

This is a complete transcript of the oral history interview with **Torrey Maynard Johnson (CN 285, T6)** 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 6. Oral history interview with Torrey Maynard Johnson by Robert Shuster on August 14, 1985.

SHUSTER: ...Interview took place on August fourteenth [sound fades out]...in the offices of the...office of the Archives on Wheaton College campus. Dr. Johnson, I wanted to continue what we had done last time, just getting your remembrances and descriptions of some of the people who were involved in the early days of YFC. Why don't we start with Frank Phillips? How did you first meet him?

JOHNSON: Frank Phillips was from Portland, Oregon. He was the director of Youth for Christ in Portland, Oregon. He was a [tape recorder turned off followed by some intervening blank tape before being restarted]...he was a veterinarian doctor, [train passes in the background] and we used to have a certain amount of fun with him because we called him a horse doctor in our own private circle and so on. But he was a very, very enterprising man and a very fruitful man for the Lord. He was born and raised in Saskatchewan, Canada, as was also his wife. And she could play, as I recall, the marimba very well. And he was a very fine platform personality but particularly a wonderful administrator. Youth for Christ met in Portland in the Civic Auditorium a good deal of the time and had large percentages of young people. And there were many, many hundreds of young people converted to Christ through his ministry. All of our leaders went there from time to time to give a hand and to gather in some of the spiritual harvest for the Lord. Among them was Bob Pierce. Bob Pierce during those days was the director of Youth for Christ in Seattle, Washington. And a friendship grew up between them so that when Bob Pierce left the work of Youth for Christ and began to develop World Vision, Frank Phillips became his executive director. Bob was the promoter and the idea man, and Frank Phillips was the man that could put it all together and keep it all together. And there would not be today a World Vision program if there had not been a Frank Phillips in those days to take care of all the detail, take care of all the finances, take care of the whole program. Later, Frank Phillips and...Frank Phillips moved to California when Bob left Seattle Youth for Christ. He went back into his home territory of Pasadena, California, and brought Frank Phillips down with him. And the work of World Vision continued then at that time under those two men, the one the home manager and the other the on-the-field worker. It was a very, very good combination in those days. Frank was not a great preacher, not a great teacher, but administrator, and a good spiritual brother in the Lord, and died very, very suddenly as he boarded a plane in Los Angeles to go on some trip either in America or overseas, I don't recall which.

SHUSTER: How did he die?

JOHNSON: I think he died of a heart attack. I don't know. I don't know the details. I know that he was stricken there as he was boarding the plane, and I'm not sure that he was still alive when they got him to a hospital, but he died at least very shortly thereafter.

SHUSTER: You mentioned what an effective administrator he was. Can you think of any particular examples of those skills?

JOHNSON: Yes, I can think of some examples the...that will demonstrate it. He was the...he was the executive secretary, at least he was the working leader, of the first Billy Graham campaign in

Portland, Oregon. When they rented a large auditorium, it was Frank Phillips that put together the whole organization for that campaign. In those days Billy had a very...a very...very limited organization. And it was there that twenty-five thousand dollars came in for Billy Graham to start the program called *Decision*. And from that he launched on into other campaigns. What Frank Phillips did at that time was indicative of the kind of work he could do by way of organization, administration, and promotion.

SHUSTER: Did he play any part in forming YFC's organization?

JOHNSON: [Pauses] Yes, he did have something to do with it, but in the earliest, very earliest days his part was a minor part because of the fact that he was a more quiet person, not aggressive in that sense of the word so that he earned his way into the so-called inner circle. But he made a contribution I think quietly but not in a very public way.

SHUSTER: And what was that contribution?

JOHNSON: [pauses] I think Frank...Frank Phillips had a good deal to do with the organization into districts. We had many vice presidents. We had many vice presidents for two reasons. First of all because we were large and growing, and second of all because we had some very strong men all of whom needed a certain amount of recognition. So that we had one in Winnipeg, Canada, Watson Argue, who had the largest Assembly of God church in Canada at that time. He was vice president for western Canada. Then we had Charles Templeton, vice president for eastern Canada, and he was in Toronto, and so on down the line. God raised up some outstanding man in a significant city. And by virtue of the work he was doing and who he was, he became a vice president. Frank Phillips had a good deal to do with that particular phase of the work, apportioning out responsibility to different men in different parts.

SHUSTER: What about J. Edwin Orr? What was his part in YFC?

JOHNSON: Well, his part was not large actually but interesting. He had been a chaplain. In fact, at the time he was a chaplain in the armed forces of the United States. He had come to America to study in the course of his career at Northern Baptist Seminary, received a doctor's degree there at Northern in Chicago. And then, as a result of having been a chaplain he later, on the G.I. Bill of Rights, went to Oxford, and then he went and got a degree at Oxford. But while he was a chaplain in Britain in the Oxford area, I recall very well, he wrote to me several times and he suggested to me that things were very difficult in Britain, and people needed help of various kinds, particularly material help, food and so forth. And in order to run his rally most effectively, it would be a source of real encouragement if he'd get some financial help for donuts and coffee as sort of a USO [United Service Organizations to "provide morale, welfare and recreation-type services to uniformed military personnel"] setup, and under the name of Youth for Christ. But that was about the extent of it. After he got out of the military, then he went back to Oxford and worked on his degree. But at that particular time and that particular place I know in a special way because I've chuckled a little about it, having known him previously, that he wrote to me and suggested those ideas, and we did help him.

