THEODORE HESBURGH

December 6, 2000

Jeff Charnley,
interviewer

Charnley: Today is Wednesday, December 6, the year 2000. We're on the campus of University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana. I'm Jeff Charnley, along with Dr. Fred Honhart, of Michigan State University, interviewing the Reverend Theodore Hesburgh, President Emeritus of Notre Dame.

This interview is part of a series for the sesquicentennial commemoration of Michigan State, coming up in the year 2005. Reverend Hesburgh, you can see that we have a recorder here today, and you give us permission to record this interview?

Hesburgh: Absolutely.

Charnley: I'd like to start first with a brief overview of your personal and educational background.

Hesburgh: Okay. Be modest, now.

Charnley: Okay. Where were you born and educated?

Hesburgh: I was born in Syracuse, New York, on May 25, 1917. As an aside, that's four days before Jack [John F.] Kennedy was

born. He was born the 29th. I was educated for twelve years at Most Holy Rosary High School, taught by the nuns from Scranton, Pennsylvania, the IHMs, they're called, the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

I graduated in June of '34 from high school, and came here to begin college education in September of 1934. After my first year--I joined the order, I might add, but just as a postulate, not having vows or anything, and I lived in a place called Holy Cross Seminary, here at the university, on campus.

I finished my first year here, and then the following August, I went to what's called a novitiate, which is a year like Marine boot camp training, only worse. You could only talk two hours a day, and I'm a great gasser. I generally had to do something during the meal, like wait on tables or wash dishes, so I wound up having to eat later, and I lost half my talking time, which was two hours a day, an hour after dinner, an hour after supper.

We took an old abandoned farm, six hundred acres, and brought it back to life, put in corn and wheat and all the usual Indiana crops. That was real hard manual labor, up at five every morning and going all day long, and a lot of praying and a lot of spiritual conferences, and I read about a hundred books, I think, that year. The beginning of that, I should say, was 1935.

August 15th, I received a habit, after an eight-day retreat. The following, August the 16th--getting the habit was the 15th--the 16th of August, the year following, having completed a whole

year there, I took my first vows for three years, vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

Then I went back to Notre Dame in September and began the second year of college, which I completed the following June. At that point, I got what's--every year you get a sheet of paper when you belong to an order, and they say what you're going to do the next year, and my sheet was very simple. Four words: "To study in Rome." So I asked them, "What's that all about?" And they said, "Well, you're going to go to the Gregorian University in Rome, and get a doctorate in philosophy and theology." Well, I was then about twenty-one years old. Or I wasn't that; I was still twenty years old. And the thought of being gone for eight years, I still hadn't, at that point, hadn't seen my family in two years. They were tougher in those days than they are today.

So I went back to Syracuse, New York, and saw my mother and dad and my three sisters and a brother who was sixteen years younger than I was. He was just a kid at that point. I saw them for a couple of weeks, and on the 25th of September 1937, I got aboard the *Champlain*. Actually, it was a French Compagnie Générale de Transportation, and I got aboard that French Line ship and sailed to Le Havre, after a brief stop at Plymouth, England.

From Le Havre, we went in to Paris to see the city. We went down to LeMans, about a three-hour drive from Paris at that time. That's where the order began and where Father Soren [phonetic] left from. He was one of the first members of the order to come

here and found Notre Dame at the end of November 1942. So it was going back to where it all began.

Then we went on to Rome, from Paris, on the train, and I spent the next three years in Rome, till the blitzkrieg began. During that three years, I finished my degree in philosophy and started my first year of theology, which I completed.

But at the end of May 1940, the American consul came into our class of seven hundred youngsters. We were taught four hours a day at the university, all lecture, all in Latin, if you can imagine that. All the textbooks were in Latin. And we had to talk Latin to and from the university, to get the facility of speaking it, because our exams were oral, in Latin. It's a totally different system, but I did a lot of work and we had plenty of time to work. I noticed, being in the seminary here in the States, the bell was always ringing for choir practice or to play football or do something, whereas over there you had big gobs of three, four hours in your room, just studying.

Since in the house we had to speak French, and on the street Italian, and at the university Latin, and I had a Mexican friend who was not all that anxious to learn Italian, he only spoke to me in Spanish, so by the end of the year I understood almost perfectly Spanish, but I didn't try to speak it. I did start it later, but then I didn't want to mix up the Italian. They're very close together.

Well, fast forward. I went back to Washington, three years more of theology, and then got ordained on June 24, 1943, which

is about fifty-seven years ago, I think. It'll be fifty-eight next June if my arithmetic is right, which it probably isn't. But in any event, after getting my doctor's degree in '45, I was asked to come back here. I was trying to get in the Navy as a chaplain. They said, "No, come back and start teaching. We've got five thousand Navy right here in Notre Dame," which was true.

So I came back on July 3, 1945, and for the next several years, till 1947, I taught six classes, believe it or not, became head of the department in two years, in '48. I was writing for the course, because there were no books on teaching theology to college students.

I was both a rector and what they call a prefect--that's a good French word--in one of the halls, which meant I was living with the students, had about eighty kids on my floor. They were all return veterans, so they were busy years. They had a lot of problems, but they did very well. It was the best group of students we ever had, I think.

In 1949, Father John Kavanaugh [phonetic], a good Michigander, a good friend of John [A.] Hannah's, made me executive vice president. I said, "What does that mean?" He says, "You're vice president of the other four vice presidents. And on top of that, you're chairman of the faculty board, in control of athletics, so that'll be a big responsibility."

I did that job for three years, and then in 1952, was named president. Normally, in those days, it was a six-year appointment, because you were also superior of all the religious

on campus. There were about a hundred priests and brothers. And of course, with that, canon law doesn't want people to have all that power for longer times than six years, so since the canon law came in in 1918, every president had been here for six years.

Following the six-year stint, which I played like a hundred-yard dash, because making changes in the university is like moving a cemetery, it's pretty complicated, finally, it came to 1958 and I thought, "Well, I can go back to teaching," which I loved, living with the students in the halls, in the residence halls, and they said, "We changed the rules. You're no longer a religious superior and there's no limitation in canon law to being president, so you keep going."

