

**Notre Dame vs. The Klan: How the Fighting Irish Defied the KKK**

Todd Tucker

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TODD TUCKER

NOTRE DAME

VS.

THE KLAN

HOW THE FIGHTING IRISH DEFIED THE KKK

NOTRE DAME vs. THE KLAN



NOTRE DAME

V S .

THE KLAN

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*How the Fighting Irish Defied*

*the KKK*

TODD TUCKER

UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME PRESS

NOTRE DAME, INDIANA

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(Permanence of Paper).*

*To my parents,*  
KEN AND LAURA TUCKER,  
*two of the world's great readers*

*The [Irish] are by nature full of faith, respect,  
religious inclinations, and are sensible and devoted;  
but a great defect often paralyzes in them all their other  
good qualities: the lack of stability.*

—Edward Sorin, CSC

founder of the University of Notre Dame<sup>1</sup>



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## PREFACE TO THE 2018 EDITION

IT WAS A BLUSTERY DAY IN SOUTH BEND, SHORTLY AFTER St. Patrick's Day 2005, the kind of day when the northern Indiana winter is refusing to yield to spring, a mixture of cold rain and wet snow in the air. The days were still short, and it was dark at the Northern Indiana Center for History (known today as the History Museum), where I was scheduled to speak after regular museum hours. I had arrived early, found my way through the darkened exhibits on Studebaker and Rockne, and walked into the meeting room where my hosts had anxiously gathered. The Klan, they told me, was on its way.

I'd been waiting for them. The book, the one you're reading now, had made a splash since publication the previous summer, capturing the public's endless fascination with Notre Dame and their darker but just as durable fascination with the Klan. I'd appeared in dozens of articles and on radio shows, culminating with a C-SPAN broadcast of a talk that I gave in Indianapolis in September. People had asked me along the way if the Klan ever showed up and made trouble at any of my events, but the answer had thus far been no. I started telling people, when they asked if I'd encountered the Klan, that they "didn't appear to be big book people."

But now they were on their way. They'd called in advance, let it be known. I knew that the Klan, in all its incarnations, had always displayed a kind of atavistic media savvy, a flare for public events, drama, and spectacles. The occasion of the 1924 Notre Dame riot in my book, after all, was a parade, and D. C. Stephenson, the Indiana Klan's mad genius, had always leveraged parades and rallies to recruit new members and garner publicity. And now it looked like it was my turn. The nervous volunteers who ran the center considered canceling the event. By then guests were arriving, however, so they decided, reluctantly, to press on. The South Bend police were called, and they parked a cruiser conspicuously in front of the main entrance.

I was standing at the podium when they arrived, a group of six, filing into the auditorium with their eyes straight ahead, taking up the front row. They were not in robes and hoods, but most wore military fatigues instead, some with T-shirts and hats that said *BORDER PATROL*. They had soldierly haircuts and serious expressions that reminded me of Timothy McVeigh, the Oklahoma City bomber. Their leader was of a more scraggly variety, disheveled, older than the rest, but followed deferentially as he selected their seats. I watched as word spread throughout the audience. People pointed, whispered worriedly, and craned their necks to get a better look.

THE FIRST LINE OF MY PROPOSAL FOR THIS BOOK, WRITTEN when publication was just a dream, stated, "On May 17, 1924, two uniquely American institutions collided in Northern Indiana." I argued to prospective publishers that the 1924 riot also featured two of the most enduring institutions in our nation, two institutions that would be symbolic adversaries again and again. As the *BORDER PATROL* shirts of my Klansmen listeners indicated, the Klan presented itself as the defender of a "pure" America, unsullied by immigrant blood, which was also a large plank of its platform when

members marched in South Bend in 1924. From 1924 to 2005 the nationalities of the immigrants would change, but the Klan arguments against them stayed relatively static over the years—as did the Catholicism of the newcomers. The argument remained powerfully resonant with a particular segment of the American population.

With regularity, people would call me in the years after publication to speak about the Klan and its surprising resurgence, which proved to me not surprising at all. The most common comment I got from Hoosiers when hearing the story was, “I can’t believe I’ve never heard about this.” Indeed, there was also a strong strand of denial in many of the stories that called for my attention in the years after the book’s publication. In murals at Indiana University a Klan rally is among the many scenes depicting Indiana history, complete with a burning cross and white robes. Student groups regularly call for these murals—masterpieces painted by Thomas Hart Benton for the 1933 Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago—to be removed, confusing an accurate (and moving, and artistically significant) depiction of racist history with racism itself. Another example, set on yet another college campus, provided my book the biggest dose of publicity it would receive.

It began in November 2007, a full three years after publication, at Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI). Keith Sampson, a student and an employee of the school (he was a janitor) was reading my book on breaks when one of his coworkers took offense. The school’s affirmative action office promptly censured Sampson, telling him in a letter, “You used extremely poor judgement by insisting on openly reading a book related to a historically and racially abhorrent subject in the presence of Black co-workers.” The letter went on, “We conclude that your conduct constitutes racial harassment in that you demonstrated disdain and insensitivity to your co-workers who repeatedly requested that you refrain from reading the book which has such an inflammatory an offensive topic in their presence.” He was instructed “to stop read-

ing the book in the immediate presence of your co-workers and when reading the book to sit apart from the immediate proximity of these co-workers. Please be advised, any future substantiated conduct of a similar nature could result in serious disciplinary action.”

