"I Learned to Look Straight at Them." The Apprenticeship of Billy Graham, 1937-1949

Expanded version of the Treasures of Wheaton Presentation by Bob Shuster of the Billy Graham Center Archives. May 9, 2009, Barrows Auditorium, Billy Graham Center Additional material added February 2013

[Note: In 2019, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association removed its records from Wheaton College and relocated those materials to the BGEA headquarters in Charlotte, NC. The Archives does retain a collection of ephemera about the life and ministry of Billy Graham in Collection 74: Ephemera of Billy Graham and Collection 15: Papers of Billy Graham. These collections are open for research, and anyone is welcome to visit the Archives to use those materials in person.]

For the last fifteen years, the Billy Graham Center Archives, along with the other archives on campus - the College Archives and Special Collections and the Marion E. Wade Center, has used the annual Treasures of Wheaton talks to tell some of the stories from our collections.

For our part at the BGC Archives, we have talked about the real life of Corrie ten Boom and how it looked on film, ministry in the year 1898, American rescue missions, the last years of church growth theorist Donald McGavran, John Perkins and the civil rights movement, the different ways people tell their conversion stories, the sinking of *Zamzam*, and a whole bunch of other subjects. These various topics reflect the Archives efforts to document the many facets of American Protestant Evangelical evangelism. But we have never taken a topic from the life and ministry of Billy Graham.

Until today, that is. For this, the last of our Treasures of Wheaton presentations, I am going to talk about the apprenticeship of Billy Graham, from the spring of 1937 to the fall of 1949. These were his years of first steps in ministry - learning, practicing, experimenting.

This is a story not of his private life, but his public one, not of his Christian walk or spiritual struggles, but of Billy Graham learning to be not only an evangelist, but a public figure. So, it is an appropriate story for the BGC Archives to tell. We do not have Rev. Graham's personal papers in the Archives. What we have are a vast amount material that tells the story of an organization, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association or BGEA. These include copies of sermons and radio and television programs, minutes of meetings, newspaper clippings, budgets, forms, etc., etc. And we have many, many small and large donations of material about Billy Graham that people have sent to us, almost all of which are about some aspect of his public activities, such a crusade hymn book or an audio tape someone recorded from the audience of a sermon. The BGEA was founded in 1950, so by definition, almost all its records are before the time period I am speaking of now. And the other accessions from private individuals are also largely from 1950 onward.

However we also have a few items from a variety of sources earlier days. And I will use these to



tell a story this first period of his public life, when there was no BGEA and the country and the fundamentalist community did not know Billy Graham from any other son of Adam. It is, as I said, the story of an apprenticeship. And not a short one. A child entering first grade when it began would be graduating from high school when it ended. What I want to do is show you various documents from our collection that can serve as signposts along the way.

We'll start here, with a photo. This shows Billy Graham with his first public...his Sunday school class back in his church in his hometown of Charlotte, North Carolina, from around 1936 or 37. It was taken only a couple of years after Graham had given his life to Christ at the age of 16 during a meeting led by evangelist Mordecai Ham

The next documents are the pages an inexpensive Five and Dime store scrapbook, kept by Graham about his first preaching experience away from home. For in 1937, Frank and Morrow Graham packed up their car and, like millions of other Americans before and since, took a child away to school. The Grahams had a dairy farm on the outskirts of Charlotte. There Graham had had a fairly typical rural boyhood, not away from home for any long period of time except for the period selling Fuller Brushes in the Carolinas during the summer of 1936. This was not his first journey away to school. In the fall of 1936, he had enrolled in Bob Jones College, then in Tennessee.



Billy Graham with his Sunday School class in Charlotte, North Carolina, ca. 1936. Photo File: Graham, Billy, 1930s

But he left after a few months both for health reasons and because he found it difficult to adjust



Pages from the scrapbook that Billy Graham kept while a student at Florida Bible Institute. CN 15, Folder 1-1

to the school's discipline. Morrow Graham, Billy's mother, had read in the magazine *Moody Monthly* about another Bible school in Florida. So, at the start of 1937 the Graham family packed up and drove south, taking Billy to begin his education again at Florida Bible Institute, known as FBI.

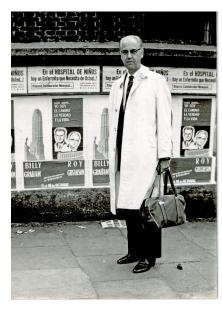
The school was a small fundamentalist institution called Florida Bible Institute, outside of Tampa and known as FBI. FBI, like other Bible schools around the country, emphasized Bible study, spiritual development, and practical training for Christian workers.

Roy Gustafson, a classmate, remembered Graham's appearance on campus. In an interview he described how, after leaving Bob Jones College, Graham had received a letter from a friend



going to FBI, praising sunshine, the more relaxed atmosphere on campus, and the pretty girls. So, around January 1937, Graham came to campus and amazed the other students with his energy, even swimming in the nearby river which had deadly snakes. Gustafson joked that he had a commentary on the Biblical book of Romans (written by a fourteen-year-old boy) which he sold to Graham for a dollar and Graham never let him forget it.

That tape was from a collection that consisted of hundreds of tapes containing thousands of hours of interviews conducted over several decades, almost all of them done by one woman, Dr. Lois Ferm. She and her husband Dr. Robert Ferm were BGEA staff workers, and she dedicated herself to getting down on tape the memories of hundreds of people about BGEA's history and evangelistic work (sometimes assisted by Bob). Most of her interviews were about specific crusades, but there are also many about Billy Graham's early days. [This collection is now located at the Billy Graham Archives & Research Center in North Carolina.]



Rev. Roy Gustafson, classmate at Florida Bible Institute and later associate evangelist of the BGEA. He is standing in front of posters advertising a joint evangelistic meeting he held with Graham in Rosario, Argentina. Photo File: Gustafson, Roy, 1960s.

It was at FBI that he received his first formal training in Bible study, constructing a sermon, preaching. The FBI faculty believed that you learned by doing. Just a few weeks after Graham started attending FBI, John Minder, the dean of men of the school, took Graham with him to visit Rev. Cecil Underwood, who was supply pastor at Boswick Baptist Church. In an interview made in 1977, Minder described how, when Underwood asked Minder to preach for him that day, Minder turned to Graham and told him he, Graham, would preach that night, despite Graham's protests. He did preach that day for about fifteen minutes and when he ran out, Minder took over.