I went around that track six times, and as a result of that, literally, if you want an easy statement of my life, I had thirty-five years studying and teaching, and then thirty-five as president. So when I got off, I was seventy years old, and I've been retired now about fourteen years. I think that's more than you asked for.

Charnley: No, it's certainly not. When people think of the relationship between Michigan State and Notre Dame, usually athletic rivalry comes into mind, but I'd like to focus first on your relationship with John Hannah on the U.S. Civil Rights Commission. Would you tell us something about how you became involved in that?

Hesburgh: Yes. I got a call from General [Dwight D.] Eisenhower--now President Eisenhower's assistant, saying, "The President would like to appoint you to the Civil Rights Commission. Would you accept?" and I said, "Sure." I haven't yet learned how to say no to the President. Heavens. He had appointed me two years earlier to the National Science Foundation board.

Anyway, he called back and he said, "Oh, I forgot to tell you. There's going to be six members, three Republicans and three Democrats. Are you a Republican or a Democrat?" And he's already appointed four or five members.

I said, "I'm neither; I'm an Independent."

"Fine," he said, "We'll make you whatever the opening is." So it went on like that for fifteen years.

Well, one of the other two Northerners was John Hannah, who was my neighbor, and I knew John fairly well because of his relationship to Notre Dame when he called my predecessor, John Kavanaugh, also a Michigander, as I mentioned, from [unclear], and said they were having trouble getting into the Big Ten because Michigan thought they were not in the big time. But if they were playing Notre Dame, they'd obviously be in the big time. He said, "You'd do us a great favor if you let us play you every year, and we're willing to play there at your place, and we're willing to take less than half of the cut, 40 percent instead of 50, or 35, if you'd prefer."

John Kavanaugh laughed and he said, "John, we're both

Michiganders and we don't treat each other that way. We'll play you for the next ten years, as soon as we have an opening. And we'll play home and home, and we'll split whatever we get, fifty-fifty."

Well, even though he paid us the next ten years, you whooped us about half of those games, and you got in the Big Ten, which you probably might not have gotten in otherwise. But it was pretty hard to say you weren't big time when you were playing Notre Dame.

In any event, that's how I initially knew John. On the commission, John was kind of laid back, but he was very, very effective, and he was very committed to achieving civil rights opportunity. Mainly we were focused on blacks in this country. I can shorten it up a bit by saying blacks, because I know there's an African-American appellation, but I find this one easier.

We had almost nothing to start with. We were sworn in at the White House on the second of January 1958. We, six of us, the three Southerners were two former governors from Florida and from Virginia and the head of the law school of Southern Methodist, named Storey [phonetic]. The Northerners were John Hannah and myself, and the only black man in government at that time, at any level, was the Under Secretary of Labor, who was a lawyer. They were all lawyers, except John Hannah and myself. But anyway, this gentleman--I'm reaching for his name and not getting it, but he's on the record and I can find it in two

minutes.

John was firmly in control. We had almost no money to work with, about a million dollars, out of the President's emergency fund, and we were only on the job presumably for two years, by the time the law was passed, in September of '57. So already we had lost about a half a year, almost.

So we started out, had our first hearing down in Montgomery, Alabama, and that was a long, involved story. But John proved himself, first of all, to be totally in control of the task we had before us, how we had to do it. Fair, but very firm, with all the people that testified.

We eventually came to a point of subpoenaing, in other words, telling our people they had to testify, whether they wanted to or not, because that had the advantage of putting them under government protection from that time on because they were testifying in an official government hearing, under government control, and if anybody touched them, the FBI was after them right away. So I made that very clear at the beginning of every meeting.

John was very good with the witnesses, he was very good with the people in opposition, which were just about anybody of any power, and all white, of course, in the South. What we were up against, we soon found out, was rather disturbing. One, there were over six million blacks who were not allowed to vote in the South. There was not a single black kid in a school that had whites in it, as students or teachers, from the Mason-Dixon Line

South, thirteen states in the Confederacy, plus most of the border states went the same route.

They spent one-seventh on the black education than was spent on white education, and because blacks were not getting educated, they had a hard time getting jobs and having money, and therefore they couldn't buy houses, and besides, the places they could live was restricted. We knew that six million of them couldn't even register to vote, which was our main role as we started out.

As time went on, John expanded our role, legitimately, because we were interested in human rights, generally. So that we covered really the area of voting, education, housing, employment, administration of justice. There was not a single black in the justice system throughout the South--no cops, no state police, no jurors, no judges, no jailkeepers, no sheriffs, nothing. Every time a black got in trouble, which was easy to do if you were black, you faced white justice, which was always, just about always, prejudiced against him. And there had been a whole series of lynchings, of course, where some white woman alleged that a black guy said a dirty word to her, and he's suddenly hanging from his neck without a trial, without anything.

Anyway, to get back on track here, when we got to Alabama, or before we went, even, we wrote the hotels down there, saying we were coming to town and could we have reservations for twelve people. We had six commissioners and six assistants. Each one of us had a legal assistant. The interesting point here was that one of our commissioners was black and two of these lawyers who

worked for the commission were black.

The result of that was that since we have to get in a hotel, they wrote back and said, "We can't possibly take a mixed group in the hotel. The white people can come, but the others will have to go to the black hotel out on the edge of town." So John said, "Not to worry. We'll go to the federal establishment there. You've got Montgomery University." And both he and I had ROTC units from there.

They were operated out of there, we knew the general in charge, so John just wrote a letter to the general, saying we were a mixed group, a federal commission with staff people, and we wanted to come there and stay. John was very calm about it, and we got word back from the major, who was the PR guy at Montgomery University, saying that they couldn't possibly put a mixed group in the BOQ, because nobody would understand that. This was after the armed forces had presumably been integrated by [Harry S.] Truman, long before, about ten years before.