SHUSTER: So you were able to start some kind of...something similar to USO for YFC.

JOHNSON: Yes.

SHUSTER: Was that the first time you toured with him or had you known him before?

JOHNSON: No, I...I first knew him when he was brought to Chicago by Dr. Harry Ironside in the 30s. That was in those days when he was touring different places, ten thousand miles in Russia and ten thousand miles on the continent, and, I think, ten thousand miles in Britain. He had wrote some little paperbacks of ten thousand miles on a bicycle without any financial support and how God answered prayer in different ways so he could carry out these ten thousand miles on his bicycle bearing a word of witness for the Lord. And as a result of that he came almost, really remarkably at that time, unknown, (and he had a certain mystique about him), to Chicago among other places and packed the Moody Church on a Sunday morning and a Sunday night with four thousand people at each service. And he related something of answers to prayer and how God honored faith in those days. I'm sure that everything he wrote at that time and everything he did at that time was quite different than what he did in the years after he graduated from Oxford.

SHUSTER: How different?

JOHNSON: Well, the earlier material that he had written was the exuberance of a young fellow that was quite enterprising and opportunistic in some ways too. And what he's written since that time of course is more...very much more substantial.

SHUSTER: That's incredible traveling ten thousand miles on a bike and you said in Russia and United States and [unclear]....

JOHNSON: Different countries. There was a number of those volumes, I forget, three or four or five of them written. I would say however for him that his faith is strong. His confidence in the Word of God never has wavered, and he has...he has major inner burden for revival, and his whole life is bound up with revival and prayer.

SHUSTER: The...what kind of speaker was he in those days? You mentioned that he was speaking to packed houses. How would you describe his preaching or his lecturing?

JOHNSON: He was a conversational type of preacher. He wasn't really a preacher. He just...he had a story to tell, and he told it, conversational way. And....

SHUSTER: Like telling anecdotes or....

JOHNSON: He's not...he's not a Billy Graham type, for instance. He's not a Bible teacher *per se*, but...but he has a good grasp of the history of the church.

SHUSTER: What...what was Eric Hutchings' part in YFC?



JOHNSON: Eric Hutchings came into the work of Youth for Christ in Manchester, England. He was a...an accountant. He and his wife ran a boarding house [unidentified noise in background]. He and his wife ran a boarding house in Manchester, England. Besides that he was also an accountant. They entertained the first team that went to Britain: Billy Graham, myself, Charles Templeton, Strat Shufelt.

SHUSTER: How had you known about them? Why were you in contact with them?

JOHNSON: He came to know us both because he heard of Youth for Christ, and secondly he was an active layman in Manchester. And these laymen had different activities of various kinds, something like Christian Business Men's Committee. So he was our host. And he was a rather short, rotund type of a fellow, a very gifted speaker. And at the height of his ministry...at the height of his ministry he was thought to be by some people the Billy Graham of the British Isles. He never ran a Youth for Christ rally as such to any extent. He may have done some in Manchester, but more a Youth for Christ speaker and an officer of the British Youth for Christ organization under Canon Tom Livermore. He had a burden for Britain and also a burden for Belgium. He did a great deal of Youth for Christ work in Belgium in many places. But he was not particularly a one-night speaker but really a campaigner, a week's campaign here, a week's campaign there, and so on. For instance in Birmingham I remember he held a campaign in the same auditorium seating about five thousand people in which R.A. Torrey, the evangelist, had a campaign many years ago. He had campaigns of one thousand to five thousand or more people both in Britain and in Belgium. And he did a good deal of work in the United States, particularly in the southeast of the United States and got a good deal of support for his work out of the United States. And he's now gone to his reward. He went to his reward several years ago and then not to old either, I don't suppose. At the time of his departure I imagine he might have been in his sixties. But a very good speaker, a good Bible teacher, and very aggressive, and a good evangelist.

SHUSTER: You say he's very aggressive. What...what do you mean by that?

JOHNSON: [pauses] I think what I mean by that: on the platform he knew why he was there, and he went for what he was there to get, and that was people to Christ. It wasn't a sort of take it or leave it. Definite invitation, altar call if you want to call it that and a good follow-up work with those people. And he was anxious to win as many people to Christ as he could.

SHUSTER: You mentioned that he wasn't really a one night speaker but more of a week-long...more of a week-long campaigner. What's the difference between those two types of speakers?