It was a shocking example of political correctness run amuck—a student censured for reading a book of history. A book, it turns out, that he had checked out from the school’s own library. For opponents of political correctness, it was delicious. In a July 7, 2008, *Wall Street Journal* editorial, Dorothy Rabinowitz wrote, “there was something undeniably special—something pure and glorious—in the clarity of this picture. A university had brought a case against a student on grounds of a book he was reading.” My book! It had become in one incident both an instrument of racial harassment and a martyr for the conservative right.

Sampson’s cause was taken up by the American Civil Liberties Union, the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, and the *Washington Post*, among others. Eight months after the original letter, in July 2008, Charles Bantz, the chancellor of IUPUI, wrote a lukewarm apology letter to Sampson: “Since no adverse disciplinary action was taken, and no information regarding the investigation was placed in your personnel file, we, therefore, consider the matter closed.” The public, however, did not consider the matter closed, and the bad publicity continued. It lasted until August, when Bantz wrote a complete, abject mea culpa, and the affirmative action officer who wrote the initial letter to Sampson found it a convenient time to retire.

Klan violence exploded in the summer of 2017—once again on a college campus. It happened in Charlottesville, home to the University of Virginia. The Unite the Right rally was probably not directly inspired by Indiana’s Grand Dragon, D. C. Stephenson, but he would have felt right at home among the marchers with their torches, their sense of grievance, their call to arms for Americans who sensed their country was being lost to malfeasant elites. Unlike

the Notre Dame riot of 1924, someone was killed in Charlottesville: Heather Heyer, who'd come to protest the white supremacists, was run down by a car.

More incidents on college campuses followed in rapid succession. A rally at the University of Florida, planned shortly after the Charlottesville tragedy, was canceled due to concerns about violence (only to be rescheduled and, indeed, result in violence). Within days, Black-hooded Antifa protestors stormed a group of far-right demonstrators near the University of California at Berkeley, resulting in scores of arrests and injuries.

The Notre Dame riot of 1924 was the prototype for these incidents: a grandstanding Klan looking for attention, assembling near a college campus where the odds of confrontation are highest. Perhaps in part this is because universities are where our highest ideals reside, where people are most likely to take a stand against injustice and intolerance. But perhaps also it's because colleges belong to the young, where blood runs the hottest. D. C. Stephenson went to South Bend in 1924 looking for a fight, and he found one. The far-right demonstrators in Berkeley, California, should have been no less surprised.

BACK TO THE HISTORY MUSEUM IN 2005. I HAD DELIVERED MY standard talk a hundred times by this point, knew it and my accompanying slides by heart. I ran through my PowerPoint of Fr. Matthew Walsh in his WWI doughboy uniform, D. C. Stephenson at his murder trial, with his smug grin on the courthouse steps. I was distracted by the Klansmen in the audience, waiting for trouble like everyone else in the auditorium. The Klan did not yell at me that night, or overtly threaten anyone, or cause any kind of outburst. They listened quietly, although it seemed to me with unusual intensity, as if waiting for me to make a mistake that they could correct.

Afterward, I sat at a table in the lobby and signed books for anyone who wanted one. The KKK leader waited in line, buying

my book with cash and handing me his business card in return. NATIONAL KNIGHTS OF THE KU KLUX KLAN, it read in gothic script. IMPERIAL WIZARD, it said after his name. I noticed that some of the patrons, after getting my signature on a book, took their copy to the Imperial Wizard to get his signature on the title page as well.

The History Museum passed out program evaluation sheets after my talk, and the Imperial Wizard filled one out. He rated me as “Good” (one step below the highest ranking of “Excellent”). And he said that the thing he enjoyed the most about the program was that I was “Fair.” He submitted the PO Box of the National Knights of the KKK and asked to be placed on the museum’s mailing list.

That night was a personal reminder to me of the strange durability of the KKK. Charlottesville was an infinitely more tragic example. The Klan will probably live forever because there will always be a dark side to progress in this country, there will always be festering resentment, and no other organization has proven as effective at giving that voice an outlet. History teaches us that the next time the Klan emerges from the shadows, and their adversaries rise to face them, the battleground will likely be surrounded by the ivy-covered walls of a college campus.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I AM LUCKY TO HAVE TWO GOOD FRIENDS WHO HAVE LISTENED to me talk about this book and have advised me about it from its earliest stages. Professor Tom Buchanan of the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, a loyal friend since third grade, was the first to hear about this idea, on a rainy day in Cincinnati three years ago. He has had to listen to me talk about it ever since. Also deserving of thanks is Doug Bennett of New Albany, Indiana, a talented writer in his own right who now knows more about the Klan than he probably ever wanted to. Thank you both, gentlemen. I promise to talk about something else now.

Many in the Notre Dame family helped me. Sharon Sumpter in the archives was a joy to work with, hospitable even in the earliest stages, when my credentials were the thinnest. Charles Lamb was a huge help with photographs and deserves special mention for locating the photograph of William Foohey in his Klan robe. Professor David Smith overwhelmed me with his hospitality, having photocopied and collated relevant articles for me in advance of our meeting. Finally, I have to thank Fr. Monk Malloy and his secretary, Joan Bradley, for making the time to see me in the middle of reunion week.