Minder made Graham youth director and assistant pastor at the Tampa Gospel Tabernacle where

he himself was pastor. In that pulpit and others in the immediate area in Florida and Georgia, Graham began to preach regularly. He began to show initiative and inventiveness in finding evangelistic opportunities. Roy Gustafson recalled Graham's preparedness in his interview. He recalled how Graham would gather up books of sermons by William Biederwolf and others and go down to the nearby Hillsboro River. There he would put the books on a stump, read and memorize a sermon. Then he would practice preaching it to the swamp and stumps. He and Graham and other students would go to the nearby town of Sulphur Springs and hold street corner services. And Sunday afternoons he would preach to the



Row of reels of analog tape stored in the BGC Archives

men in the Tampa stockage (jail). Gustafson was impressed with how even then Graham was



always prepared to preach and looking for opportunities to preach. He preached at a little Spanish mission with same enthusiasm speaking to seventy-five people as he would show later preaching to tens of thousands. And he would preach in trailer parks, new things in those days.

When he went home to Charlotte, he preached a Christmas sermon in a nearby church, a local boy who made good. Friends in Charlotte began to call him the boy preacher. The local Charlotte paper began to publish occasional notices about Graham, such as one from 1939 which is perhaps the first record of his use of mass communications, in this case radio.

He quickly grasped the importance of advertising and when he visited churches to lead evangelistic meetings, he did what he could to make sure that the whole community knew something was going on. When he preached at a church, he would plaster the area around with handbills about the meetings.

In John Minder's interview he talked about Graham's first extended evangelistic campaign, in late 1938. It was at Swan Lake, where there was a summer camp for children. He preached there



Photo postcard of Graham at Camp Maranatha in Michigan with Edman, summer of 1948. Photo File: Edman, V. Raymond.

and every child in the camp gave his or her life to Jesus. Then he agreed to preach for several nights at a church in East Palatka, Florida. He went up the first night and when he came back to FBI, Minder asked him how it went. Graham said the people not very enthusiastic, and he did not seem like he wanted to go back. But Minder told him to pray and trust in the Lord and he would have a good meeting. So, Graham went back, and the crowds grew every night. He postponed going home to North Carolina because the church asked him to extend his meetings. On the final evening, the tent was so crowded that there was not room for more people, so they had loudspeakers broadcasting the message to the people outside.

At FBI as well, he learned the effect of scandal on ministry. The president of the school was accused of moral indiscretions. Some faculty and about a quarter of the student body left. Graham was convinced that the charges were false and stood by the president, as did most of the other students and faculty. Years later in his autobiography he wrote, "Dreadful as the experience was, I was grateful that the dark cloud passed over Florida Bible Institute while I was there. It was a big learning experience for me in many ways, and it taught me to be very careful myself."



Visiting Fundamentalist pastors and church leaders who pasted through Tampa on vacation might hear Graham preach or meet him when he caddied for them on a local course. Among some of the visiting preachers were Homer Rodeheaver, William Bell Riley, and Mel Trotter.

That is how Elmer Edman, the brother of V. Raymond Edman, president of Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois came into contact with Graham. He and Paul Fisher had come to Tampa on vacation and Graham caddied for them. They were so impressed that right on the golf course they offered to help Graham with costs if he would attend Wheaton when he graduated from FBI, to add a liberal arts education to his Bible training. Friends of Graham's from FBI also urged him to go.

The FBI graduation was in May 1940. In the fall of the same year Graham was heading to Wheaton College in the frozen North for the next step in his preparation. Like Minder before him, President V. Raymond Edman of Wheaton was impressed by Graham. But instead of making him his assistant, Edman arranged for Graham to be in charge of the United Gospel Tabernacle, which he, Edman, had started. It was a great responsibility and opportunity for the 23-year-old sophomore.

Gospel Tabernacle Selects New Pastor The United Gospel Tabernacle,

The United Gospel Tabernacie,
120 N. Wesley street, announces
appointment of Billy Graham as
the new full-time pastor.

Mr. Graham
takes over the
duties of Dr. V.



Raymond Edman former acting pastor, who fill-Billy Graham pastorship until January, 1940,

when he was called to other work Under Dr. Edman's leadership the Tabernacle has grown and many young people have received

spiritual help there.

Billy Graham attended Florida Bible Institute at Tampa and was graduated from there in 1940. He has been actively engaged in evangelistic work the past several years and just last month completed a summer campaign.

Portion of the front page of The Daily Journal, September 13, 1941. CN 15, Folder 1-4.



The Tab met in a local hall in downtown Wheaton (the building still stands) and was not really a congregation but a preaching platform. It was an outreach to the community as well as a welcoming spot for Wheaton students far from their home churches. Graham preached twice on Sundays and led a prayer meeting Wednesday evening. He also continued to preach at other churches, which began to invite him from greater distances.

While keeping a fairly full schedule of speaking engagements, he also lived the life of a college student, majoring not in Bible but in anthropology because of the influence of one beloved teacher, Anthony Grigolia. He tried other things as well, including a very brief and unsuccessful career as a college wrestler,

and a stab at campus theatrics, as you can see from the program from the campus production

of Macbeth. He even appeared in the 1943 college bulletin, as an example of Wheaton's student body. Graham was also learning to lead. In his senior year he became president of the Christian Service Council and spoke to his fellow students about their responsibilities for Christian work.

More important than the speaking and the studying, it was at Wheaton where he met his future wife.



Ruth Bell. She was a daughter of China missionaries who intended to go back to China. She was



a popular girl on campus, asked out by many of the young men. Here is she at the Washington day banquet with Harold Lindsell.

But she and Graham were drawn to each other and were soon engaged and then married after their graduation in the summer of 1943. Besides Ruth, Graham was getting to know many others at Wheaton: teachers, class mates, and local Christian workers, people like Hudson Taylor Armerding, Grady Wilson, Carl Henry, Ken Hansen, Jimmie Johnson, Harold Lindsell, and Robert Evans. They were almost the first links in the vast network of friends that was going to be so important in his ministry. As Graham said in 1977, at the groundbreaking for the Billy Graham Center, "Through contacts made here at Wheaton I first launched into a nationwide and then subsequently worldwide ministry of evangelism."