JOHNSON: Oh, there's a great deal of difference between a one-nighter and a campaigner. There are a great many people who can give you a good message for one night, possibly sometimes two or three nights. But it takes a different type of a person to hold an audience for a week, or two, or three weeks of time. I think many men can speak for one or two occasions without a great deal of

background and perhaps without a great deal of depth. It may be their own personal story of how Christ came into their life, or it may be that they are a motivator of a type, and in one night or two nights they can provide a great deal of motivation, but to have more substance, we're all built differently.

SHUSTER: So a campaigner requires what kind of qualities?

JOHNSON: [Pauses] That's a good question. I suppose a man who's going to be a campaigner, there are those spiritual qualities and sometimes intangible qualities you can't put your finger on. I think a man has to have a burden for it for one thing. And he has to have a vision of the possibility of it to know that as we say, "You can do one night's work in one night." To do a week's work it takes a week. And we used to call a one night a "hit or miss." It's a one-shot deal so to speak. It's like a pinch-hitter in a ball game. You're up once. You have to make it on that one occasion. But a man who will...is interested in a week or two of meetings is building night by night, building convictions, building information, building toward response, so the response ought to be increasing as the nights go by so that it's the quality of the character literally. And I can't put my finger on it any better than that at the moment.

SHUSTER: Did Stephen Payne have a part in the early days of YFC?

JOHNSON: No, Steve Payne did not have any substantial part in Youth for Christ. He was our friend. He was a classmate of mine in college. We graduated from Wheaton College together, so we've maintained a friendship over the years, but insofar as anything substantial, no. I would say that Houghton College became a center of interest and support for Youth for Christ in the New York area, upstate New York. Apart from that, I would suppose that Steve would have been prayerfully interested in support.

SHUSTER: How about Paul Freed?

JOHNSON: Paul Freed? Yeah, Paul Freed was very much a part of Youth for Christ.

SHUSTER: And how did he become involved?

JOHNSON: Paul Freed was the Youth for Christ director in Greensboro, North Carolina. He got to Greensboro, North Carolina, because he married a Carolinian girl. Her father was a politician. I think her father ran for governor so that he was in the highest echelon of the Republican party in the state of North Carolina. And so as a result of that and other circumstances he found his way to North Carolina and was Youth for Christ director there. And he tells about him, concerning himself and his work that I had said, "Well, Paul, you've got to go to Europe with us to Beatenberg [Switzerland, site of the YFC World Congress in 1948]." And he had no idea of going there, but he went. And then I sent him to Spain. And when he got to Spain, he got a vision of the need there and also a vision of how to reach the masses by radio. And he testifies that he would not be in radio and Trans World Radio today if I hadn't put my hand on him, said, "You've got to go to Europe," and insisted on his coming to Europe. He got the vision of that good radio work. Paul is more of a one-nighter speakers. He's a great salesman. He's a good promoter. He's what we call a stem

winder. For one night he can tell you in the most moving way what God is doing, particularly behind the Iron Curtain [“the political, military, and ideological barrier erected by the Soviet Union after World War II to seal off itself and its dependent eastern European allies from open contact with the West and other noncommunist areas,” *Britannica.com*], behind the Bamboo Curtain [“a political and ideological barrier between the West and the Communist countries of Asia after the Chinese revolution of 1949,” *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*], and so on. He’s a very aggressive hard worker. His wife has been a good team with him.

SHUSTER: Why...why did you feel that it was so important for him to come to Europe?

JOHNSON: Oh, I recognized he was a leader, and I knew that God was going to do something special, and we wanted leaders there to be a part of that special something that God would do. And so there were certain people upon whom I laid my hand figuratively at that time, that I recognized leadership in them and felt they could benefit greatly.

SHUSTER: What was the major purpose of the Beatenberg meeting?

JOHNSON: [Bumps microphone] The main purpose of the Beatenberg meeting was to gather together all those leaders who were involved in Youth for Christ for a world-wide conclave. When I say world-wide, very definitely limited world-wide conclave. It couldn’t be world-wide in a...in the largest sense of the word because we didn’t...we were all young, all quite immature. We didn’t know where to reach everybody. We wouldn’t have had the money for it. But particularly from Europe and Britain and the United States, Canada, these leaders were gathered together for fellowship, for prayer, for commitment. Commitment, which was a take-off from the commitment of the student volunteers [Student Volunteer Movement] of another generation to evangelize the world in our generation. And we set out to do it, to evangelize the world to the best of our ability in our generation. And as a result of that particular meeting we went back to all our various fields with a commitment and a determination to do that very thing.

SHUSTER: You mentioned that this was a gathering of some of the YFC leaders. Was there any particular organization or background or geographical area that was a major supplier of leaders for YFC? [Pauses] Was there any common denominator that many of the leaders had?