Well, John was fairly calm. He just called up the Secretary of the Air Force and said, "You'd better override that guy down there. He must not have read the law." The guy came back and said, "I can't disturb my place by countermanding the commanding officer, the general."

Well, John still was fairly cool, so he called up the Secretary of Defense, who was a good friend of his and mine, had been the president of General Motors, Charlie Wilson. Charlie came back and said, "I'm sorry, guys, but I can't overturn the

Secretary of the Air Force."

John said, "This is exactly why he's Secretary of Defense, so he can overturn the fellow who isn't upholding the law."

Then John got angry, which he could do, after a long period of patience, and he called up the President, point blank, and he said, "Mr. President, you gave us a terrible job, and we can't very well do it if we don't go out in the boondocks and have these hearings with people that are being treated unjustly. To get all this on record, we had hoped to turn out a hundred books from all parts of the country, of these records of these hearings. But how are we going to do it, when the first place we're going, we even get turned away from the federal establishment? And the Army, the Navy, and Air Force, I assume, were ordered integrated by President Truman, before you."

Well, President Eisenhower was a very calm person, but he, too, got upset about this and he reverted to Army English. He called up that general and kind of indicated he might be a private first class if he didn't put us up right away. Well, we were put up there, but we were not very welcome, and no one wanted to see us. That was the first problem we had, just getting a place to lay our heads during the hearing, which was going to last three or four days.

Then we had a problem. According to Alabama law, they had to keep the voting record for two years, and even those that apply to vote, who are trying to register. The local judge had the job of keeping the voting records for the last two years from

Montgomery. We just wrote and said we'd like to examine these records, because they had to put on the back, if they were turned down, why they were turned down. And he just said, "I'll burn them before I'll give them to you."

Then we went to the federal judge there, Johnson. This is beginning to sound like the current election. Went to the federal judge and he called the judge that refused and he said, "We were together in law school and you're my good friend, but this is the law, and by God, you follow it or I'll put you in jail."

So we got the records and as we started to examine them. One of the reasons why the applicant was turned down for voting was "error in spelling," and he spelled "spelling," S-P-I-L-L-I-N-G, and dotted the "i". So that gives you some sense of what we were up against.

Well, you can multiply that all across the South, all across the West. We had hearings in New York and in Chicago, in Philadelphia, in Boston. You name it, we had hearings. But not all of them that first year and a half that we were in business. We came out with a report. It's sitting right here behind you on the wall.

At the end of the first report, we had a problem getting that report finished, because we were going to do it in late July. It was due in September when the law was signed at the White House, given to the President and the Congress. It was a dual report to both the President and the Congress. John was

worried and I was worried because if we said something substantial, it was very likely that the Southerners wouldn't go along with us.

Ike had, I think, thrown us a fast ball, but it turned out to be serendipitous, because in addition to three Republicans and three Democrats, he put on three Northerners and three Southerners. In those days, of course, you had the solid South. They were all Democrats, and I was a freelancer, if you will.

So we had a hearing coming up in--it wasn't Baton Rouge--Shreveport, Louisiana, and in that hearing we had to look into voting in Louisiana, which was terrible. I won't go into all these details, but John was right on top of it. He was a cool--I was going to say "cat"--but he was. He was a cool guy, but he was a strong guy, and he showed great strength of character in the way he conducted those meetings and how firm he was with people who were very contentious. And this was not a small thing. We had hearings where they'd call up the hotel and ask for our room numbers, and they'd say, "What do you want them for?" and they'd say, "We want to bomb those characters." So we had to break up hearings several times under threat of a bomb being in the room, get the FBI to sniff it out.

Well, just parenthetically, something that impressed me about John. He had, I think, three boys and a girl, and this was during the Vietnam War, part of the ten years we spent together, and every one of his kids went in the service, whereas everybody else I knew was avoiding that by enrolling in college. They were

enrolled, but they still went in the service with the ROTC, most of them, and some of them became officers. I think they all went to Vietnam. So anyway, that was a side of his character that was interesting to see.

We went on through that first year and a half, and, as I say, had the final hearing in Shreveport, but when I got there, about five in the morning--I had been fishing up in Canada and I had to fly down. They had a big mess-up in the lines. But I finally got there about five in the morning and I went into the BOQ. Again, we're staying with the Air Force at the SAC [Strategic Air Command] base in Shreveport. Not much sleep. Those planes were taking off, loaded with atomic bombs, about every fifteen minutes, taking off and landing, B-52s.

So I got there and these guys are getting up, but they hadn't had much sleep. They were all in a foul mood. The weather was--you're soaking wet five minutes after you get out of the air-conditioned plane.

This marshal comes up and says, "You Hesburgh?" and I said yes, and he says, "I got something for you," and he hands me, he says, "That's a restraining order from the local federal judge, restraining you guys from having a hearing here." Well, he had the power to do it. We had decided earlier we were going to stay on in Shreveport for three days after the hearing, which would be three days, and write our report. What are we going to do now at this SAC air base, with nobody getting any sleep, and the weather being just horrendous?

So the first thing we did, we got in touch with the federal government, of course, the Department of Justice, and we sued the federal judge for doing this, and the case immediately went to a three-federal-judge panel, and then it was remanded from there to the Supreme Court. By October, we had an order back from the Supreme Court, rather record time from July to October, saying that the judge was completely wrong in restraining us, that we had every right to represent the federal government in the pursuit of human rights. It was such a clear judgment. Every report we filed after that, we ran it on the front page, just as justification for what we were doing.

So I said, "John, I've got a great idea. I'll get an airplane from one of our friends over in Kansas, Mr. O'Shaunessy [phonetic]." He had an old DC-3, a nice DC-3. "And we'll fly up to our fishing camp at Land 'o Lakes, Wisconsin, and we can do the report up there. The weather's cool and we can go fishing while we're doing it."