Anna Hansen was his landlady for most of his stay in Wheaton. In an interview recorded thirty years later, she recalled what he was like at that time. She described him as an earnest young man who would sometimes ask her for something to munch on as he strode back and forth, practicing his sermon for Sunday. She particularly remembers



Harold Lindsell and Ruth Graham. Photo File: Graham, Ruth.

one conversation when he suddenly brought his fist down on his hand and said 'Mrs. Hansen, by God's grace, I'm going to serve Him.'

In June of 1943, he and Ruth graduated, ending for him a period of seven years of higher education. [For more on Graham at Wheaton, see <u>A Walking Tour of Billy Graham's Wheaton</u>.] After graduation in 1943 came a pastoral interlude.

When Graham was a senior, he was approached by <u>Robert Van Kampen</u>, a Chicago businessman, about becoming the minister at the Baptist church of about fifty members in nearby Western Springs, where Van Kampen was on the board of elders. He accepted and was the pastor of record for the next year and a half. The church met in the basement of its uncompleted building. Here Graham, for the only time in his lengthy ministry, had the experience of a full-time pastorate.

He led the church on a vigorous campaign of evangelistic outreach that doubled the size of the congregation in a year. The name was changed from the Western Springs Baptist Church to the Village Church to make it easier for non-Baptists to attend. A <u>newsletter</u> was begun, the auditorium was modernized, a pipe organ installed, a program was initiated to help several missionaries, included two wholly supported by the Village church, the Sunday school tripled in attendance and Child Evangelism and Boys Brigade groups begun.



From the August 1944 Songs in the Night, newsletter of the Village Church. Collection 313, Folder 2-27.





The Western Springs Baptist Church, ca. 1943. Photo File: Graham, Billy, 1940s

He also helped start Western Suburban Men's Fellowship, which attracted hundreds of Christian laymen from around the area to a monthly dinner at a local restaurant with fellowship, singing, and a speaker talking about the Christian life. Graham was able to attract speakers such as Walter Maier of *The Lutheran Hour* radio program, Bob Jones Jr., Dr. Edman, and Pulitzer Prize winner Vaughn Shoemaker, cartoonist for the *Chicago Daily News*.

And he brought to the church something its members had probably never dreamed of. Rev. Torrey Johnson of the Midwest Bible Church turned over to the Village Church his radio program, *Songs in the Night* and Graham worked on increasing the outreach of the program, his first experience in having personal responsibility for electronic evangelism.

His most important move was to approach popular Gospel singer George Beverly Shea for the program. Shea was already well-known from his regular appearance on the radio program *Club Time* and his recordings for RCA.

In an article in Christian Life in November 1968, editor Robert Walker reminisced:



Portrait of George Beverly Shea, ca. mid 1940s. Photo File: Shea, George Beverly

Something more than 20 years ago Bev Shea and I first worked together. It was on a five-day-a-week radio show aired over Chicago's WCFL. I wrote the script; Shea served as soloist. Our sponsor was Club Aluminum Products Company whose president, Herbert J. Taylor, wanted



Chicagoans to hear the Gospel through hymns as well as purchase his cookware in department stores. The program proved successful, so the company moved us up to the NBC Network, and "Club Time" went nationwide. It was the only program of its kind in those days and received a good bit of publicity.

After about a year a major problem was encountered. The young pastor of a suburban Chicago

church which Shea attended was an enthusiastic chap. Although "evangelism" as we knew it then had pretty well died out several decades before with Billy Sunday, the young minister was not only conducting what he called "evangelistic" meetings locally, but he also was giving "the invitation." To the astonishment of all except him, a few people were beginning to respond. Shea served as soloist at the meetings. Then to our consternation the pastor was invited to hold a meeting in another city and, of course, invited Shea along. After some jockeying with the studio, it was agreed that the program could be "cut on wax" in advance, not a common practice in those days, and Shea made the trip. On his return he told us a strange story. Not only was the attendance good but when "the invitation" was given people crowded the aisles to go forward to the altar. Shea's description sounded incredible. Supposedly, people were won to Christ only through "personal evangelism." Soon the young pastor was receiving other invitations to cities Shea, George Beverly. more distant. Each time Shea's accounts were similar. "You



Shea with Graham, ca. 1945. Photo File:

ought to see it for yourself, Bob," he said. "Then you will see what I mean."



Front page of the September 1944 issue of Songs in the Night, summarizing the impact of Graham's pastorate. Collection 285, Box 44, Folder 9.

Several months later I did. I shall never forget the sight of people streaming down the aisles to the sound of Shea's deep bassbaritone voice singing, "Just As I Am." Since then I have attended many other meetings at which evangelist Billy Graham has given the invitation. On each occasion I am deeply moved as I witness the power of the Holy Spirit at work turning the hearts of men and women to Jesus Christ. And I shall always be grateful to Bev Shea for urging me to witness what appeared to us then a great phenomenon. So great, indeed, that more than 20 years ago CHRISTIAN LIFE Magazine carried the first article ever published on the sensational young evangelist, Billy Graham.

Graham's recruitment of him for Village Church (which he joined) and Songs in the Night helped bring in many more listeners, who heard not only Shea's singing, but Graham's sermons.



Graham's outreach efforts had invigorated the church in an amazing brief time. However, it became clear that the work of a pastor was in conflict was the life of an evangelist. Graham got invitations to speak that were taking him more and more often took him away from Western Springs.

And then came the invitation to ride the whirlwind.

<u>Torrey M. Johnson</u> was a dynamic preacher who was founder and pastor of the Midwest Bible Church in Chicago.

He also had become the leader of the Chicago branch of an evangelistic movement that was springing up independently in cities across the United States called <u>Youth for Christ</u>. YFC grew from seeds planted in the late 1930s and early 1940s when men like <u>Percy Crawford</u> in Philadelphia and <u>Jack Wyrtzen</u> in New York City began programs that gave young people an exciting, peppy Christian event to go to on Saturday nights

In the mid-1940s, dozens of YFC clubs were beginning in different parts of the United States, following this model. YFC in later years would be exclusively for high school students, but at its beginning, it was aimed at a range of population from high school to young adults, especially the millions of young service



Johnson at YFC rally in Des Moines, Iowa, ca. 1945. Photo File: Johnson, Torrey

men and women who were traveling between bases or assigned to cities far from home. And the rallies of the organization often drew people of all ages. The movement was marked by loud ties on its preachers, exciting music, bold preaching.