JOHNSON: I would say...will always say that Youth for Christ was a movement of the Holy Spirit, [pauses] somewhat spontaneous in many parts of the States to begin with and then through the military and otherwise by the Holy Spirit caught fire and moved across the world. Chicago was a great stronghold for us because I happened to be one among those that God laid his hand on in the beginning. And I was here and I had been here, you see. I had been a pastor in one church in 1930, and Youth for Christ began in 1944. So I had been a pastor of one church already for fourteen years, which had become a very strong church in Chicago, possibly, apart from the Moody Church, the most aggressive church in the city. So I had already around me a certain number of these young men. I had been a student at the Moody Bible Institute and a graduate of Wheaton College and had been born and raised in Chicago. I was purely one hundred percent Midwestern. And a certain number of these folks that had been at Moody, had been at Wheaton and so on, either gravitated toward me or I gathered them around me. Straton Shufelt, Merrill Dunlop, Doug Fischer, Bob



Cook, Billy Graham, others like that and then older men who supported us. Dr. [Will] Houghton came to support us. Dr. [V. Raymond] Edman supported us, Dr. Billy McCarrell, Dr. Harry Hager. These were prominent people of the area. They supported us. Apart from that the other main area that would have given us a few more would have been the Los Angeles and southern California area. But there was also Minneapolis with George Wilson and Merv Rosell. But the...otherwise it was a movement of the Holy Spirit just laying His hands on us, basically a group of younger men that didn't know a thing couldn't be done and did it, and didn't know you don't do it that way but did it. And they were adventuresome. They didn't have much to lose, but they didn't think about that, and they didn't think much about gain. They just wanted to do God's will, and they went ahead and did it.

SHUSTER: You mentioned a couple minutes ago in talking about the group gathered at Beatenberg that they were somewhat immature. What did you mean by that?

JOHNSON: Immature? Well, our men...our men were God-chosen men. They were God-chosen men, and some of them had very, very limited education. Others of them had limited experience. Probably, I haven't evaluated it carefully or statistically, but it may very well be that some of them didn't have much more than some experience in a young people's society or Sunday school in a local church. [Train passing in background] They weren't all ordained men. Some of them were businessmen. Ted Engstrom, for instance, I would consider to have been a businessman although he was working for a Christian publishing house at the time in Grand Rapids. He was working for the Zondervan Corporation in the business end of it particularly. And I wouldn't have considered him a preacher *per se*. Some had been in the service and were now out of the service for one reason or another. So that's why I said that we were immature as a group.

SHUSTER: Do you think this effected YFC in any way?

JOHNSON: The fact that we were immature affected us for good...for good. We didn't have any routine we had to follow. We didn't have any traditions that we had to avow. We didn't have any background that might be good to guide us but also might be a hindrance to us. We were a fresh group that had basically little background but were ready for whatever came. And these men took chances for God. And I mean by taking chances for God, they did big things in a big way without figuring out what it would cost financially for instance. For instance, Charles Templeton was in one meeting in Chicago and immediately by telephone he rented Massey Hall in Toronto for every Saturday night. Well, a generation before that Massey Hall had been rented for a campaign by Reuben Archer Torrey, and that was considered a big thing in those days, and here's a young fellow who at that time had just gone into the ministry having been converted...a converted newspaper cartoonist. He dared to do it. Ed Darling dared to rent the Olympia Hall or stadium in Detroit. They were adventuresome. They...they had faith. They had courage. They had enthusiasm. It was a dynamic, and I think rather than being adverse it was alright.

SHUSTER: Tom Livermore you mentioned a little bit earlier as Canon Livermore about organizing YFC work in England. What's his story?



JOHNSON: Oh, Canon Tom Livermore's a man that ought to be recognized both by Youth for Christ and also by Billy Graham. Billy owes an enormous lot to Tom Livermore. We came to know him on our first trip to Europe in London. We entertained the ministers of the London area at the Dorchester Hall, and they responded and entertained us at a tea in some other establishment during that time, and we came to know Tom Livermore. He had a church in London. And we were preaching in different churches, and it was decided by us as a team that Billy Graham should preach for Tom Livermore on a Sunday night. Billy went. I don't suppose that...I'm sure that Billy had never before worn any of the clerical garb of a clergyman of the Church of England, but he did that night. And I remember he came back and described to us enthusiastically how he preached in the robes and so forth. But he gave an invitation, and a large group of people responded to the invitation that night in Tom Livermore's church. Tom Livermore came to see us afterward, and he was enthused about what happened. And we had decided among us that some one of us, either Charles Templeton or myself or Billy Graham would have to go back to Britain after this first survey tour and hold some campaigns.

SHUSTER: Why did you feel that?

JOHNSON: We felt that we could be useful and probably needful, that we were needed.

SHUSTER: Because...and why did you think that you were needed?

