena College, which is a Nazarene school in California, in Pasadena, California, didn't graduate, drop-out. But...so he started up and did a little preaching along the way. He came up to Seattle, Washington, where Byron Boyd was pastor of the College Church of Seattle Pacific College, now University, and was also director of Youth for Christ and had more to do, both in his church and in the college and in his denomination as he could handle. And he saw potential in Bob Pierce, and Bob Pierce was invited to be the director of Youth for Christ in Seattle. And Bob took it, and they met in the Moore Theater, downtown Seattle. It seats about twelve hundred people. And that was the embarkation point for servicemen to the Pacific theater of war: soldiers, sailors, marines, etcetera. That was their last place before they crossed the seas. And those were dangerous times. That auditorium was jammed every week, thousands and thousands won to Christ. Many of them died out in the Pacific. Others who didn't die carried the message of Youth for Christ and the method of Youth for Christ with them and developed Youth for Christ rallies among service people and national populations and with missionaries across the seas. That was how...those were the Hillis brothers [Don and Dick]. Don Hillis and I forget his brother's name got started in Youth for Christ in China through the GIs and otherwise [coughs]. They were missionaries out there. So from that Bob did such an excellent job we made him the vice president for the Pacific Northwest. And you see our fellows not only had a rally and had an area, but many of them that were gifted to either sing or preach, they answered the call to meetings all over the world. So we sent Bob Pierce to China, and when he got to China he saw the poverty. He saw the orphans. He saw the widows. He saw the need of the people, and in a volume written by Franklin Graham he describes...well, he actually quotes Bob Pierce and how he got started that way with one orphan. And out of that the support of many orphans and orphanages and schools and hospitals and evangelistic work there and elsewhere, that was the beginning of World Vision. He had a man...a man with a great heart, marvelous insight. He could speak for an hour and a half or two hours and hold a person spell-bound with prophetic insight as to where we were and where we were going and how we could get where we ought to get. I have nothing but admiration for the ministry of Bob Pierce. And he was a Nazarene by the way [laughs].

SHUSTER: When he came back from China, then he left YFC to found World Vision or was there [?]?...?

JOHNSON: Yes. He ultimately left...well, Youth for Christ. Youth for Christ, you see, gave birth to so many other institutions and organizations. Youth for Christ couldn't contain all the great men that God raised up in connection with us. It was impossible, I think, that...for Youth for Christ to have permanently contained all these men. I can't conceive of anything but it became the mother. I don't think Youth for Christ could have held all these. Maybe if Youth for Christ would have had a better leadership than I provided and others provided they could, but I think this was God's way.

Billy Graham has his organization, Bob Pierce, Bob Evans, so on. It became the spawning ground, and I'm grateful.

SHUSTER: What about Paul Maddox?

JOHNSON: Paul Maddox was a chaplain in the United States Air Force. When I first met him he was a lieutenant colonel in the European command of the United States Air Force, chief of chaplains, European command under General Mark Clark who was the commander of the European command for America. We were going to Europe and preaching, and he communicated with me. He said, "I'd like to have you come to Germany. And I will both open the door, escort you and others in Germany in Youth for Christ." He was a Southern Baptist. And he did. He opened the door in Germany for Youth for Christ. I remember one day he took me to the gentleman who was in charge of religious affairs for the American military in Germany. The American military was in charge of religious affairs. It was a very tense time. This was the closing of the Nazi era. This was the finish of the Holocaust and so on, and religion was a very delicate thing. We went in to see the director of religious affairs, an American if you please, a theologian.

SHUSTER: So he was director of religious affairs for Occupied...

JOHNSON: Yes.

SHUSTER: ...Germany, or...?