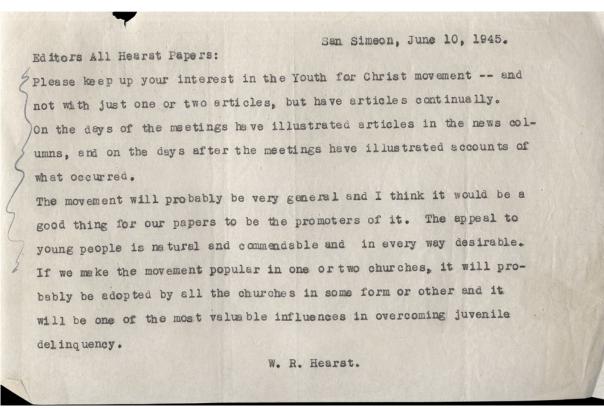
No evangelistic meetings since the days of <u>Billy Sunday</u> twenty years earlier had been attracting this kind of attention or crowds. YFC meetings got a good deal of publicity in the nation's newspapers, much of it favorable when newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst told his editors to publicize the movement.

George Beverly Shea was instrumental in organizing the first YFC meetings in the Chicago area. Johnson was soon involved with the group almost full-time. Johnson and Graham had known each other since about 1941. As Graham wrote five years later, when he heard Johnson on the radio, "I am going to get acquainted with a fellow who can preach the Gospel like that." They met while Graham was still a student at Wheaton and Johnson became a mentor to him. In May 1944, he began to call on Graham to speak at rallies of thousands of people, starting with one at Chicago's Orchestra Hall.



YFC event in California, ca. 1945. Photo Flle: YFC - California





Copy of a telegram William Randolph Hearst sent to editors of his papers around the country. Collection 285, Box 29, Folder.

One early spectacular of the movement was a <u>rally</u> on Chicago's Soldiers Field. Held on May 30, 1945, just a few days after the end of World War II in Europe. 65,000 people attended. Graham had a small part in the program, and this was probably the largest crowd he had spoken to up to this time. The Chicago club from the beginning was alive to the value of publicity and they made a silent film of the rally, to be shown in YFC clubs and churches. Here are some excerpts from that film, which give a taste of the energy and exuberance of the YFC movement. [At this point about <u>2 minutes of clips</u> were played from the film, <u>F4 in Collection 285</u>]

At the end of 1944, Johnson asked Graham to join YFC full-time. Graham agreed, although he officially remained pastor of Western Springs until the fall of 1945. He told Torrey Johnson

when offered the job, "I am not coming in to put organization first. I want that understood. I am not coming in to do one bit of paperwork. My main objective is to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ and win as many young people to His saving grace and knowledge as I possibly can." He need not have worried. In the first nine month of working for YFC he traveled to Philadelphia, Minneapolis, Toronto, Atlanta, Indianapolis, Miami, Orlando, Charlotte, Des Moines, Norfolk, and Jackson Mississippi. In April 1945 alone he traveled to fifteen cities in the United States and Canada. In his first year he traveled by plane alone over



Graham at his desk in the Youth for Christ office in Chicago, ca. 1944. Photo File: Graham, William Franklin - 1940s.



135,000 miles, more than any other civilian in the country. He was getting to know all the parts of the United States better than perhaps any other evangelist. YFC represented an explosion of opportunity such as neither he nor anyone else could have imagined a few months earlier. With relatively little experience, he was being placed in a situation of seeming unlimited opportunities for evangelism and many unseen difficulties and snares, learning to think on a continental scale and how to work with a wide variety of people.

In summer of 1945, the different YFC clubs sent representatives to Winona Lake, Indiana to form a national organization. Johnson was elected first president and Graham was the first field representative. These minutes are an example of many minutes, reports, letters, clippings, and similar documents, scattered through many collections in our Archives, which help tell the story of the Graham's ministry from 1944 through 1949 in a vivid way.

Graham was soon recruiting almost every preacher he knew. He himself very quickly became was one of the premier speakers of the organization. He helped form the typical YFC Saturday night rally, programs that included, besides a concluding talk on salvation through Jesus Christ, vigorous group songs, Gospel musicians and a variety of attention-grabbing events and stunts, from chalk drawing to Ranger the Gospel Horse.

Besides Graham and Johnson (called the apostle to the Bobby Socks), there were dozens of popular speakers in the movement included Charles Templeton from Toronto, T. W. Wilson, Bob Pierce, Bob Cook, and Robert Evans.

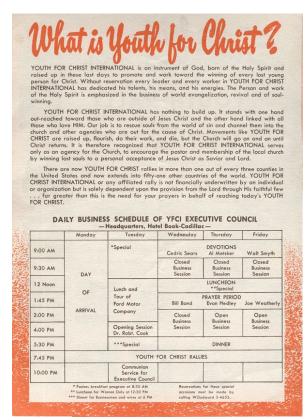
And while Graham was learning how to speak to tens of thousands, he was also learning how to lead through organization (yes, with some <u>paperwork</u>), how to work with a team, to set objectives, find support, encourage the development of new clubs and new leaders, how to manage.



Advertisement for a rally sponsored by the Youth for Christ Club of Elgin, Illinois, USA. Accession 87-146.



Click





Program for a series of YFC public rallies held in conjunction with a meeting of the YFC executive council in Detroit, Michigan, USA. (The Detroit chapter of YFC was called Voice of Christian Youth.) November 1948. The brochure lists some of the most prominent leaders in YFC at that time. Note that Robert Cook had become the second president of YFC, succeeding Torrey Johnson in 1948. Collection 48, Box 14, Folder 34.

He was also being initiated into the process of fund raising and the vagaries of donors. Chicago businessman Andrew Wyzenbeek, converted in 1910 at a Billy Sunday rally, was one mainstay of YFC. He recalled:

Interviewer: Did you use to attend the rallies, the Youth for Christ rallies?

Wyzenbeek: Yes, I use to attend them. I attended them quite regularly. And they were in different churches and so forth, so they wanted to make a real impression here in Chicago. And both Billy and Torrey Johnson came storming into my office when I was in business here, and they said, "Andy, we got a chance to rent the Auditorium." That's on Wabash Avenue there.

Yeah. And I said, "How much does that cost you?" And they said, "Five thousand dollars." And I said, "Have you got any money yet?" They said yes, they had three thousand. So, we were prospering. I turned to my bookkeeper. I said, "How's the exchequer?" He said, "It's in good shape." [Laughs] I said, "All right, boys. I'll give you a check." [Laughs].

Interviewer: What were the programs of the meetings like?