Barb Holleman of the South Bend Police Department put me in touch with the department's historian, Don Cornelius. They helped

me track down some interesting information at the last minute about Chief Lane. Susan Sutton of the Indiana Historical Society helped me navigate through the wealth of material held by that fine facility. John Straw did the same at Ball State University. Thank you all.

I would like to thank two of the surviving riot participants who spoke with me at length about their memories of May 1924: I. I. Probst, class of 1926, and George Scheuer, class of 1928. It was a privilege to speak with you. The book helped me get back in touch with several old friends from Notre Dame. My classmate Tony Troup helped me launch a website for the book. I also have to thank Mark Foohey, Sean Foohey, and Jim Foohey, all of whom shared with me the Foohey family saga, a classic Irish American success story.

Jim Manney at Loyola Press was the editor I have been promised since I started writing: kind, insightful, and enthusiastic about this book. Others at Loyola who have my gratitude are Chrissy Kolaya, Matthew Diener, Heidi Hill, and Melissa Crane.

Finally, I would like to thank Joe Durepos for actually reading the proposal I mailed to him, seeing its potential, and calling me on my cell phone while I was getting a cup of coffee at the Steak 'n Shake in Valparaiso, Indiana. We've called it the "Good News Steak 'n Shake" ever since. Thanks for everything, Joe. Without you, none of this would have happened.

## PROLOGUE

MAY 19, 1924

BILL FOOHEY WAS IN HIS DORM ROOM STUDYING CHEMISTRY when the call to arms sounded again. It was a Monday night, around 9:15. After Saturday's thrills, the young men of Notre Dame were settling back down into the weekday routine of classes and studying. Sophomore Hall had been quiet until the telephone at the end of the hallway rang, setting off a burst of activity. Doors slammed open and shut and feet pounded excitedly up and down the hall. Foohey closed his textbook, walked to the door of his room, and stuck his head into the hallway. The sounds of frenzied young men reverberated off the thin walls of the drafty building they called the "Cardboard Palace."

"They've got one of the boys downtown!" shouted his friend I. I. Probst, who had apparently taken the report on the dormitory's only phone. He seemed more ecstatic than upset. *Who could they have?* Foohey wondered. Most of the men who lived on campus were probably getting ready for the next day's classes or heading to bed. Maybe it was one of the many upperclassmen who lived in town. Even though they were technically subject to the same

lights-out rule as the men on campus, everyone knew they went out most nights to play pool and smoke cigarettes, which was forbidden on campus. The Ku Klux Klan might have grabbed a random Notre Dame man off the street to avenge the whipping they had taken on Saturday. Foohey could see his peers through their open dorm-room doors hurriedly tying their shoes and throwing on jackets. Through the window at the end of the hallway, he could see the shadows of men from Freshman Hall running across the quad toward town. It appeared that the freshmen had a head start. The men of Sophomore Hall were getting ready in a panic, terrified that they might miss the fight.<sup>1</sup>

"We're going to have to teach them another lesson!" someone yelled as he flew down the stairs. A general cheer of support followed. Probst punched Foohey on the arm as he ran past him.

"You're coming, aren't you?" Probst asked. Foohey had been a hero of Saturday's donnybrook. He looked over his shoulder at the Klan robe and hood that he had seized on Saturday afternoon—they hung on his wall like hunting trophies.

He had already recounted the incident to his friends a hundred times, in the dining hall, between classes, and on the quad as he posed for photographs in the stolen robe on Sunday afternoon. Foohey and two friends from Sophomore Hall had followed three Klansmen into an alley. They were easy to identify, with their robes in bundles at their sides. They had innocently asked some Notre Dame students on the train platform for directions to Island Park, the site of the Klan's tristate rally. The Notre Damers had helpfully directed them to the alley that Foohey and his friends were guarding.

The Klansmen got about halfway down the alley when they realized it was leading them nowhere. They turned around, only to find Foohey and his friends blocking their exit. Two of the Klansmen immediately tried to run past the students, but Foohey's accomplices tackled them to the sidewalk with a precision that Rockne would have admired. The Klansmen's bundled robes

landed next to them on the ground. When Foohey's friends jumped after the robes—their real target—the two Klansmen took the opportunity to hastily abandon their comrade.

The remaining Klansman made a weak attempt at running around Foohey, who slammed him into a door. In the weeks leading up to the Klan's rally in South Bend, many of Foohey's friends had worked themselves into a righteous rage over the Klan's lies. Copies of the Klan's newspaper, the *Fiery Cross*, had made their way onto campus, and the students had read with disbelief its stories of secret papal armies and the un-American nature of Catholicism. Some of them had gone into town to heckle a Klansman who spoke about the menace of Catholic education during a speech he gave.

The Irish were another favorite target of the Klan, who portrayed them as subhuman goons or drunken degenerates. Foohey could take those insults personally: his father, Timothy, had left County Cork, Ireland, at the age of seventeen in 1859. Still, Foohey might have been able to laugh off the Klan's ridiculous accusations, at least until early May 1924, when the Klan's slate of candidates swept Indiana's Republican primary. The Republicans were the dominant party in the state. It seemed very likely that Foohey would soon be living in a state run by a Klansman governor.

The Klansman standing in front of Foohey in the alley was not the muscular soldier of the Invisible Empire that he had imagined. He was a wide-eyed hillbilly, a slack-jawed rube venturing into the big city for a picnic and a parade.

"What do you want?" he asked Foohey.

Foohey pointed to the bundle at his side.