JOHNSON: For the ingathering of the harvest of the Lord. The British basically are more Bible teachers. The Americans are more basically evangelists, or at least at that time were. And church history will establish that in the nineteenth or the twentieth century the Americans have gone to Britain and had great campaigns, and the British have come to America and had great Bible conferences. Now earlier than that of course you had [John] Wesley and you had [George] Whitefield coming here, and they were evangelists but in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries this was true. So they didn't have much in the way of evangelists. So we felt one of us ought to go back, and as we talked and prayed together we felt that God had laid his hand on Billy Graham to go back. And Tom was...Tom became the president of Youth for Christ in the British Isles. And so he guided Billy Graham in that first winter for about six months of meetings in the British Isles. Had not Billy gone to Britain at that time the story might be a great deal different than it is. So much for that. Now Tom was well trained. Tom was a Cambridge graduate and had all of the academic credentials of a first class clergyman in the Church of England and was a member of the church parliament, as I say, and he was a very, very valuable man to us in Britain and on the international scene. He was a [pauses] quiet, conversational type of a preacher but had substance to what he said.

SHUSTER: Why was he such a valuable man to you?

JOHNSON: He was valuable from the point of view of counsel, counsel in relationship to the churches of Britain and the Christian leadership of Britain which has to be approached in a different way than you do approach it in the United States.

SHUSTER: Can you think of examples of some of the advice and tips [unclear]?

JOHNSON: Well, he could guide us. He could guide us in relationship to the different segments of the Church of England: the High Church, the Anglo-Catholic Church, and what we call the Evangelical Church. In Britain there's also the liberal. There were about four categories, I suppose. And how to work with these men and how to take advantage of...of talent and energy and opportunity. And he also was a good access man for us. He opened doors for us with their people that would have been more difficult otherwise.

SHUSTER: You mentioned that because of the second trip that Graham had to England and Canon Livermore's advice to him, Graham's story was very different, that it would have been very different. What...what did you mean by that?

JOHNSON: I meant that had not Billy gone for those six months at that time and had wonderful success in small towns here and there, opportunities that came, he never would have seen the vision of the further opportunity. And because of those particular campaigns and the blessings of God, a spirit was engendered in Britain to have Billy come back to the British Isles, and he became more widely known. And Tom Livermore, being the Church of England's man, could open a good many of the churches of England for Billy at that time. And he could gather together a certain number of people, particularly in London, for the Harringay campaign [1954]. It was the Harringay campaign that really opened the door wide for Billy in Britain.

SHUSTER: Of course, another YFC person associated with Europe is Bob Evans. When was...when did his involvement in YFC begin?

JOHNSON: We were looking for a someone to sell bonds. I think I mentioned this in a previous talk with you. We were looking for somebody to sell war bonds.

SHUSTER: Who was looking for someone?

JOHNSON: I was.

SHUSTER: For YFC or [unclear]....

JOHNSON: For YFC in Chicago. We were having a big...big meeting in Soldier's Field, Chicago. And to demonstrate our patriotism to our country, to show that Evangelical Christians are also loyal Americans, that there could be no mistake about that. So I decided, together with my counselors, that we would sell war bonds at the Soldier Field rally. But we wanted someone who could represent the military. And in our inquiries here and there, I don't recall where, we came across the fact that Norfolk, Virginia, there was a man there at the American Naval Base in Norfolk, Virginia, Bob Evans, who was a Wheaton College graduate and a chaplain who could come. So we suggested, "Let's have him come." So we worked it out with the military to have him come in uniform. And he had been at the Anzio beachhead [1944] in the Mediterranean theater of the war and so on. And he had gotten some vision of Europe at that particular time while he was in the military. And his parents had been missionaries in Africa before, so he came from a missionary family. We brought him to Chicago and he spoke along appropriate lines of the patriotism and Christian loyalty to their country and so on. And we sold an enormous amount of war bonds.

SHUSTER: Do you recall...?

JOHNSON: They say that we sold more war bonds at that rally than any other large meeting in the history of the United States.

SHUSTER: Do you recall how much you sold?

JOHNSON: No, I don't. I couldn't tell you what we sold. We...I didn't pay too much attention to those details which I should of. In hindsight, you know, a lot of things you should have kept a record of, and you didn't. But that was the reputation we gathered out of that. As a result of that meeting doors opened for Bob Evans in YFC. Naturally, people would like to have him come and speak, and he's a good speaker, good, solid Christian leader. And he became executive director of YFC under myself. By myself being president he became executive director and administrator, working in the Chicago office and continued there. And he went with us to Beatenberg. At Beatenberg his vision of Europe was reinforced and perhaps enlarged. And as a result of that, in the course of time, not...not too long a time either, he developed what is now known as Greater Europe Mission. Warren Filkin...Dr. Warren Filkin, prominent Christian leader, and Noel Lyons, N-O-E-L Lyons, who had been the director of...well, basically I think for the Moody Bible Institute, joined with him and started the Greater Europe Mission.

SHUSTER: As executive director what...how was his responsibility different from yours as president?

JOHNSON: Well, I...I myself as the president was the man on the go, the front man so to speak and gave direction to the work. But coming into the office was an enormous amount of detail. We had our vice presidents in the different areas. We had to run almost like a speaker's bureau so to speak for speakers, singers, platform personnel. And he would work with all the different area men and directing the personnel here and there and keeping these channels clear, taking care of the overseeing the finances. So he was I suppose what you would call office manager, and I gave direction to him, and my direction came in association with the international board.