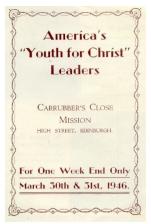


Wyzenbeek: Well...it was a great deal of music. Good singing. Good soloists. And good

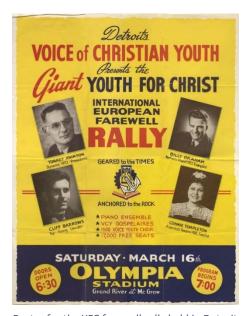
preaching. And many kids were converted. And it was a tremendous help to the churches. To keep their young people in line. I think it was directed by God in those days. It was a necessary thing. And the Lord used Billy Sun...Billy Graham and Torrey Johnson to do it.

Perhaps most important for his own development, he was on the first YFC team from the US to travel overseas, for an exhausting series of six weeks of meetings in the British Isles and western Europe. The team was a group led by Torrey Johnson and also including Charles Templeton and song leader <u>J. Stratton Shufelt</u>. Wesley Hartzell also accompanied the team to write stories about the tour for their supporters back in the United States. (Bob Jones Jr. had also originally been intended to be part of the group, but the arrangements did not work out.)

All of YFC's already formidable skill in public relations was used to focus support for this first trip. There were farewell rallies around the United States before the group left.



Brochure announcing the YFC teams' meeting in Edinburgh, Scotland. Collection 285, Box 45, Folder 4.



Poster for the YFC farewell rally held in Detroit for the team going to Europe. Collection 285, Oversize Drawer 23.



H.A. Ironside praying over the first YFC team to go to Europe. L to r: Charles Templeton, J. Stratton Shufelt, George Wilson, Torrey Johnson, unknown, Ironside, Billy Graham.

Then to Moody Memorial Church in Chicago, one of the most important Fundamentalist pulpits in country. Pastor H. A. Ironside dedicated the group at a large service the evening before their flight. And hear you see them leaving from the now defunct Meigs Field in downtown Chicago

[Film clip was shown here from Collection 285, F1]



This was Graham's first trip outside of North America. Many people looking back saw the two trips he made to the British Isles in '46 as of major importance in shaping and empowering him. Torrey Johnson would recall years later:

"The British basically are more Bible teachers. The Americans are more basically evangelists. 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."

[Click here to read the entire transcript of Johnson's interview.]

British businessman turned evangelist Eric Hutchings recalled in an oral history interview the arrival of the team in England in March 1946. The four men of the team came off the train all dressed in black, because they had been told in America in England they had to be dressed very somberly. Hutching asked them if they dressed that way in America. When they said no, he took them to a hotel room where they changed into their normal and colorful clothing. There were two great rallies in Manchester, it was just after the war and people were glad to be able to gather in crowds again Graham was amazed by the size and enthusiasm of the crowds. All the British organizers of the meeting agreed that of the four Americans, Graham made the biggest impression because of his sincerity, directness, honesty, and compassion.

The team that traveled throughout the British Isles and met some opposition, but mainly support for the young colorful Americans, an oasis of enthusiasm in a drab postwar land where rationing was still the rule and there were blocks of blackened, bombed-out buildings in the major English cities.



YFC team at a meeting, perhaps In Manchester, England, March 1946. Photo File: YFC - European Trips, 1946-1947



YFC team in London meets with the Lord Mayor of the city, March 1946. Photo File: YFC - European Trips, 1946-1947





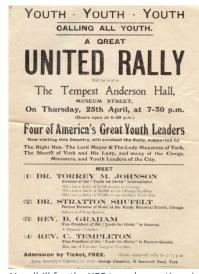
Youth for Christ procession in a British city, probably in conjunction with one of the meetings led by the team from America in 1946-47. Photo File: YFC – European trips, 1946-1947.

Wesley Hartzell accompanied the team, helped with publicity and scheduling, and wrote weekly, detailed reports on their adventures. [Read the <u>Text of Hartzell's first three weekly "diary"</u>]

Canon Thomas Livermore, the British minister who invited the team over and who became head of the British branch of YFC, recalled in his oral history interview that Graham talked so

breathlessly and so fast that the people in his congregation had trouble following him. Several shorthand stenographers found they could not copy him down because he was talking at about 240 words a minute. But Livermore found that audiences made up of people from all levels of society and all walks of life enjoyed listening to him. He knew how to talk to them. This was not true of many other American evangelists. Graham was equally taken with England. He told Livermore that he loved London and he loved the nation and asked him to pray that he, Graham, could come back. And he did come back, in the fall of 1946 with Cliff Barrows and Ruth Graham.

The YFC team also visited continental Europe, splitting up to visit different countries in Scandinavia and the Benelux countries and France. They then returned to the United States. During the summer of 1946, Graham summarized the results of this first trip: "It was also my privilege, as you know, to go to Europe,



Handbill for the YFC team's meetings in York, England. Collection 285, Box 45, Folder 4.



where we had 101 meetings in 46 days, and traveled 20,000 miles, speaking to some hundred thousand people. All of us together had some 1,500 young people who came to the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Graham felt called of God to return to England and several ministers who had heard him speak

invited him back. So, he returned and traveled throughout the British Isles for last part of 1946 and first part of 1947. On this trip, he was the unquestioned motivator of the team, the one with the vision for the work. Now he began to exercise a wider leadership, to experiment with way to hold something more than a couple of days of rallies per city. He also began in a serious way to feed his hunger for a deeper understanding of Christian spiritual discipline and the history of revival in the life of the church

He was accompanied by a new song leader, <u>Cliff Barrows</u> and his wife Billie, who served as pianist. The Barrows and Graham worked together on a few previous occasions. So, when Stratton Shufelt had to cancel just before the tour began, Graham turned to the Barrows. George Wilson of YFC also accompanied the group during the early part of the tour to help with the schedule and arrangements.

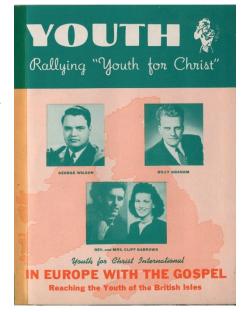


Newspaper clipping about the YFC team's departure for England, October 1946. Photo Album: Johnson, Torrev – V.

In a 1982 interview, Barrow's recalled Graham's invitation. Rev. Barrows said that Graham had asked the Barrows in mid-1946 to go to Great Britain with him. None of the other YFC staff would go with him, they did not think it was a good idea. Graham said the country need them. The churches were in ruins, young people were not attending, there would not be much in the way of funds or offerings, and they would have to cut their income in half. But they had to go.