That, too, was wonderful, because these guys, I call up O'Shaunessy and he said, "What do you want the airplane for?" and I told him. He said, "That's a good cause. We'll be over there about one o'clock." And I said, "Well, stop at the regular airport and get some fuel, because you can't get it here. Just jet fuel." And then I said, "I'll clear with the general so you can land here," because civilian airplanes couldn't land at the SAC base.

So they got in about 1:30 and we climbed on the plane, the

twelve of us. The other five commissioners, who had been up all night, hadn't been in an airplane all night, they went right to sleep in these comfy chairs aboard this converted DC-3. I got in the back and sitting on the floor with the staff people, and we whacked out the guts of this report.

They'd been working on it for a long time, but we had to come down with conclusions, recommendations, and that was the heart of the report. We had twelve of them, I think about three on voting, about three on education, and maybe four on each of these three subjects, the last one, of course, being, I believe, employment.

Education was the important one, and, of course, voting was the most important one. That's why the commission was originally set up. I figured, while these guys are sleeping, we'll make these twelve tough recommendations. If we can get them by the three senators, we're home free, but that was a long shot.

Well, anyway, they all went to sleep. It took about five hours because it was a slow airplane. We landed at Land o' Lakes. I had called ahead and had big steaks ready for them and a drink if they wanted it. So we had cocktails and steaks and baked potatoes, and then I said, "Anybody want to go fishing?"

Turned out, they were all fishermen, so we went out, and they caught more fish then, and I think the Lord was doing something. Then came back at ten o'clock on a high. They'd had a good four-hour or five-hour sleep going up there. They had a wonderful meal, they were catching great big bass and pike and

muskellunge. Everybody caught fish, because I had the best guys we could get to take them out to the right places.

So I thought, "Boy, John, let's do it right now when they're in such a good mood." So we got them out on the front porch, and screened in, the moon coming up across the lake, pine-scented air, and I told them, I said, "While you guys were sleeping, the staff and I put together these final recommendations. I think we ought to vote on them, John," and he said, "Okay, I'll chair it."

So we discussed each one, and believe it or not, the first eleven passed unanimously, six-zero, which was incredible, because it was pretty strong on education. It was very strong on voting. You try to keep someone from being able to be registered to vote and you go to jail, and no fiddle-dee-dee about it. And education we were fairly strong on.

So we got to the last one and the former governor of Virginia said, "Father Ted, would you hate me if I vote against this?"

John said, "Father Ted doesn't hate anybody."

I said, "That's right," and I'm about to start, "Just vote your conscience."

He said, "That won't do. I know what's right and wrong here. I just can't go home if I vote for putting black and white kids together in the same classroom."

And I said, "Well, that's what it's about."

But I said, "Vote your conscience, John."

He said, "I can't vote my conscience. I've got to vote the

wrong way, and I know that, and you know that." So anyway, he voted against it.

So when we arrived at the White House a month later, in September, with this report, Ike apparently had read those recommendations carefully and he said, "My God, they put three Republicans and three Democrats, figuring they wouldn't agree on anything, and then I put on three Northerners and three Southerners. You guys are 100 percent, six-zero, for eleven of the twelve recommendations." There might have been ten, I don't remember the exact number. It was about that number. "And these are pretty strong medicine, and you're recommending this to the Congress which sent you up to do that." He was so impressed with it, he said, "How can you explain that? You guys are Southern governors, two of you Florida, and Virginia. And you're a Southern Methodist law school."

Well, they said, "We listened to a lot of--"

[Begin Tape 1, Side 2]

Hesburgh: "We know it's wrong, and because it's wrong, we had to just say so, and that's what we're suggesting to the Congress, that can't decide on anything."

So I said, "Mr. President, John should tell you that you didn't just appoint three Democrats and three Republicans; you appointed six fishermen, and we wrote this report up at Land 'o Lakes, Wisconsin."

And he said, "Did you catch a lot of fish?"

I said, "We cleaned the place out, practically."

He said, "Could I go up there?"

I said, "Of course." We did arrange for him to go up, but then something came up overseas and his brother Milton, and his father-in-law went up fishing there. But they caught a lot of walleye and they brought them back and Ike cooked them in the White House kitchen, to finish out that part of the story.

Well, through all of this up and downs and political pressure and not being very popular in many parts of the country, John kept the thing going solidly, and Ike was so impressed that he talked the Congress into renewing us for another two or three years, and that went on for the next ten years, with John always being the chair.

When [Richard M.] Nixon came in, as I say, we had been pretty obstreperous to a lot of people. By that time, the old governors had died and I was the only original one, with John still alive. John decided to pack it in, so he went down to become secretary for all overseas AID, Agency for International Development. He had earlier taken a stint in Washington as the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower, so he knew the ropes, and he operated very well in that because he knew his way around, he knew how to get done what he needed to get done.

But when he left, I'm the only original member left, so I went to see President Nixon right after he was elected, in the White House, and I said, "I think I'd better resign. I've been

on this ten years and I'm the last living member. John's living, but he's working for another part of the government." I said, "I really should give you my resignation right now."

He said, "Well, let me think about it, will you?" So he called me back a week later and said, "I want you to be chairman."

I said, "Well, that's hardly resigning."

So I took John's place for the next four years, and four years later, after the election, I got fired, because we were really leaning on the administration pretty hard on especially employment. They had enormous employment in Washington, and we took all the forty biggest agencies, like the Pentagon and FBI and Secretary of State, just took their own statistics. Part of our law was they had to keep the race figures. And it turned out that of the forty top employers in Washington, all the government agencies--we're talking here about millions of employees--only one--Health, Education, and Welfare, in those days as a category, our categories were poor, fair, good, and outstanding, we got no outstanding, no good, and one bottom-of-the-line fair, in Health, Education and Welfare. And the other thirty-nine were poor, on the record.

So the law that the federal government had pushed through wasn't even being observed by the federal government. I think that was probably the can tied to me that assured that I would be fired, which I was. But it turned out to be kind of a badge of honor to be fired.