The man shook his head weakly. "I don't want a fight," he said, but he did not hand over his robe.

Foohey pushed him into the door again, harder this time, rattling the door in its frame. The Klansman dropped his robe and raised his fists. He managed to throw one feeble punch. Foohey dodged it easily and then countered with his left hand, just as the brothers had taught him in boxing class. "You're skinny," Br. Francis

had told him, “but, my God, you’ve got big hands.” One of those giant hands, curled into a fist, connected solidly with the Klansman’s chin.

The Klansman fell to his knees. He managed to get up and stagger out of the alley, suddenly less attached to the robe that was now crumpled up at Foohey’s feet.

Saturday’s experience had left Foohey with a sense of satisfaction: the Notre Dame men had shown the Catholic-hating Klan that they wouldn’t back down. So Foohey was surprised to learn just two days later that the men they had routed had come back for more.

He looked at Probst and decided he couldn’t miss another fight. “Yeah,” he said. “I’m coming.” He followed his friend as the men of Sophomore Hall poured onto the quad.

The group of young men grew as it crossed the campus to Angela, the road that would take them into town. It was mid-May, and there was still just a touch of coolness in the air. To Foohey, the crowd of Notre Damers seemed bigger than Saturday’s group—maybe those few students who had obeyed Fr. Walsh, the school’s president, on Saturday and remained on campus were determined not to miss out on the fun a second time. They were definitely a more cheerful crowd than the one that had charged into town on Saturday. The men on Saturday had been angry, indignant, and maybe just a touch afraid—until, that is, they got to the city and put the Klansmen on the run. Their mood had then changed from anger to jubilation, and by early Saturday afternoon, Notre Dame students were running the streets of South Bend while the Klansmen were cowering in their headquarters at the corner of Michigan and Wayne streets. This time, the Notre Damers were ebullient from the start. They ran shouting and chanting to the Klan’s headquarters, the site of much of Saturday’s action.

The Klan’s weekly meeting had just let out. Men were standing in the doorway of the headquarters and on the sidewalk and street in front of the building. Unlike on Saturday, the Klansmen were not wearing or carrying their robes, nor did they appear surprised

in the least by the appearance of the Notre Dame men. The students ran up to the building. A fiery cross of red lightbulbs shone in the third-floor window. Destroying that cross had been one of the Notre Damer's early victories on Saturday; putting it back up was a clear provocation on the part of the Klan. The students were right up against the building now, standing together in a tight group. Foohey looked around. The Klansmen who had seemed to be leaving the meeting were standing firm in their positions on both sides of the street. The cheering Notre Dame men were surrounded.

The Klansmen charged. This time, it was the Notre Dame students who were caught by surprise. Foohey put his fists up instinctively. Many of the attackers, their breath smelling of whiskey, identified themselves as sheriff's deputies. Uniformed South Bend city police officers were also in the mix. Bottles were flying through the crowd. They were indiscriminate missiles; Foohey saw a bottle smash the nose of a deputy next to him who was grappling with a freshman. Blood and broken glass covered the ground.

"We're the law here!" shouted one of the deputies as he beat a Notre Dame man to the ground with an ax handle. Foohey reached into the tussle with his long arms, tying the deputy up long enough for the Notre Damer to get away. The young man lurched down Wayne Street, spitting out blood and teeth.<sup>2</sup>

As Foohey clashed with the deputy, something hit him in the back of the head; he fell to the ground, stunned. *These guys are trying to kill me*, he thought. One of them kicked him hard in the ribs. He rolled over, crawled away, and stood up. He raised his fists, groggily ready to defend himself. By then, though, the deputies had moved on to another student.

Standing there dazed, Foohey saw a group of Notre Dame men running into Hullie and Mike's, a student hangout across the street. He fought his way to the edge of the crowd and followed them in.

There were about twenty of them inside. Most were groaning, pointing bloody noses in the air, or holding towels over their

wounds. The most seriously injured had been laid out on the two pool tables and were receiving rudimentary medical attention from George Hull and Mike Calnon, the owners of the establishment. Calnon looked up from the leg he was bandaging as Foohey entered. With a cigar clenched between his teeth, he grunted, "Looks like the bastards were ready for you this time." Through the window, Foohey could see that the Notre Dame students who could escape the clubs and the bottles were in full retreat. He ran back outside to see if he could stop them.

He chased after them for about three blocks. At the courthouse, a safe distance from the club-wielding Klansmen, they stopped. They milled around on the lawn, gasping for breath and nursing their wounds. Few of them relished the idea of going back into the fight, but none of them wanted to continue running all the way back to campus like cowards. They would wait on the courthouse lawn and see what happened next.

Foohey looked around him. Everywhere there were men with purple-black eyes, fat lips, and bloody gashes, men limping and groaning. They had been ambushed. The men they had all been ridiculing were going to have the last laugh. It enraged Foohey.

"Let's go back!" he shouted. "We can't let them get away with this!" He heard a few hoarse, unenthusiastic shouts of approval. "We can take them," he said. "There might still be some of us over there!" A number of the men moved toward him, ready to continue the fight. "Come on!" he screamed. "Are you afraid?" More students came toward him. "Are you afraid?" he yelled again, to a group of Notre Damers who had not moved. They reluctantly limped forward. Saturday had been a robe-stealing bit of fun compared to this—now they were in a real fight. Well, they could play that game too. From three blocks away, Foohey heard the thoughtless, hollow roar of a victorious mob, a sound he knew from football games and Saturday's fray. He was eager to take his battered squadron back to Michigan and Wayne to squelch it.