Graham and the Barrows held a couple of rallies to raise money for their tickets. "And they sent us off to Great Britain. Never [expecting] to see us again!"

The they held extensive meetings of at least a week each in Manchester, Newcastle, Belfast, London and Glasgow and briefer one- or two-day rallies in many other cities, as reported in this 1947 prayer letter by Graham.



Cover of a brochure about the YFC team going to Europe in October 1946. Photo Album: Johnson, Torrey – V.





Meeting being held in a British city during the Graham/Barrows 1946-1947 tour. Graham is at the podium with his wife Ruth besides him. Cliff and Billie Barrows are at the extreme left of the platform group, Gavin Hamilton of British YFC is to Graham's right. Photo File: YFC- General rallies, 1946-1948.

Besides speaking to crowds about salvation, Graham was also assuming the role of a leader behind the scenes.

He played an important part, along with Gavin Hamilton, Thomas Livermore, Eric Hutchings, Torrey Johnson and others in bringing together Evangelical leaders from around Britain to form the British Youth for Christ. And Graham spoke to Christians about their responsibilities for service and showed confidence in speaking the insights that he felt God had given him. Eric Hutchings recalled in his interview that at one of the rallies Hutchings had helped organize in Manchester, Hutching's wife had gone forward when Graham asked for people to serve the Lord fulltime anywhere. Hutching was angry because he was comfortable where he was. But Graham



Graham about to speak to the first meeting of the Brutish YFC, March 1947. Barrows is leading singing from the balcony. Photo File: Johnson, Torrey M. - YFC-1947.



had always prophesied at a pray meeting that someday God would call Hutching to be an evangelist. And so, it came to pass.

And while he challenged others, he was challenged himself. Rev. David Shephard in an oral history interview recalled Graham's visit to his church in Wales in 1947. He told how he had been impressed by Graham's openness and willingness to take correction and be teachable. And

he talked with people who had seen the Welsh Revival of 1904-05 and was very impressed and interested.

In the 1982 interview, Cliff Barrows remembered the 1946-47 tour as a kind post-graduate course on evangelism for himself and his wife Billie as well as Ruth and Billy Graham. He described how for six months they went to secondhand bookstores and libraries to find books about the great revivals and English evangelists of the past

Barrows saw a spiritual longing in Graham and a desire for deeper spiritual things. They read D. L. Moody and began to have a vision for impacting cities the way English evangelists in the past had.

He also met and was influenced by British evangelists and students of evangelism history such as J. Edwin Orr and Stephen Olford. Barrows remembered how Olford really ministered to

Graham with English pastors Alan Redpath (center) and Stephen Olford. Ca. 1947. Photo File: Johnson, Torrey -YFC – 1947.

them from the Bible and prayed with them and introduced them to other English preachers such as Alan Redpath and Tom Rees.

Click <u>here</u> to read an interview, made soon after he returned to the United States, about his 1946-47 British tour.

It was while he was in England, experimenting and praying and studying that he received an

invitation for a campaign in his hometown, the place he had left ten years before as a skinny teenager, the town. where the married 29-year-old minister was still known as "the boy preacher." Barrows recalled that Graham had said to him that maybe they could begin holding weeklong meetings in American cities, instead of one day rallies. And then an invitation came from a Christian group in Charlotte, to which Graham's father belonged, that invited him. Graham prayed about t with barrows and said he wanted to get George Beverly Shea involved as well.



1Part of a large brochure about the 1947 Charlotte meetings. Collection 5, Box 1, Folder 5.



And so, Graham put together a team that would endure for more than half a century. Cliff Barrows was already song leader and master of ceremonies. George Beverly Shea joined them as soloist. Childhood friend and fellow Wheaton alumni Grady Wilson was nearby in South Carolina, and he was recruited to preach at meetings when Graham could not.

The first recognizable Billy Graham crusade, the pattern of the crusades that were to follow, was held in the fall of 1947 in the inevitable spot, his home town of <u>Charlotte</u>. This first crusade was not funded by YFC, the team had to raise the money themselves, just as they had had to do in

England. Barrows recalled that this campaign was not financed by the YFC. Graham wanted to put on an extensive advertising campaign that would cost five thousand dollars. The committee that invited him did not go along, so Graham said he would mortgage his house to raise the money. Barrows wasn't sure if he actually did that or the house was just used as collateral, but they raised the funds for a major publicity effort.

Graham's own campaigns were obviously based on what he had learned from YFC meetings and his experiences in Great Britain. In particular he believed in involving the supporting pastors and congregations in the planning of the campaign, to build the community support that would bring Christians and non-Christians to the meetings. The same churches provided hundreds of people for ushers, choir members and counselors. He believed in vigorous first-class advertising, sometimes over the opposition of the local committee. And, again, to attract the non-Christian, he would meet in civic auditoriums or tents whenever possible rather than churches.

Third in a series of annual Hollywood Bowl Youth for Christ Rollies, resignify sown is spenored by the Southern Contention of the Christ Rollies, resignify sown is spenored by the Southern Contention of the Christ Rollies, resignify sown is spenored by the Southern Contention of the Christ Rollies, resignify involved sestioner or meny youth, church and Christien businessens.

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AT WORLD FAMOUS HOLLY WOOD BOWL

Cover of program for a rally at the Hollywood Bowl in Hollywood, California. Graham was one of the principal speakers at this rally. Collection 7, Box 1, Folder 1.

The meetings themselves were energetic combinations of testimonies, group singing, soloists and musicians, all climaxed by an unapologetically evangelistic and vigorous sermon that talked

about contemporary anxieties and invited people to give their lives to Jesus Christ. Instead of a one-night rally, the campaign would be a week or two weeks long, to give time for the message to sink in, people to respond and for word of mouth to grow.

And those who came forward to accept Jesus received brief counseling at the end of each meeting and filled out cards that were turned over to local supporting churches for follow-up. There were to be many, many refinements in years to come, but most of the basic elements were in place, built not only on his own experiences, but also on the collective experience and practice of centuries of Trans-Atlantic interdenominational evangelism. Graham and his coworkers were to perfect an existing system and adapt it to the age of radio, television and satellites.