I wasn't on the job very long when they told me they wanted to put a guy in for staff director. He was the really right-hand guy, and John always made sure we had a good staff director. This guy I wanted to put on had been assistant staff director and the other guy was going back to practice law. So I told them at the White House I wanted this fellow to be my staff director, and they asked me to come over to lunch. I remember so well they had the chief political operator in the White House and another guy, very close on the staff there, plus Pat Moynihan and myself, four of us to lunch. I guess it was actually dinner, but it doesn't matter. We were at the White House staff room. And Pat Moynihan gave it away. He said, "Padre, you'd better be ready for it. They're going to have to talk you out of the guy you wanted to be staff director."

I said, "I really feel that I need a strong guy that I can count on."

They said, "We've got a strong guy you can count on," and he brought up a guy over in Virginia who had gotten a couple of congressmen elected and this was going to be his payback for what he had done politically.

So I said, "Well, I'm not happy about this, but I'll have lunch with the guy," which I did. It turned out he was a nice guy, but had no law degree and he'd be a very weak sister in this job. So I said, "Where do I go from here?"

So I went over to John's office in the State Department. I remember sitting in his office, saying, "What do I do, John?"

He said, "You know, Father Ted, you've got more oomph than you think, or realize. You just pick up that phone and call this political guy in the White House and tell him that he's got a simple choice. He accepts your recommendation that this guy is staff director because you have to work with him, he's your top guy, or if not, he'd better go out and get another chairman, because you're resigning and you're going to tell Mr. Nixon that you're resigning because of this guy's action."

Well, this guy went up a flue, you know, and he said, "Boy, you're talking tough."

I said, "I'm being coached by a guy who knows how to talk tough when you have to. But that's the way it is." I'm calling on John's telephone, didn't tell him who it was.

Finally, the guy said, "Well, we don't want to lose you, so go ahead and appoint Glickstein [phonetic]," which is what I did. And it worked out very well, but John really saved the day, because I didn't feel like going back to the President and arguing with him, but that's the only way it was going to end.

John was kind of a mentor. We were both university presidents during this whole time. He was a model of how to get tough things through a committee. He probably was used to working with a committee of trustees at Michigan. He used to regale me with some of his problems there. But he was a guy that had great vision, and I think he took a place that was little regarded, and in a matter of fairly short time made it one of the first-class universities so that he could stand up with the

University of Michigan and say, "We're as good as you are." Michigan had a lot longer time in history, but by golly, I'd say today, you would have to say, there are some very close calls, if you compare the two institutions.

I've ranged a long way, but sooner or later, this stuff would have to come out, so I hope it's useful to you.

Charnley: It sure is. In looking back at your work on the Civil Rights Commission, was there any legislation that you can point to that maybe has the most important [unclear]?

Hesburgh: I would say--I said earlier that we finally decided we were getting nowhere on anything, so we put the whole thing into one package and we took to Mr. Kennedy, the President, and of course he handed it over to Bobby [Robert F. Kennedy], who was his Attorney General and really guiding all the civil rights stuff. They were really bearing down on him.

Kennedy was in an awkward position there, because in those days they had a solid South, and he had a real scraper of an election and all he had to do was to get tough on civil rights, and you could be darn sure he would lose the solid South and he would only have one term in the White House. Everybody that walks into that Oval Office wants to stay there eight years, and he was no exception. So I think his strategy was that he'd hold off for four years and then, the last term, it didn't matter, he could get tougher. But he never got a chance because he was

knocked off, you know, in three years.

[Lyndon B.] Johnson came in. Johnson's been much maligned as a President, in a lot of biographies they've written about him, and I have to say that I always admired the guy because he was really concerned about the poor, because he had been poor, growing up in south Texas along the Pertenales.

He knew what it was to be hungry and what it was to have to work like a dog for very little pay, and he really empathized with the blacks in America, because they were getting a terrible shrift on all the key points like education and housing and employment and voting, and so forth, especially public accommodations, where they couldn't walk down the street in Atlanta and take a drink out of the fountain, because it was only for whites, even though blacks get thirsty, too. Couldn't go to the toilet anywhere, which gets embarrassing if you're shopping in a big city. You couldn't go in and just buy something, try it on. They wouldn't let you try anything on. You couldn't even go in the drugstore and get a Coke and sit down and drink it. You could get one and take it out on the street and drink it, maybe. But that was, we called, in general, public accommodations, and that was terrible.

So Johnson, right after he got elected, got together with us and said he's going to break this power lock, or power grid. He went in and called a joint session of Congress in January. He only came in in November, and he called them there in January and he said, "We're going to finally make Jefferson's dream come

true, that all Americans are created equal, and endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." He said, "That isn't happening today, because they can't even vote, much less all of those other things like going to a good school. Segregation is, by law, the old *Plessy vs. Ferguson* decision." Anyway, he said, "We're going to pass this," and he took the law that we had a terrible time getting Kennedy just to drop in the bucket up on the Hill, and he pulled it out and made it even tougher, and then shoved it back in.

He had a special meeting of both houses. He said, "This is the most important thing for the country, and we're going to do it, and I don't want a lot of monkeying around." Now, there was no way on earth that that could happen, except that he had been head of the House and head of the Senate, and he knew those guys and he knew their foibles and he knew their sins.

So he'd call up a guy from one of the Southern states and say [in a Southern accent], "George, I hear you're not going to vote for mah bill." Now it became "mah bill."

And George would say, "Well, Lyndon, you know, I vote for that bill and I'm dead politically."

And he said, "Who are they going to put in to take your place? Where did they get all those bridges and that big university out there, and those airports? And what about those highways? They got them because you're head of the committee. They're going to drop you off? No way they can do that. It

takes twenty, thirty years to get to be head of a committee."

And the guy would say, "Well, I don't know. You can say that, Lyndon, but I've got to go to the election."

Lyndon would say, "How do you think it would happen? What would people speculate if there was an article in the *New York Times* or in the *Washington Post* next week, saying, `What is Senator X doing, and your name would be X--what is Senator X doing in Room 340 of the Mayflower Hotel every Thursday afternoon, three o'clock, and we don't think he's up there to say the 'Our Father.'"