JOHNSON: Occupied Germany. We went to see him because the chief of chaplains will report to him as to what we were doing, and going to do. So we went to see him. He said to me, "You believe the Bible, don't you?" I said, "Yes, sir." He said, "Your faith is in Jesus Christ." I said, "Yes, sir." He said, "You're a Nazi. Hitler taught them to believe in one book, *Mein Kampf*, and their devotion to Adolf Hitler. You teach them to believe in one book, the Bible, and in Jesus Christ. You're a Nazi." He said, "I'll tell you. We did everything we could to close the doors for you. We're going to continue to close the doors for you if we can. We tried to keep you out of this country." When we left his office, Colonel Maddox said to me, "Torrey, if I could I would have cut his head off and rolled it down the street," not literally, but in a spiritual, godly sense of what he had said. That was our welcome to Germany. But God worked, and what has transpired over the years since that time in many different ways is in part a result of those pioneer days, and Paul Maddox was the man that stuck his neck out for that. And he became...he became, I think, executive vice president probably was his name for the Northwestern Schools in Minneapolis where Billy Graham at that time was president. And Billy...Billy was occupied with his campaigns, and he thought that Paul could run the school for him, and he could talk to Paul on the telephone and give his observations and counsel to Paul, and Paul could carry it out. Well, Paul was a military man, and in the military you don't have democracy. You have an authoritarian system. And Paul exercised the authoritarian system [laughs]. It didn't work out quite that easily.

SHUSTER: When the officer in charge of religious affairs said that they tried to keep YFC out but were not able to, what did he mean by that? Did you know?

JOHNSON: [Pauses] No. I think if I understand the background that it brings to the situation, he was a liberal, and, of course, we were not liberals [train passing in background]. And the liberals didn't like us. They...they...they felt that we were militating against what they were trying to do. And they haven't changed down through the years. It's always been that way. A true liberal can't tolerate a true Evangelical, even a Evangelical that's positive in his attitude and generous in his spirit. The antagonism, "You must be born again." You know, they don't buy that kind of a thing, so he would have welcomed...I'm sure he would have welcomed a delegation from the National Council of Churches, or the World Council of Churches. Now there are true Evangelicals both in the National Council and the World Council, but oftentimes it's a pretty watered-down kind of a situation.

SHUSTER: But if he was in charge why wasn't he just not able to keep YFC out?

JOHNSON: Well, he...I think...I think there's a duality and maybe a conflict in authority in those days as there is even now. We have a three...a tripartite system here. We have the judiciary, we have the executive, and we have the legislative. And there is an area where you wonder where the ultimate responsibility lays. That was brought out so much in the...in the Nixon trials. He was in charge of religious affairs for the military, but I think that was under the Secretary of State. And, of course, Colonel Maddox was under the Secretary of Defense, naturally, in the military. So there would be a little conflict.

SHUSTER: Some room for maneuvering.

JOHNSON: I think so.

SHUSTER: What about George Wilson?

JOHNSON: George Wilson is another great man, great man. If George Wilson were in the business world today, he would qualify in my opinion to be the president of General Motors. He's a business genius. He's not a preacher. He's not a singer. He's a soul-winner, got a tender heart, great insight. The Billy Graham organization and ministry is the extension of Billy Graham through George Wilson. What I'm saying is, there wouldn't be a Billy Graham organization if there wasn't a George Wilson or someone like him taking that place, but I don't know of a man in America...I don't know of a man in America that could do for anybody as well and as widely and as long as Billy...as George Wilson has done for Billy Graham. He's a very dear brother.

SHUSTER: How did he become involved in the YFC?

JOHNSON: He's a graduate of Northwestern College in Minneapolis under Dr. W.B. Riley. I suppose you could say he was, quote, "Dr. Riley's Sonny Boy," end of quote. He was in charge of the bookstore of the school. Later it became his own bookstore. He could run it better on his own, and he could run it for the school and have a wider ministry. But he was also very close to Dr. Riley, and Dr. Riley was in his declining years, but Dr. Riley's ambition was greater than his health. And we used to say Dr. Riley would pray and say, "Lord, now let me build this one more building." And he felt God would keep him alive to get it done, but before he finished that

building he'd say, "Lord, just let me live long enough to get this done." So he always had another project with which he sort of bribed the Lord to keep him alive [Shuster laughs]. Well, he lived to be I think about nine...eighty-seven, around in there. But George had to be the follow-through man. And George was the man, with the board and others, that pulled these projects through that Dr. Riley envisioned but didn't have the physical strength nor the acumen to do it. He also was responsible for the beginning of the network of radio stations of the Northwestern Schools, which network has been the lifeline, financial lifeline, and in some ways the prayer line also for the Northwestern Schools down through the years, and George pioneered that. So while he was in the school and had the bookstore for the school, he became involved with Youth for Christ, which met in the First Baptist Church. And being that Dr. Riley was the senior minister, George had an open door, and the church never charged anything financially for the use of their property for anything for Youth for Christ. And by the same token the school benefitted. And to show you how the school benefitted, when Billy became the president of the school, it shot up until it became about eleven or twelve hundred students almost overnight. And they were Youth for Christ kids.