At Charlotte, too, talking for the hometown papers, he had begun to reflect on his experiences so far. "I learned to look straight at them. Say I am reaching to an audience of three or four thousand. I can look straight at them, and I can tell when a man way in the back blinks his eyes.



When he does that, I know it is time for a change of pace or I'll lose some of the people. That's what I've trained my voice for. It's a change of pace that's the secret."



Portrait Photo of William Bell Riley (1861-1947), n.d. Photo Album - Johnson, Torrey XIII.

Yet on the at the very moment when he was beginning to become the seemingly inevitable leader of this venerable movement in evangelical tradition, his life took a humbling turn. At the end of 1947 he became the unwilling president of a college, four years after graduating from Wheaton.

William Bell Riley placed unyielding pressure on him to take the position, one that involved him in all the concerns of college president fund raising, planning buildings, educational policies, faculty debates. Riley was a giant of the fundamentalist movement. He was based in Minneapolis, Minnesota, where he had pastored the First Baptist Church for 45 years and also served as president of World Christian Fundamentals Association.

He and his wife founded Northwestern Schools, a Bible Institute, a seminary, and a liberal arts college, to train ministers, evangelists, teachers, missionaries, and Christian laypeople. Riley had met Graham as a student down in Florida and was impressed later when he heard him speak at YFC rallies. Riley's health was failing, and he desperately wanted to find a successor with the authority and fire to carry on the work he had started.

At first, he attempted to get Torrey Johnson and Graham to come to the Northwestern as a team, with Johnson as president and Graham as first assistant to the president in charge of publicity. When Johnson categorically refused, Riley, concentrated all his fire upon Billy Graham.



Graham refused several times and finally asked Riley to stop contacting him about it. As Graham said at the time and later, it was not a job he wanted or felt called to, but Riley approached him in a way that he could not refuse.

I'll never forget that day, that Dr. Riley thought would be his last. And he asked me if I'd come into his room alone. For two and a half years he had written me letters and I had written him the same answer time after time. And I sent him a letter from Winona Lake the summer before last. And I said, "Dr. Riley, I would

appreciate it if you would not write me anymore. Or disturb my heart or conscience anymore." I said, "Please, let's cease negotiations." My mind was made. I announced to the entire group at Winona Lake, my colleagues who had been in prayer with me. The decision had been made. I came to Minneapolis to speak at a conference, a Youth for Christ Conference here. And Dr. Riley asked me if I'd come out to his home. And he was lying in his bed, so weak that he could not sit up. And he asked Mrs. Riley if we could be alone. And he took out his Bible and he said, 'Beloved.' And he looked at me with fire in his eyes that day. He said, 'As David was appointed king of Israel, before David realized he was to be the king,' he said, 'I now appoint you.' And he said, 'I'll met you at the judgment seat of Christ with these schools.' And I was broken down. I had no reply. And I made him this promise. I said, 'Dr. Riley,' I said, 'I don't want to go to



Northwestern.' I said, "I don't feel slightly inclined to go. I realize it is a tremendous opportunity.' But I said, 'I cannot not turn a request like that down. I would not be true to God.' I said, 'I will take the schools should the Lord call you home, for a period of time at least, until God either shows me or makes other provision." He seemed to be satisfied. And since that cold December day last year we have been trying to do our best to fulfil the promise made at his bedside that stormy August afternoon a year ago. We can do no other. And by the grace of God, that promise shall be fulfilled in days to come.

Text of Graham's 1947 report to the Northwestern Board of Trustees

His ministry up to this point had consisted of meeting one exciting challenge after another. Now, after Riley's death in December 1947, he shouldered the heavy responsibility of another man's vision, a responsibility he did not want but would not refuse. There was what seemed a huge construction project, for the schools' main building, Memorial Hall. The funds, it seemed, could not be found. He was being tried and tested as he had not been before.



"It soon became apparent to me that the problems connected with the erecting of Memorial Hall were almost too great. And I must confess that I lost heart and had a lack of faith time after time. I even went so far as to feel that perhaps we should close up and stop right where we were because of our lack of funds."

That is from the <u>earliest recording of Billy Graham's voice in the Archives</u>, his November 1948 dedication of Memorial Hall. For the money was raised and the building was completed. From his brief time at Northwestern (he resigned in 1952) came many people who would later be

essential members of the staff of the BGEA, above all George Wilson who was assistant to the president for business administration. He had been Rilev's right-hand man for all practical details of administration. He was also the leading figure in the YFC club in Minneapolis and worked closely with Graham on many projects. Wilson had gone with Graham and the Barrows to England in the fall of 1946 and handed most of the organizational aspects of the tour. In the years to come, he would provide the immovable organizational base for Graham's half a century of unstoppable evangelistic travel. And Minneapolis was to be the headquarters for the BGEA, after it was founded, for half a century.

1948 was to be a big year. At Northwestern, besides getting used to being president of a school, there was the fund-raising effort for



Four of the essential early leaders of YFC: Charles Templeton, George Wilson, Billy Graham, Torrey M. Johnson. Note the colorful ties on all but Templeton. These ties were a mark of the YFC evangelist. Walter Smyth, head of the YFC club in Philadelphia, supplied them to the rest of the group from a manufacturer there. Ca. 1946. Photo File: Wilson, George

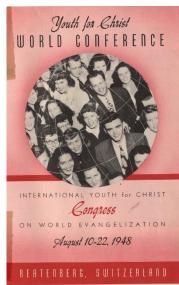


Memorial Hall to lead. He was also speaking all over the Midwest and the Northeast United States and would lead major evangelistic campaigns in Augusta Georgia, Des Moines Iowa, and Modesto, California.

And it was at this time that Graham meetings began to have significant organized local prayer support, at first largely from the initiation of the local committees. Prayer groups were organized in individual churches and between churches to pray for the campaign and for the spiritual needs of the people living in the city.

And just like in 1946 and 1947, Graham spent a portion of it overseas, speaking in London in March and in August attending the first YFC world congress at Battenberg. YFC was still largely an American movement, based in the United States and largely American led, but it was beginning to put down roots on other continents, and the leaders of the movement were beginning to seek guidance on what they should be doing not just as evangelists in their own countries but as members of the worldwide body of Christ.

Graham came to Battenberg in the midst of a movement he had helped form and inspire, watching as it adapted and began to accept new responsibilities, even as he was. Immediately after Battenberg he briefly attended as an observer the founding congress of the World Council of



Part of the pamphlet for the 1948 YFC World Congress in Battenberg, Switzerland. Photo Album: Johnson, Torrey - VI

Churches, where he was exposed to other strands and struggles within the worldwide church. All of this was filed away for the time, decades in the future, when he would provide leadership in bringing a long series of regional and world evangelical conferences.