He'd say, "You wouldn't do it. My God, you'd blow up my family and my reputation."

He'd say, "You'd better vote for mah bill."

Well, by July, which was unthinkable--just to create the commission it took them all summer, and then they did it as a way of getting out of doing anything else, take their problem and dump it on us. Anyway, in July, he signed that bill, and I swear to you, there's no President before or since who could have got that bill through, except Lyndon Johnson did it by sheer force, and pushing and even bullying, which I don't mind if he's bullying people that won't vote for justice.

Charnley: This is the Voting Rights Act of 1964?

Hesburgh: 1964, you're right. It was actually the Omnibus Civil Rights Bill in 1964, and then they had the Voting Rights came in

'65, although it was included a good part of it in the first bill. But the first bill does change the face of America, and you can thank John Hannah in large measure for that happening, because he gave leadership to a little weak commission that amounted to nothing.

Every time we got out a report, they never found a single fact. John was fierce that this had to be factual, this had to be what the witness said. As I say, we had a tape of every single word that was said in these hearings, and we had almost a hundred hearings over the years. And we put out a lot of books.

So I'm very grateful to have seen his leadership at work during all those years, steadfastly and with great courage, never ducking a problem. One other thing about him that I think kind of endeared him to the rest of us. Staff, of course, would get caught up with great fury on some of these things. They'd put out a sentence like, "The inexorable condition of voting is abominable in everybody's eyes, who thinks at all about justice," and John would say, "I think that sentence would be stronger if you left out all the adverbs and all the adjectives." And you know, in a way it was. It was simple. Not to allow people to vote is a great injustice if they happen to be American citizens. John was simple in that sense. He didn't want to have a lot of embellishment, because the facts spoke for themselves, and that was what was going to make the difference, not the adjectives and the adverbs. People could add their own.

Charnley: Did you have any later contact with him?

Hesburgh: Well, we became great friends, and, of course, I traveled with him at times when we coincided in Japan and Okinawa and the Philippines. I used to kid him and say that the sun never sets on Michigan State University, because it's had these wonderful programs all over the world. He was very big on that, and he'd go out himself and make sure they were working. That's why he made such a great administrator for the international program in the whole country, because he knew it. One really funny one. He was a very balanced, good guy, but he could get his dander up.

Charnley: How did he do that?

Hesburgh: It wasn't against me, but I remember a few times during those hearings when someone would press pretty close to the bone and he'd say, "Now, we're here to get the truth, not to spout propaganda, and what you said just is not true, and I ask it be expunged from the record."

But this time I saw him turned off right away was, he and his wife, who's a lovely lady, and I were in the Philippines. We'd be in Okinawa together at a meeting. We both had business in the Philippines, mostly with alumni. We were staying at the Hotel Manila and we go into the dining room that night. I had a collar on, and he was dressed up with and shirt and tie and coat,

although the weather was kind of hot, but we had appropriate clothes for that.

We get to the dining room and the maitre d', who was a little guy about four and a half feet tall, Filipino, he says to me, "You can't go in."

I said, "Why not?"

He said, "You don't have a tie on."

That really put John through the ceiling. He said, "You damn fool. He's a Catholic priest. Catholic priests don't wear ties. They wear what they call a Roman collar, and he's got it on, and that's his formal wear. Now, get out of the way."

And the little guy said, "No tie, no get in."

I knew this was going to not end in peace, so I said, "John, you got an extra tie?" and he said yes, so we told his wife, "Go ahead and grab a table," and we went up into the room and I got a tie from him. Actually, it was a black tie, so I put on a shirt and put the tie on and came down.

So at the end of the evening, I took it off and said, "John, thanks a lot."

He said, "It looks good on you. Keep it." And I think I still have that tie.

Charnley: Interesting story.

Why do you think Hannah was selected chair the first time?

Hesburgh: Well, I don't know. I don't know why I was selected.

Oh, I know why he was selected chair. Eisenhower just put him in as chair because Eisenhower probably saw him perform in the Department of Defense. But I'm sure it was Eisenhower's judgment, because he had the right of appointment and he also appointed the chair.

Well, another thing was, the three others were Democrats and John was a Republican, so that was probably another reason. His choice was the black guy. At that time, it might not have washed. I don't know. And I was the only other choice, and it was unusual to put a priest in as chair, but Nixon did it.

Honhart: To go back a little bit, to get a little different focus at Michigan State, obviously, one of the longstanding relationships has been the intercollegiate athletics between the two schools. You want to share some of your thoughts about what that's meant, both pro and con, as far as for both schools, and their relationship?

Hesburgh: I think it's been a very healthy relationship. We've never had any fuss. Oh, occasionally, the kids get worked up at games, but that's part of the atmosphere. I was president for thirty-five years, so I went the whole gamut of John and his next four successors, including the current man. I was a good friend of all of them. In fact, I'm still on committees with [John A.] DiBiaggio, the Knight Commission on the future of intercollegiate athletics, and also the man you just honored.

Charnley: Cliff [Clifton R.] Wharton [Jr.].

Hesburgh: Yes, Cliff Wharton, who is also on that commission. I can think of nothing but positive, peaceful things that happened between our two schools. I mean, we've shared professors at times, interchange. We'd hire someone or they'd hire somebody from here.

When I was president, I used to always go up there for the games and stay with John and his wife. I went up this year, after a long absence, because Pete was a good friend of mine years ago. Before he got this job, he was involved in a number of pro bono things. He'd been up there quite a few years. It's amazing how they slide by. I hadn't even been up there and I hadn't seen him in about six, seven years, so he wrote me last year and said, "Would you come up for the game this year?"

I generally don't go to away games, even when I was president. Father Joyce did that. But I thought I'd better go up and see him. I thought he was doing very well.

We've had very good academic relationships. We, I think, have been totally cooperative on both sides whenever that was called for.