Just then, car headlights shone onto the courthouse. At first, Foohey thought it might be a police car. Then two priests in full-length robes stepped out. Even in the darkness, Foohey knew who they were: Fr. J. Hugh O'Donnell, the prefect of discipline, and Fr. Matthew Walsh, the school's president. A curious thought crossed his mind: *Now we're in real trouble.*

Fr. Walsh walked authoritatively across the courthouse lawn, surveying his wounded men. He looked disgusted but not surprised—it was the disaster he had been predicting since the Klan first announced its rally in South Bend. He looked more at home in this strange scene than any of them, thought Foohey, remembering the legends he had heard about Walsh's wartime service. Fr. O'Donnell hurried behind him, trying to keep up.

Directly in front of the largest part of the group, Walsh stopped and began to speak, but he couldn't make himself heard over the distant cheers, the closer sirens, and the groaning of the crowd. He looked around for a better position. Directly behind him was South Bend's Civil War memorial. He climbed with surprising agility atop a cannon, spreading his arms briefly to gain his balance. Standing there motionless, his arms outspread, he could almost have been part of the monument, a tribute to the Notre Dame chaplains who had served in the Civil War. Walsh began to speak again, and this time a few of the men on the lawn could hear him. Foohey wanted desperately to return to the fight, but he could not bring himself to turn his back on Fr. Walsh.

"Whatever challenge may have been offered tonight to your patriotism, whatever insult may have been offered to your religion, you can show your loyalty to Notre Dame and South Bend by ignoring all threats," Walsh began.<sup>3</sup>

Bill Foohey moved closer.

BILL FOOHEY'S GRANDSON WAS A FRIEND OF MINE. HIS NAME was Mark Foohey, and we both arrived at Notre Dame in the

summer of 1986. We both lived in Cavanaugh Hall, where our rector was Notre Dame's dean of rectors, Fr. Matthew Micelli, CSC, a man who had witnessed more than twenty years' worth of undergraduate depravations from his small dorm room on the first floor. The University of Notre Dame, in his eyes, had made only two mistakes in its history. First, it had never selected an Italian president—almost all of the priests who had served in that capacity were Irish. Second, the school had admitted women in 1972. Fr. Micelli frequently threatened to write a book entitled *The Emasculation of Notre Dame*.

Mark was a much more typical Notre Dame man than I was. Like the vast majority of the student body, Mark was Catholic—I was Protestant. This caused some concern for Fr. Micelli. He would periodically ask me if I wanted to come aboard and offer to sponsor me, having perceived correctly that my Protestantism was of the vague, unaffiliated variety. His evangelism was never heavy-handed. Fr. Micelli suggested that I become Catholic with the same tone that you might use to tell a friend to renew his expired license plates—a tone that says it's just something you really should do.

Like many Notre Damers, Mark had the school in his blood—two uncles and a grandfather were graduates. I was from a family and a town that had never sent anybody to Notre Dame. Mark was from the East Coast; I was from southern Indiana. Mark was the first person I ever saw playing lacrosse. Despite our differences, Mark and I became friends in the way that men living in close quarters during eventful times do. We were never roommates, but we saw each other nearly every day for four years.

Mark and I came to Notre Dame at a good time. The legendary Fr. Hesburgh was still president when we were freshmen. Our first year was also the first year for football coach Lou Holtz. Our sophomore year, Tim Brown—a fellow Cavanaugh resident—won the Heisman Trophy. Our junior year, 1988, the football team won the national championship.

Like all Notre Dame students, Mark and I were thoroughly indoctrinated in Notre Dame lore from our first day. We learned about Rockne, First-Down Moses, and Touchdown Jesus. We memorized the names of the Four Horsemen and the six Heisman Trophy winners. We learned about the annual snowball fight, the annual spring festival—called An Tostal—and Circus Lunch, a dining-hall extravaganza complete with cotton candy and staff members in clown costumes. We memorized an obscene version of the Michigan fight song. We learned about campus history, catching snippets of the stories of Fr. Sorin and the Log Chapel and Old College.

One bit of campus history Mark and I never learned anything about was the riot between Notre Dame students and the Ku Klux Klan in 1924. It is not an event that the university brags about. Neither do its participants. Mark's grandfather never mentioned it to him. He died when Mark was young, but it doesn't seem as if Bill Foohey made a point of talking about the riot to anyone, even in the years immediately following the incident. He never said a word about the riot to his brother, James Foohey, who arrived at Notre Dame in 1932.

I discovered again and again as I researched this book that participants in the riot rarely reminisced about those violent days in 1924. Maybe they were ashamed of themselves for lending credence to the stereotype of the belligerent Irishman, a stereotype that was frequently bandied about by the Klan. Maybe they didn't like to recall an era when vicious anti-Catholicism was very much a mainstream philosophy. Maybe they remained quiet because of the long shadow cast by Fr. Matthew Walsh, who had ordered them to stay away from the Klan's festival in South Bend. I talked with many descendants of Notre Dame men who had been at Notre Dame at the time of the riot. Most of them had never heard of it.