Evon Hedley was a Canadian delegate to the Battenberg congress and his home movies captured Graham at this moment in time. [At this point a film clip was played from video V14 of Collection 48, Hedley's movie to which he added a narrative many years later]

Back in the United States, Graham, Barrows, Shea and Grady Wilson held a campaign in Modesto California in October. And while there they took the opportunity to meet, pray, look back and think ahead. The result was what Barrows jokingly called, "The Modesto Manifesto."



Group photo of the delegates to the 1948 YFC World Congress. Photo File: Johnson, Torrey - YFC – 1948.

Based on their personal experience which by this time included hundreds of meetings all over several countries in a wide variety of circumstances, plus what they had seen, heard, and read of many, many other evangelists ministries, they talked about what had hindered or destroyed evangelistic ministries in the past and what lessons they should draw for their own work to come.



Graham, Barrows, Shea Leave Georgia for West Coast



With their successful campaign in Augusta, Georgia, nearing its close, Billy Graham, Cliff Barrows and Bev Shea are making plans for the third of the present series of meetings scheduled for two weeks in Modesto, California, and including nearly the entire surrounding area. A special canvas tabernacle, seating nearly 3,000, has been constructed especially for this campaign.

Last minute reports from the Augusta, Georgia, meetings conducted by this great team indicate that in many respects this has been the greatest campaign known to the state of Georgia. Decisions for Christ in some meetings have reached nearly 300, with thousands in attendance, and many hundreds being forced to miss the meetings due to overcrowded conditions in the auditorium.

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Announcement from the October 1948 issue of Northwestern Pilot, magazine of Northwestern Schools. Collection 74, Box 9, Folder 2.

Barrows recalled in his interview how the team gathered in one of their rooms at the Rock Motel in Modesto and asked each other what things had caused scandal in evangelistic ministries in the past. They listed four areas: morals, money, criticism by pastors, and finally vanity or pride about having the highest numbers. They prayed for God to protect from those things and committed them to the Lord.

So, all seemed ready for his ministry to take off. Early in 1949 he held encouraging meetings in Miami and Baltimore. Then, in June 1949 came what Graham in his memoirs his biggest flop. A two weeklong meeting in Altoona, PA, was based on all the prayer, planning and preparation that he had been developing. The response was so tepid that he says he considered leaving evangelistic work. This public disappointment was matched, probably not coincidentally, by a private crisis of faith, as described in his memoirs. Here, at the end of his apprenticeship was perhaps the severest testing of his beliefs and his skills. But he came through it renewed, in his relationship with God, his confidence in the Bible and his belief in his call to be an evangelist of the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

So, in September 1949 he began his campaign in Los Angeles that he and all others have always considered the crucial turning in his ministry.

From our perspective today, we can see that Graham was finishing twelve years of training and preparation. He had been mentored by Minder, Edman, Johnson, Livermore, Olford, Riley, and others. He had learned how to study the Bible, how to prepare a sermon, how to give an invitation. He had tried being pastor and a college president and knew that he was meant to be an evangelist. He had been through a time of seemingly unlimited opportunity and a time heavy burdens and doubts. He had studied and drawn lessons from the past - his own and the Evangelical tradition. He had built up a thick network of ministers and active Christian businessmen laypeople across the United States, England and Western Europe, people he could



rely on and who trusted him. These were the people who would soon be leading committees in their own communities to send him invitations to hold evangelistic crusades.



Part of the pamphlet for the 1948 YFC World Congress in Battenberg, Switzerland. The people shown here are a small portion of the individuals who began in Youth for Christ and would become part of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association or who would work with them officially or unofficially for years to come. Photo Album: Johnson, Torrey – VI.

Through YFC especially he had learned how to work with and lead evangelists as extroverted as himself, how to plan and evaluate a national effort, how to motivate, how to encourage. He had spoken at every sort of venue from street corner to stadium and learned that most difficult skill, how to speak simply and naturally to tens of thousands of people.

During his meetings in England and the week-long evangelistic campaigns he had begun to hold, he had learned about prayer support and how to base a campaign on the participation of the community.

He had started to build a team of co-workers who knew and supported each other and would stay together harmoniously for decades. And he had begun to develop an organization that would specialize in organizing local churches for cooperative campaigns.

He had learned how to advertise to get the attention of the secular world.



Since traveling to Florida Bible Institute in his family car and speaking over the local Tampa radio station, had traveled hundreds of thousands of miles across the United States and Europe and had broadcast many times over the radio. This gave him not only a good feel for the American mind and mood but also a firsthand understanding of the impact of modern transportation and communications and what these would mean for evangelism. The young man who had used crude handbills and painted posters to advertise his meetings was father to the man who in 1954 would insist that he would only hold meetings in New York if full use was made of radio and television to reach the largest possible audience.

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Before a lamp can light, it must be lit. A candle only illuminates a room when it has received a flame. I am having been talking this morning almost exclusively about the public Billy Graham because that is the story told by the documents we have in the Archives. But let me conclude with two private moments that illustrate God's working, through granting vision and calling.

In 1977, Roy Gustafson recalled during his interview something Graham had told him about their time at Florida Bible Institute. He said while he was walking around the golf course at the school, the Lord had showed him great crowds responding to the Gospel. He had not thought he would be involved in it and God did not show him that. But he had seen that response.

Ten years later, Graham, in a time of stress and difficult decisions, told an audience in Minneapolis about his certainty of his own calling: "I told him that God had called me to another field of service, that I was to be an evangelist and God had not given me the gift of administration, or the gift of a teacher, or the gift of an education, that if I had any gift from God, it was the gift of winning men to Jesus Christ."



As the Modesto Manifesto showed, he and his co-workers were seasoned enough to use their experiences to critique their ministry and young enough to apply an energy and enthusiasm to their campaigns that would disarm almost every critic and overflow every obstacle. They combined this activism with a notable piety and reliance on prayer and a seeking of God's will, including the enlisting of hundreds and then thousands of prayer partners around the country. The evangelist Billy Graham had matured in his vocation and was very well known and respected among the fundamentalist and evangelical community.

Now he was going to enter the national spotlight. The curtain on the second act was about to go up.