A number of our youngsters here have gotten their advanced degrees from Michigan State. Every time I go up I meet several of them. We have always been helpful to each other in any way possible, which is not true all the time.

Charnley: One of the coaches during that time period was "Duffy" Dougherty.

Hesburgh: Dear guy. He gave our football banquet talk almost every year.

Charnley: At one time there was a move, if the record's correct, to try and hire him for Notre Dame, is that true?

Hesburgh: I can't say that's true. First of all, he was doing such a splendid job, but he loved this place and he used to come down almost every year and talk at our football banquet. He was a very wonderful speaker, a great guy.

But I know the only time I hired someone from a Big Ten school was when I got Aaron Parsigian [phonetic] from Northwestern. But before even talking to Eric Parsigian, I called the president up there, Rocky Miller, and said, "Rocky, we're going to need a new coach and we're looking with great envy at Aaron Parsigian, but I won't even talk to him if you don't say it's okay with you."

He said, "Ted, you're the only guy I know that doesn't go hunting without a license." He said, "He's not going to stay here. He's had his run here, and it's been wonderful, but if you want to talk to him, go ahead. I think he'd be a great coach for Notre Dame."

So I don't honestly remember trying to hire Duffy Dougherty, although I must say, we had very close relationships with him. Father Ned Joyce, who was my executive vice president for all the thirty-five years I was president then, he mostly came up with the people for replacements.

Coaches are funny, you know. You get a great one, then one that isn't quite that great, then you get another great one. It's an up and down kind of business, but Duffy was a great coach and a wonderful person. Another friend we had up there, of course, was Father Mack [phonetic]. He would have shot us or poisoned us if we went after Duffy, I think.

Charnley: He was a very strong supporter.

Hesburgh: Oh, yes.

Charnley: The game that people remember, of course, is the 1966 10-10 tie.

Hesburgh: Yes, I was at that game.

Charnley: Any comments you'd like to share with us about that?

Hesburgh: I can only tell you what I got from our coach afterwards. Everything went wrong. Our first quarterback went down. Our best runner, Nick something--

Charnley: Yes, I know.

Hesburgh: He, of all things, getting off the train, fell down and bumped his knee and couldn't play. In the game, towards the end, as you remember, it was tied and we had the ball, but the guy we added in as quarterback, Coley O'Brien [phonetic], I believe it was, had just been diagnosed, never knew it, with diabetes, the week before, and Aaron didn't really want to put him in. But at the end he lost the quarterback that was quarterbacking, and Coley was all he had left, that knew the plays and the formations and things. But with the diabetes, he was seeing triple. His eyesight was under great pressure and he was--you know, there's nothing like a blind man throwing a pass. You've got to see who's out there and where he is and who's guarding him.

So he had really one of two choices, to just play it safe and run it into the ground for three or four plays, and that was the end of the game, or having this guy who wasn't in full control of his vision throw it out there and get it intercepted and run for a score and that's the end of it.

As you recall, the next week, they really worked hard on Coley and got his vision straightened out, and the following week, he beat Southern Cal something like 55 to nothing, and we became national champions that year. But it looked like it wasn't a sporting thing, at least a trial Hail Mary pass or

something. It was Coley O'Brien who was the key to the whole explanation, as I got it from the coach.

Charnley: That's very interesting.

Hesburgh: It drove Aaron nuts because everybody was always bringing that up. They didn't think anything else he did was good.

Charnley: The national championship, and forget the other thing. There's been some great rivalries in some of the other sports, too.

Hesburgh: Oh, yes.

Charnley: Basketball, for example. And from my perspective, the toughest game that Michigan State played when they won the national championship in 1979 was against Notre Dame. Do you have remembrances or comments about that aspect of the sport?

Hesburgh: Not really. What I did here, I had Father Ned take care of all the athletics. He had the job that I had when I was executive vice president. He was chairman of the board for the administration of athletics here, and he ran a tight ship, and we went all those years without any real serious trouble. A few incidents that we had to live with and take care of, but by and

large, he was so good at it that I didn't even go to any away games. I'd go to games here.

We always felt Michigan State was like a brother. I'd say there are a few schools around, which I will leave unmentioned, but we didn't quite feel that way about it.

Charnley: You alluded briefly to the Knight Commission and that aspect.

Hesburgh: Well, you've got two former presidents--

Charnley: Right. Wharton and DiBiaggio.

Hesburgh: --on that commission.

Charnley: How do you think the Knight Commission is going to proceed at that point in time?

Hesburgh: Well, the last time we wanted to clean up the internal administration, we got the presidents back in charge of the NCAA, and the faculty. We really had a simple program that the president had to be in charge. I call it one plus three. The president had to clearly be in charge. You couldn't have anything done in that--you know, top things in athletics without his knowledge and his approval. He didn't have to do them personally, but he had to be on top of them.

What was he mostly on top of? First, academic. He didn't allow the school to accept kids that weren't capable of doing the work, and, secondly, he didn't accept [unclear] kids that weren't doing the work, and, thirdly, a majority of his kids ought to graduate, and he didn't want any hanky-panky courses.

The president first has to be sure that the academic side of the organization is right, and then the second one was finances, that all finances had to go through the normal course of finance spending at a university. There couldn't be anything on the outside, in the booster club, or money coming in from an outside to the inside, and then everything had to be accounted for in the university financial setup.

And lastly, he ought to feel strong enough about this that he's willing to have a team from the NCAA come in every five years and give them a complete look and they would have access to all the financial reports, all the coaches, all the athletic director or directors, if they had a couple, president, players. It was a complete open book and it had to be done every five years, and 92 percent of our recommendations passed.

Now we think the pressure's often coming from outside the organization. It gets back to money, but it's gambling, it's drugs, anything that has money involved in it. Enormous coaches' salaries, which you think is wrong. Probably too much in the way of schedule. The last meeting we had, we spent a day and a half listening to everybody--NCAA, all the conferences, including Big Ten, students and players, coaches, athletic directors. We just

went through the gamut and had them all just tell us what they thought was good and bad about it.