Mark and I, Catholic and Protestant, were only superficially aware that there had ever been a time when Catholics were a feared and hated minority in the United States. Catholics were so assim-

lated to our minds that it was impossible for us to imagine that kind of widespread prejudice. I was a lifelong resident of Indiana, yet I had no idea that the Klan had briefly owned the state, claiming a majority of the state's legislators, the governor, and one out of three white Hoosiers as members. The Ku Klux Klan is Indiana's family secret. The echoes of that riot and that era, though, resonated down through the years to Mark and me, affecting us in ways that we could only vaguely perceive. Mark and I lived in Cavanaugh Hall for all of our four years at Notre Dame. The university strongly encouraged students to live on campus.

Mark and I lost touch with each other immediately after graduation. I was not on his short list of friends to keep in touch with through moves and career changes; he was not on mine.

While working on this book, I tracked down the handful of Notre Dame men who had been present at the riot and are still alive. There are precious few—a man who was eighteen years old at the riot, a freshman, would be ninety-eight today. One of them was I. Irwin Probst, currently of Fort Pierce, Florida. “I. I.,” as he likes to be called, gave me his own priceless account of the May 1924 riot. He also sent me the names and numbers of other surviving rioters. Finally, along with a stack of relevant papers, I. I. sent me a crude, photocopied picture of a Notre Dame man posing in a Klan robe after the riot. The resolution was extremely poor, but I could see the young man's smile, his slightly wrinkled robes, and his intimidating large hands. He was standing in front of Sophomore Hall, a building that no longer exists. I. I. told me that the original photograph was somewhere in the Notre Dame archives. He also told me the student's name. It was a friend of his, Bill Foohey, class of 1926.

With the help of Charles Lamb, one of Notre Dame's indefatigable archivists, I got my hands on the original. Looking at the picture, linking the name and the suddenly clear face, I made the connection. The man had to be related to my friend Mark Foohey—they could have been twins.

I wanted to call Mark to see if he had ever heard any stories about the riot at his grandfather's knee. I was relieved that Mark remembered who I was after such a long time—we hadn't spoken since 1990. He was obviously surprised to hear from me, surprised that I had gone to so much trouble to find him. Not really knowing where to begin, I described for him the photograph that I had of his grandfather.

"How did my grandfather end up in a Ku Klux Klan robe?" Mark asked me.

"Well, Mark," I said, "it's a long story."

*Author's note: When I set out to write this story, I knew I wanted to tell it from the point of view of Matthew Walsh, of D. C. Stephenson, and of a Notre Dame student who had participated in the riot. I had extensive written records of the thoughts and feelings of Walsh and Stephenson—letters, speeches, and the like—but I had very few firsthand accounts of the riot from the young men who had taken part in it. I had some oblique mentions of the riot, a few handed-down memories, and the stories of two eyewitnesses. This made it difficult for me to describe exactly what it felt like to throw a potato at a fiery cross, or how Walsh sounded from atop the cannon.*

*For the sake of the story, I have taken a great liberty. I have attributed thoughts and emotions to Bill Foohey in this story, all of which are based on accounts of others, the historical record, and reports of the riot, of which we know he was a part. His thoughts and feelings in this story are also based, I suppose, on my own experiences as a hotheaded young man at Notre Dame. Bill is, in other words, a composite character. In recounting the stories of Matthew Walsh and D. C. Stephenson, I have also assigned them thoughts and feelings, which I have taken from their own personal letters and speeches. In some places, I have extrapolated historical events in*

## PROLOGUE

*order to bring out the drama of the situation. Again, all of this is based on the historical record.*

*I have researched the events of May 1924 to the best of my abilities. I believe that I have made accurate suppositions about the thoughts and feelings of Bill Foohey and others, but they remain suppositions.*

# 1 THE ANTAGONISTS

IN JUNE OF 1893, THE HOLY CROSS BROTHERS WHO RAN St. Columbkille's School in Chicago lined their boys up and marched them by a tired-looking priest. Their distinguished visitor was Fr. Thomas Walsh, the president of the University of Notre Dame, the most esteemed Catholic school in the country. He suffered from Bright's disease and was visibly ill; in fact, he would live less than a month longer. The brothers hoped that a parade of their youngsters might cheer him up.<sup>1</sup>

Like the rest of the boys, young Matthew Walsh concentrated on becoming invisible as he marched past the priest. It was not to be.

"Come here, Matthew," said Br. Marcellinus. Walsh reluctantly stepped forward. As the school's most promising student, he was frequently called on to recite for visitors the five sorrowful mysteries, the seven dolours of Mary, the fourteen stations of the cross, or any of the other memorized lists that characterized his religious instruction. Such performances were usually followed by teasing and taunts of "teacher's pet" on the playground.

"Fr. Walsh, this is Matthew Walsh," said the brother, seeming amused by the coincidence of their last names. The priest smiled weakly as he patted the boy's head. He looked as if he barely had the energy to stand.

"Pleased to meet you, Father," said Walsh. The priest nodded.

"Fr. Walsh is the president of the University of Notre Dame," said Br. Marcellinus to the entire class. He swept his hand dramatically across the room, stopping at a picture of Notre Dame's famous Golden Dome hanging on the rear wall. The brothers of St. Columbkille's, as Walsh and the other boys well knew, belonged to the Congregation of Holy Cross, the same order that ran Notre Dame. Good behavior in the classroom—often by Matthew Walsh—was rewarded by the compliment that there might someday be a place for such a youngster at the great Catholic university.