SHUSTER: Did you have any problem in those early days of groups or individuals claiming to be part of YFC when they really weren't associated?

JOHNSON: Repeat that question.

SHUSTER: Did you have any trouble in those early days of organizations or people claiming to be part of YFC or associated with YFC when there really wasn't any connection?

JOHNSON: Well, we had...we had challenges of different kinds. The outstanding challenge we had was Jack Wyrzten of Word of Life. He had never supported us in those early days and never supported us through the years really. Sometimes he made it quite difficult, or at least tried to make it difficult for us. He should have been and would have been the president of Youth for Christ had he chosen to do it. He was my personal choice to be our president, and I so told him because he had had the Word of Life rallies in New York at the Alliance Church on Eighth Avenue, which is just

off of Times Square. And he had had one or two larger rallies in Madison Square Garden. And I got a certain amount of inspiration from him. One thing that I got...well, I got several things from him. One thing was the idea if Jack can do it in New York, we can do it in Chicago. So I got that inspiration from him. Secondly, I came to understand a little bit about how he did it. He brought in different speakers every Saturday night, different music from time to time, interesting people with testimonies and so on, and had a great ministry and a great harvest of souls. He did a marvelous job. And being that he was our predecessor and pioneer, I felt that he should be the president. I think some others shared the same thing. But Jack Wyrzten told me at that time...he said, "I'm a Plymouth brother. And Plymouth Brethren don't believe in organization. And I don't really believe in organization." However, like so many others, he's a living contradiction of his own word because he has the tightest organization possible, which is neither here nor there but happens to be the truth. So that....

SHUSTER: When you say "tightest organization," you mean?

JOHNSON: Tight in the sense of he's very well...he's org...he's very well organized, nothing loose about the organization from an organizational point of view. So he...he made difficulties for us. He would criticize us at different times for things we did and things we didn't do and things that were done in connection with Youth for Christ but we had no control over. You see, every Youth for Christ organization was autonomous, was independent, and they pursued their own course. And so we had no control over what one fellow would do in one place or another in another place. There were among other things two horses that were trained. I call them one a Lutheran horse and one a Baptist horse [Shuster laughs] because the one was owned by a Lutheran layman and the other was owned by a Baptist evangelist. And they were used in some rallies, and Jack Wyrzten would criticize us for something like that over which we had no control at all. And probably he had...he had reason to criticize us sometimes too, I'm sure.

SHUSTER: What was his criticism about the horses?

JOHNSON: That they were worldly...a worldly way of doing God's work. But....

SHUSTER: Was that generally the nature of his criticism?

JOHNSON: Sir?

SHUSTER: Was that generally the nature of his criticism?

JOHNSON: Those were some of the criticisms of his. And then sometimes criticism of some of our men. He was a very critical person so...well, of all of us really, Billy Graham, Charles Templeton, myself.

SHUSTER: For what, for...?

JOHNSON: Well, whatever reason he felt he wanted to develop.

SHUSTER: But there wasn't any particular criticism that he made over and over again?

JOHNSON: [pauses] I suppose he would have thought that sometimes our work was more superficial. You know, we all have a tendency to do that about somebody else if we're not careful. That their work is more thorough and so on. Then he tried to organize some Youth for Christ...well, he told different ones not to have anything to do with Youth for Christ International. I remember he told one brother in Buffalo, New York, for instance, not to do it. And then he...he would prefer, at least his records show that he would prefer that there was not a Youth for Christ in the city so that when he came to that city he would be recognized in some special kind of a way because he came once in a while so he had a kind of little circuit like that. And his difference from me in that regard was I'd rather have a thousand men working in a thousand communities than trying to do the work of a thousand men. There's no way I could get to every city. So I had to settle for whatever kind of men there were in those cities. And some did a better job, and some didn't do quite such a good job, but at least some job was being done.

SHUSTER: You mentioned a little earlier Ted Engstrom as becoming involved with YFC. What was his part in the development in those early days?

JOHNSON: Ted Engstrom was the director of Youth for Christ in Grand Rapids, Michigan. And they had a good Youth for Christ there, and he was a Christian leader in the town too. He organized a great campaign. I think Billy Graham has never been...yes, Billy was there for a campaign I think at one time. But I think maybe...

SHUSTER: He was there in '47.

JOHNSON: ...I'm sure one of the best campaigns held in Grand Rapids was by Jack Shuler, the young evangelist out of California. And I know there was a great deal of talk at that time that these very conservative Dutch people were mightily moved by Jack Shuler. But I think Billy came for a campaign a little bit later.

SHUSTER: In '47, yeah.