We'll have a few more meetings and then we're going to have to get a report. I suspect we'll set up some kind of an institution, if you will, or group of people, who can do this on a constant basis. We're all retired guys and we're coming back to do this, but I've had enough of it.

Charnley: In your work on the commission, did you find President DiBiaggio important?

Hesburgh: Oh, yes.

Charnley: I mean, their work. Did they speak from a knowledge base, and what had happened to them, and how athletics affected their administration?

Hesburgh: No question. They didn't quote Michigan State, or where he is now, Tufts, of course, or New York, in the case of Cliff Wharton. I'd say they are two of the more important members, and it's obvious, because they know what they're talking about.

Charnley: The contacts that you had with our current president, [M.] Peter McPherson, do you remember when those began?

Hesburgh: Probably ten years ago, but we kept criss-crossing on different things. I belonged, when I was in my full flight, to about thirty different organizations, and I don't remember exactly which one it was, but it might have been the council on foreign relations, or it might have been some of the other academic organizations, because he was never in academia explicitly, but he had a doctor's degree. Anyway, I always liked Peter and I had seen him over the years. I rejoiced at the fact--

[Begin Tape 2, Side 1]

Charnley: This is tape two. We're talking about Father Hesburgh's relationship with President Peter McPherson.

Hesburgh: I guess I have probably a hundred or two hundred fairly close friends out there, and most of them in academic life or other things like civil rights or other--I was on the Rockefeller Foundation longer than John Rockefeller, on that board, and became chairman later on, so I had a lot in that area. And of course, all the academic connections you have through being president of the university.

So Peter was one of the coterie of friends and I was delighted when he was appointed. From what I could hear up there, over one weekend, it seemed to me he was doing a very good job. He seemed to be very much liked by the people he worked

with, and I wrote him a note afterwards and said, "I'm glad I saw you in situ, where you were working, and you're doing very well, from all I can see."

Charnley: One of the strong points of emphasis is, of course, international relations, and his AID experience, directing that in the [Ronald] Reagan administration. Did you have contacts with him while he was AID director?

Hesburgh: I had contact with him, off and on, over a good number of years. Not as extensive as with John, because we were meeting every month, practically. But with Cliff I had a lot of contacts. I had put Cliff on the Rockefeller Foundation board and he succeeded me as chairman, later on. John DiBiaggio and I were very close friends, on a number of different venues.

Charnley: What do you see the future of the relationship between Michigan State and Notre Dame?

Hesburgh: I think it will always be good because it started on kind of a high point, with John Kavanaugh and John Hannah. It got strengthened greatly during the time when John and I worked together, you know, practically every other month, or every month, for ten years, that's a lot of association. Plus our overseas connection, plus our academic connection.

I was on the board of the National Science Foundation and I

took great joy in calling him up after a board meeting to say, "John, you just got $350,000 in research grants." A neighboring school, which I will leave unmentioned, only got $230,000. John would laugh. I'm not sure it's politic to include that, but I'd thought you'd get a laugh out of it.

Charnley: We did. We enjoy it. In celebrating 150 years of existence, our university, coming up, is there anything that you might have to say about higher education at Michigan State?

Hesburgh: Well, I think Michigan State is a classic example of the great benefit that happened in 1863 when Abraham Lincoln set up the land-grant program. That looks like a small thing. What you hear about in 1863, of course, is the Civil War and the Emancipation Proclamation.

But for him to do that, and set it up specifically on a public education, agricultural, and mechanical arts, I'm sure he couldn't look ahead--he could look ahead and say, "This is going to be at the heart of the development of this vast land," which it has been, but even so, I don't think he could have envisioned how it expanded into medical schools and law schools and wonderful libraries and wonderful facilities for research.

The land grant gave birth to some really marvelous institutions, one of them being Michigan State. Michigan State was always kind of like the orphan out in the coal there, in the barn, behind the barn, because Michigan had such prominence as a

great university, and I think they even tended to kind of look down on Michigan State as being a cow college or chicken farm or whatever you want to call it.

But under John Hannah, John Hannah just pulled that thing up by its bootstraps and he got all kinds of support and people had confidence in him and he put on all kinds of programs, all over the world, and he was in the best position to do it, because what the world needed out there was what we needed 150 years before. They needed better agriculture, they needed better crops, they needed to feed their people, they needed better mechanical problems.

I was associated with John also in--he had a fellow named Osikeway [phonetic], who came in from Nigeria, eastern Nigeria, which was kind of an abandoned part. The big university, which I helped build, through the Rockefeller Foundation, was at Ibadan in western Nigeria, the Uriba [phonetic] land, as they used to call it, because that's the language there, Uriba.

But John had Osikeway, who ran eastern Nigeria, and he spent a whole semester at Michigan State, observing everything, especially how the teaching went. And he came to John and said, "I think this is exactly what we need. You needed it when your country was expanding. We need it today." And John went along with that and he got the AID help needed to get the thing started

I actually visited it when--the president over there was one of your deans, Robinson, who died, I think, in Hawaii, later on. He was also on the Civil Rights Commission with John. I think

John probably arranged for that. But he's a wonderful guy and we were very dear friends.

I remember having a hearing in New Orleans and he came to see me. I flew in from Vienna for it. John and I were on the road an awful lot, and he said, "Should I take this job?"

I said, "Jeepers, it'd be terrific. They'd see you as a brother. You're coming in from America and you've been a dean at a great American university, and you've got the president, Osikeway, in your corner, because he's the one that wanted this kind of school."

So Robinson went over there and became the head of that university, called vice chancellor, I guess. It was on the British system. This was the first land grant college in Africa, probably the only great one today. And it was born of Michigan State. They helped them with the early faculty, they helped them with their president, getting Robinson in there. It was just a marvelous thing.

Charnley: Thank you, on behalf of the project.

Hesburgh: Well, I thank you, and I hope I haven't gone too far afield for you.

Charnley: No. Thank you. Some wonderful insights. Thank you.

[End of interview]

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