SHUSTER: How did you first meet George Wilson?

JOHNSON: Well, George helped me a lot because George had a Saturday night rally in Minneapolis. And I was holding meetings in the Central Evangelical Free Church, but no meeting on Saturday. So we went downtown to the First Baptist Church where George Wilson, also co-director with him was Merv Rosell, but Merv came and went because he was campaigning all the time. I went down, and I stood in the rear of the church. It was jam-packed on Saturday night for a youth rally, and George Wilson and Merv Rosell were running the rally. And that greatly encouraged me to get started right here in Chicago.

SHUSTER: So this was before, then, the Chicago meetings?

JOHNSON: Yes, I think so.

SHUSTER: About 1943, or so?

JOHNSON: Yes, so he...he became an inspiration for me, together with others. Jack Wyrzten was I think the big inspiration, but all of these were contributing things confirming in my mind if God could do it there, he could do it here. From that time on, George and I were good friends. He worked with me traveling through Europe asking God to show us a place to hold our first international conference, which became the predecessor of all the Billy Graham and other evangelistic conferences. And George and I were led of the Holy Spirit to a city called Beatenberg, where the school was run by Frau Doctor Wasserschulpe [?]. Her husband was still alive, but he was bedridden. He was the director, but she under him was the director. And we engaged that place for our first international conference. And George and I were together on that at that time.

SHUSTER: You mentioned that he was a...is a business genius. Can you think of an illustration of that?

JOHNSON: A person has to go to Minneapolis and see what there is. They...they tell me that IBM, when they have some good prospective customers of that stature will recommend or take them to the Billy Graham headquarters to see how George Wilson operates that organization. They have a mailing list alone I think of upward of six million—I can't tell you the exact number, but upward of six million - a mailing list. And with their computers and otherwise he can identify every person that's on that mailing list and what relationship they have to the Billy Graham organization. For instance, on giving, how much they gave, when they gave, when they gave last, and so on, all of it according to territories and just like Sears-Roebuck might do it or some other national organization. I'm sure that that particular thing would be much better and more complete than anything the Republican or Democratic parties have. If either one of those parties had a George Wilson to operate in those areas, it'd be fantastic. I don't think they have anyone that can approach George Wilson. When it comes to building with properties, they started with a very modest little thing, then another. And he knew how to buy an old building and make something of it, and a person would be amazed how he has rehabilitated buildings there until they become outstanding in efficiency and cost and so on for the work of the Lord.

SHUSTER: Did he have any particular part in helping to establish the administration or structure of YFC?

JOHNSON: Yes...yes. George was in the original constitutional convention, and I believe was our first secretary if I remember rightly...first secretary, and...yes, I wouldn't say he had more to do than anybody else on that particular point, but equally as much. His input was good.

SHUSTER: What about Gregorio Tingson?

JOHNSON: Gregorio Tingson? Gregorio Tingson I'm very close to. He was ordained in my church in Chicago. He was ordained there. Thomas Claus of the American Indian Crusade was ordained in my church. Jim Vaus, the converted wire-tapper was converted in my church. Bob Cook was converted in my church. Many of those were not converted but ordained to the ministry in my church. Gregorio Tingson, I believe, our contact with him as an organization was in the Philippines I think, I'm not sure, through Bob Cook and Merrill Dunlop, who went out campaigning for us in that part of the world. And they met this young fellow. I'm not sure about this. And he came to Chicago and we invited him to our rallies because he was from the Philippines and had a burden for world evangelization and the winning of souls.

SHUSTER: Now why did he come to Chicago, to...?

JOHNSON: That was our headquarters.

SHUSTER: So he came specifically...?

JOHNSON: Yes, and he worked out of our headquarters. And we...when we'd have a big rally, we would use Gregorio Tingson. We would use others like him from different countries of the world, go out on these one night stands. And people would come to see them because they were from other countries overseas. And they'd come to see them because they could tell you about what was

happening in those countries both as a result of the war and also what God was doing, and also because they had a message for the Lord. So...and he's an orator. He's an orator. I think later on he went to the Northern Baptist Seminary if I remember....

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