JOHNSON: Yes. I don't know whether it was as large. I don't think it was as large. I don't think it was quite as effective as, you know, Jack Shuler's was. But Ted Engstrom had leadership in those campaigns and was Youth for Christ director. Well, when I retired from Youth for Christ, Bob Cook needed a right-hand man in the field of administration. And one night about midnight after a rally in Grand Rapids, Ted Engstrom was up with me in my hotel room in the Pantlind Hotel, P-A-N-T-L-I-N-D Hotel, which has now been taken over by Amway Corporation and built into a beautiful hot...re...remodeled into a really beautiful hotel. But he was in my hotel room at midnight. I said, "Ted, Bob needs you. He needs a good administrator. He can't do that and be out on the field at the same time. And I'm going to call him now and tell him you're coming." And he hemmed and hawed a little bit, but at one o'clock in the morning I called Bob Cook at Wheaton, Illinois, and said, "Bob, I have your man for you. Ted Engstrom's coming to be your right-hand man." And Ted came. And then later, not so cheating Bob Cook, but the second after Bob Cook he became president of YFC. Then when Frank Phillips died, Bob Pierce needed somebody for his

administrator. And he left Youth for Christ and went to World Vision and became Bob Pierce's right-hand man. And then when Bob Pierce finished his work at World Vision, Ted Engstrom took over World Vision. That's the story of Ted Engstrom. Ted Engstrom was an effective speaker, and a good organizer, and a man of great vision, of great passion, and he's a good man. As also is Jack Wyrzten, don't...

SHUSTER: Sure.

JOHNSON: ...don't misunderstand me about Jack. Those kind of things happen along the way. You mentioned about...I think this...I should put this in here for you because this is worthwhile, which indicates something of the generational gap between the younger men and the older men. At that time we had several outstanding evangelists in America that had carried...that had carried the torch when the time was difficult. John R. Rice was one. Paul Rood was another. Bob Jones, Senior was a third. And I mention them because I...is typical of what happened. These men had carried the torch of evangelism, mass evangelism in the 1930s. On the common thought was that the days of mass evangelism was over. That was an *passee*, but they held out and they held forth, and they continued on magnificently, every one of them. The Chicago Christian Business Men's Committee had a campaign one summer at the Ice Arena, which is on Lakeshore Drive, about 600 North on Lakeshore Drive in Chicago. Bob Jones had one week. John R. Rice had one week, and Paul Rood had another week. But the campaign didn't go very well, and the Christian Business Men's Committee were anxious to work together with Youth for Christ because they knew that we always got a good crowd on Saturday nights. So then there came a discussion not amongst us but in their circles. "You can't have these young Youth for Christ fellows preach on Saturday night. They can't carry a message with a big crowd like that." And I remember one night one of these three gentlemen was discussing and he said to me...he said, "Now, there's no way that Billy Graham could carry a crowd like this on a Saturday night." Well, they didn't have any problem on the other nights, but the Saturday night crowd was our crowd anyhow, and we knew what we could do. But it was difficult for those older men to realize that a new generation of younger men had come along, and they were as it were at center stage. And they had to be on the side. And to get older and do it gracefully and rejoice in the younger men that God was raising up was very, very difficult. I could give you other instances too where different ones of us were belittled as it were in order that they could maintain their positions. But so it was, and so it was before, and so it will be in the future I'm sure to be able to.... Now, Dr. [V. Raymond] Edman was marvelous that way, and Dr. John Brown of John Brown University was marvelous in that way. Dr. Louis Talbot of Biola University was marvelous in that way. They were older men that recognized, "Here are some younger men coming now to fill the ranks, to take our places. God bless them. Let's help them" [train passing in background].

SHUSTER: Can you think of some examples of their help for [unclear]?

JOHNSON: Can I give you examples of their help?

SHUSTER: Yeah, you were mentioning these...Dr. Edman, Dr. Talbot....

JOHNSON: Well, Dr. Edman was a help to us right from the very beginning, from the very, very beginning. When we had our first Soldier's...the first meeting in the Chicago Stadium, Dr. Edman organized the whole student body at Wheaton College to come to that rally. And we had had lots of criticism and we weren't popular in all circles by any means. And for him to make a stand with us meant that other people were going to take a stand against him. And there was...and he...he was quietly in his own quiet way a prayerful helper to us all along. He was with us as I recall in Beatenberg. From Beatenberg I think he went on to Greece for meetings for us if I recall correctly. And then John Brown of John Brown University used to fly his own plane, and he was already an older man. And he had had big, big campaigns in the Southwest, not well-known in the North but the South. He said, "I'll go anywhere you want, anytime you want at no expense just to help you young fellows with the work that you're doing." And we sent him up to western Canada. And he went into those little towns and villages all through western Canada and other places on our behalf at his own expense to encourage us in the work.

SHUSTER: What about Helen Sunday, Ma Sunday. Didn't she...?

JOHNSON: Oh, Ma Sunday was great. We came to Winona Lake and Homer Rodeheaver was alive. Ma Sunday was alive. Homer Rodeheaver still had some of the old time musicians with him. The Ackley brothers were with him. Virgil Brock who wrote "Beyond the Sunset" was with him and so on, and Ma Sunday had her home at Winona. And Winona Lake had gone down, so that...