Although the teasing kept him from saying so aloud, the young Walsh hoped the prophecy would come true. His parents hoped so too. For a boy from a family like theirs—immigrant and poor—to go to college at all would be a great achievement.

Matthew Walsh's father, David Walsh, was born in Mitchells-town, County Cork, Ireland. His mother, Joanna Clogan, born in Troy, New York, was also of pure Irish stock. Walsh's father was part of the vast human wave that left Ireland in the nineteenth century, fleeing famine, British oppression, and economic hopelessness. In the years between 1845 and 1855, more Irish left their country than had previously emigrated in the country's entire recorded history.<sup>2</sup> The Irish had few illusions about ever returning to the mother country. Of all the ethnic groups streaming into America, only the Jews had a lower return rate than the Irish.<sup>3</sup> In nearly every large city in America, the Irish claimed neighborhoods as their own by crowding the tenements, building churches, and winning political offices. The Walshes settled in West Town, Chicago, a neighborhood where it was not at all remarkable to find people named Walsh—or Murphy, or Kelly, or Sullivan, for that matter, the only Irish surnames more common.<sup>4</sup> Even the parish's patron, St. Columbkille, was an Irish import, a rash prince who became a holy man in exile.

An array of stereotypes followed the Irish to the New World, most revolving around the twin activities of drinking and brawling.



No one knew better than the Irish themselves that there was a grain of truth to these prejudices. Irish boys did tend to become wilder as they got older and were quick to fight. There was unquestionably an element among them that did more than its share of drinking. The Walshes encouraged the quiet studiousness of Matthew, the seventh of their ten children, in part because it was so rare.

Walsh was born on May 14, 1882, in Chicago. From the start, he impressed every adult in his life. His parents hoped that his academic achievements might earn him a place at Notre Dame. To get into college, though, Matthew would need more than stellar grades and scholastic performance. He would have to fulfill an even greater dream of his parents, neighbors, and teachers: he would have to become a priest. Joining a religious order was just about the only avenue to a higher education for children of immigrants in America at the time.

The Walshes believed that such a life brought great spiritual rewards. Priests dealt with “sacred matters in a sacred language.”<sup>5</sup> They welcomed babies into the church with baptism and administered the last rites to the dying. By virtue of having been called to a life in Christ, parish priests had unequivocal authority within their communities. Their authority was rooted in the fact that they could do something that no one else on earth could—they could celebrate Mass.

For a family like the Walshes, there were considerable earthly rewards to the priesthood as well. Not only would the door to higher education be opened for a young man who wanted to become a priest, but his family would also be treated with great respect and admiration within their community. Large Catholic families like the Walshes were not unusual at the turn of the century, nor were their priorities. Seminary applicants were plentiful, and thus the seminaries could afford to be highly selective in choosing whom they committed to feed, clothe, educate, and employ for a lifetime. Matthew Walsh’s acceptance into the seminary would bring great

credit to his parents and teachers. In addition to being educated and esteemed as a priest, Walsh would enjoy a standard of living that would be a measure higher than what his siblings experienced; he'd perhaps even have a laundress, a cook, and a housekeeper.<sup>6</sup> Matthew Walsh's family and teachers made sure that he knew from a very young age to listen closely for a call to the priesthood.

The center of Walsh's community, both literally and figuratively, was St. Columbkille's Church. Division Street, Lake Street, Hoyne Avenue, and May Street formed the boundaries of the parish, an area roughly fifteen city blocks on a side.<sup>7</sup> The Catholicism that Walsh learned there was as rigidly defined as the parish boundaries. Families in the parish were expected to rent pews. The pews were reserved until just after the first Gospel reading, by which time everyone could see which families were absent. The pews were then made available to nonrenters in exchange for a "voluntary" offering of ten cents. No marriage ceremony would be performed after 5:00 PM. Funerals had to be arranged by family members, not by the undertaker. Parishioners wishing to donate money to Catholic causes outside the parish needed written permission from the pastor. Every aspect of church life was regulated with cheerful fervor by the church's rector, Fr. Nathan Mooney, Notre Dame class of 1877.<sup>8</sup>

In 1896, at the age of fourteen, Walsh completed grammar school and moved up to the brothers' high school. As the rest of the boys in school got louder and bigger, his reticence grew even more conspicuous. Unlike his swearing, brawling peers in West Town, Walsh was becoming a young man who could absolutely swim in silence. Walsh's grades, demeanor, and piety all seemed to confirm what religious men had been telling him all his life: he was different. At the dawn of adolescence, his self-awareness became acute. In 1897, after completing a single year of high school, Matthew Walsh fulfilled the expectations of everyone around him. He announced to his family that he would like to join the priesthood. The choice of or-

ders was clear. The Holy Cross brothers of St. Columbkille's scurried to enroll him in the seminary at Notre Dame. He was fifteen years old.

Walsh left for Notre Dame in the summer of 1897. He and his mother took the train from Chicago to South Bend, Indiana, the home of Notre Dame and Walsh's home for the next six years. To Walsh, who had been a city boy all his life, the trip was like traveling into a great wilderness—he watched out the window as the northern Indiana forests and the shore of Lake Michigan rushed by him. It was a quiet trip. Walsh's mother would occasionally clear her throat or gather her breath as if she was about to speak, but she never did. At the train station in South Bend, they boarded a horse-drawn carriage for the two-mile trip to campus. Walsh recounted his arrival at Notre Dame years later to his friend and Notre Dame historian Arthur Hope, who included the story in his book *Notre Dame: One Hundred Years*.