SHUSTER: The conference grounds....

JOHNSON: ...it...it was on very difficult times. And Palmer Muntz [Collection 108] was the president of the Winona Lake School of Theology. Pal...no, no he was not president...

SHUSTER: I think he was director of the Conference Grounds.

JOHNSON: He was director of the Bible Conference. He was director of the Bible Conference. And Arthur McKee, who had been a great song leader for the leading evangelists including Billy S...including Gipsy Smith had...and Paul Rader. He was the manager. The two of them came to me one day. They said, "Torrey, if you'll bring your Youth for Christ group to Winona Lake, we'll give you five hundred dollars to help you get started." That was a lot of money, and that was encouragement. Mr. John Duff, a Plymouth brother who ran the Cedar Lake Bible Conference at Cedar Lake, Indiana, I talked to him about coming to his place. I suppose he could accommodate maybe as many as five hundred, but he thought we couldn't fill it. So he told me that was the biggest mistake he ever [Shuster laughs] made in his life, not have us come. So we went to Winona Lake, Indiana, started out the first year with a summer campaign gathering the whole group from all over the world. And Ma Sunday was there, and one night she was seated on the platform, and I said [pauses]...she said to me rather, she said, "If you can fill this Billy Sunday Tabernacle, I'll give you five thousand dollars." So we had that as a goal, not the first year, I don't think, but somewhere along the line. And one night she was on the platform, and the place was full. And I said, "Ma, this place is full. I want my five thousand dollars now." [Shuster laughs] And she stood to her feet and she wrote out her check for five thousand dollars for Youth for Christ. Well, she became a very popular influence in Youth for Christ. She went to many of our rallies in many parts

of the country. George Wilson, in Minneapolis, used her and used Homer Rodeheaver a great deal in Minneapolis and in the North Central area because they had been good friends of Dr. W.B. Riley of First Baptist Church in Minneapolis. So they were known. Mrs. Sunday and Billy were known there and Homer Rodeheaver was known there. George was a wonderful friend, and he opened many doors. And she spoke at many, many places, and the old Billy Sunday crowd would come to see Ma Sunday. She was a great, wonderful soul.

SHUSTER: How about Hubert Mitchell? How...what was his part in YFC in early days?

JOHNSON: Hubert Mitchell...Hubert Mitchell was the director of Youth for Christ in Los Angeles that met in the Church of the Open Door in downtown Los Angeles, which was also the home of the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, which became Biola. The...they had carried on the Saturday Night Jubilee for a number of Saturday nights. And that grew out of what had happened in Chicago and happened in New York and other places, so they started in California. I received an invitation to come out there for the Dr. Torrey Bible Conference, and in conjunction with to speak at Youth for Christ both in Los Angeles and elsewhere, and I went. And I met Hubie Mitchell on a stairway back of the platform, the stairway that led from the auditorium behind the platform to Dr. Louis Talbot's office. And on the stairway was Hubert Mitchell, Dawson Trotman, and certain other leaders of Los Angeles. We had a prayer meeting right there before the meeting. That was my introduction to Hubert Mitchell. He led the meeting. He had his own style, which was totally unpredictable, just a cozy, little homey style, no formula of any sort. He had been a graduate of Aimee Semple McPherson's school.

SHUSTER: Oh, the L.I.F.E. [Lighthouse International Foursquare Evangelism] Institute.

JOHNSON: Yes. And he had gone out [bumps table] into the foreign fields as a missionary under the [International Church of the] Four Square [Gospel] people. And his big...I suppose his main quality was prayer and faith. He was a great help to us in prayer and faith. He'd stay with you in long prayer meetings, reinforce prayer, believing God, depending on God to...when there was no outward evidence of anything. Very poorly organized, didn't particularly care about organization. God will take care of that if you prayed enough and believed enough. And God did, but he did it through other people that were better organized. And he ran the Youth for Christ in Los Angeles for a number of years right there in that auditorium, great, great meetings, Saturday nights. He ca...he lost his wife. He got a...God gave him another missionary as a wife, a girl named Rachel. He was the area vice president for the Southwest at that time, being in Los Angeles.

SHUSTER: Which you said was one of the main areas of YFC.

JOHNSON: Yes, yes, and we had a great deal of work there. He came to Chicago eventually as I think perhaps our folks know and got started into telephone ministry and also prayer meetings in the downtown district of Chicago in banks and office buildings and here and there where he could four or five or eight or ten people gathered together to pray and share together things of the Lord. He's doing the same kind of a thing now in the Los Angeles area. It couldn't seem to work here. He went back to Los Angeles and is doing the same kind of a thing down there. We've had a happy association over the years in Youth for Christ. He...he had an accordion. He'd play and sing with

that accordion. He'd get up in the middle of a service and start in that way, sort of a...his Full Gospel charismatic background comes through in his public ministry, but a very devout believer.

SHUSTER: Just about the end of this tape here, so I think we'll stop.

END OF TAPE