"We need to go to Notre Dame," his mother told the driver. "My boy is going to be a priest."

"Very good," said the driver as he snapped the reins and started them forward. Walsh could tell that his mother had expected a more energetic response.

The carriage soon pulled up to the steps of the domed Main Building, the same building pictured in the photograph that hung on the wall of Walsh's grammar school classroom. The breathtaking architecture was offset by the appearance of a rotund, unremarkable-looking priest standing on the building's front porch with his hands in his pockets.

"These people want to see Fr. Corby!" the driver shouted to the priest. Walsh remembered that Fr. William Corby was the provincial, the head of the Holy Cross order at Notre Dame.

"He's in the presbytery," said the priest.

As they continued on their way, Walsh's mother asked the driver about the priest on the porch.

"That's Fr. Morrissey," he said, surprised that she didn't know. "The president." He stopped the carriage at the door of a small gray building.

It was easy to find Fr. Corby's office in the deserted building. Through his open door they could see him working at a tiny desk. He looked up as the mother and son he had been expecting appeared in his doorway. With his gray hair and long, flowing beard, Fr. Corby looked every inch the aging Civil War hero. He stood and introduced himself. Both Walshes were trying hard not to show any fear; he was proud of them for that. After a brief conversation about the train ride, he put his hand on the boy's shoulder. Corby had been a part of many good-byes, in the army and at the seminary. In his experience, it was best to make them quick.

"I'm on my way to see Dr. Linneborn at the seminary," he said to the slight, quiet boy. "You can go with me." Walsh, his mother, and Fr. Corby all exchanged looks. It dawned on Walsh's mother that Corby did not expect her to travel any further with her son. He was in Corby's hands now.<sup>9</sup>

"Oh," she said. She took a deep breath. She kneeled and kissed her son on his forehead. "I'll see you at Christmas."

Walsh muttered, "Good-bye," and then she was gone.

"Let's go," said Fr. Corby gently, not allowing a pause. He placed his hand on the boy's shoulder and led him out a different doorway into the blinding summer sunshine.

They walked the short distance to the seminary along a lake. Fr. Corby introduced Walsh to the man at the door.

"This is Dr. Linneborn," he told him. Walsh could hear the importance that Corby placed on "Dr." in his introduction. "He is the rector of the seminary."

"Pleased to meet you," said Walsh.

"I have a job for you already," said the rector, with a strong German accent. "I need you to bring down all of the mattresses from the attic to air out here on the lawn." Dr. Linneborn paused, raising

a bushy eyebrow at the young seminarian. “I hope you are not too little.”

Over the next two days, Walsh tackled his first project in the seminary, wrestling every mattress outside into the brief South Bend summer air.

Walsh steadily built on the reputation for earnestness and efficiency that he earned in those two summer days. He did what he was told to do and never complained, whether the project was studying the mysteries of the Catholic Church or moving mattresses. As he worked his way through high school and the seminary, that set of attributes gained him the favor of his superiors.

When Walsh completed his high school work in 1899, he began his college studies. The school was rife with conflicts at the time, conflicts that Walsh observed but avoided getting personally involved in. Two camps of priests were at odds, both believing that their goal for the university was most advantageous. One group of priests, led by Fr. John Zahm, argued that Notre Dame needed to do away with its prep school and its trade school and focus on becoming a great university. Zahm’s own academic credentials were impeccable. In addition to having a PhD, he had written a book on evolution—a book eventually banned by the pope for its progressive theories.<sup>10</sup>

The other school of thought was led by the university’s president, Fr. Andrew Morrissey, nicknamed “the Kilkenny Chieftain” after the Irish county of his birth. Fr. Morrissey maintained that energy invested in making Notre Dame a great research university was misspent. He believed that their little Catholic school would never be able to compete with the likes of the University of Michigan or Ohio State University. Notre Dame should concentrate on remaining, as he put it, a “compact, tidy little boarding school.”<sup>11</sup> The debate turned personal at times. By arguing for faculty with advanced degrees, Fr. Zahm implied that Fr. Morrissey, who did not

have a PhD, was not qualified for his position. In fact, no Notre Dame president up to that point had ever held a doctorate.

Matthew Walsh kept his head down and avoided the debate in part because of his natural reticence and in part because he could clearly see both sides. He didn't go to Notre Dame because it was a great university—he went there because it was a great Catholic university. If improving the academic status of Notre Dame meant watering down its Catholic identity, as many in the Morrissey camp argued, then he wasn't interested. In addition, if the trade school and the prep school provided the university with a steady stream of much-needed income, then why should the university close them down?

On the other hand, Walsh agreed with the Zahm loyalists that college professors should have PhDs. He could see in his own teachers a subtle but discernible difference between those few with doctorates and those without. It was the difference, he thought, between learning from those who had read the books and those who had written the books. He appreciated Zahm's argument that the pursuit of knowledge led to a better understanding of God's creation—and how could that be un-Catholic? Walsh was certain that an advanced education was part of God's plan for him.

At Notre Dame, seminarians were kept somewhat isolated from the rest of the student body, and Walsh was comfortable with that. He wanted to become a priest—not join the rowing team or the chess club or attend the brutish football games, whose increasing popularity convinced him yet again that he was fundamentally different from the rest of the crowd. He did write the occasional article for *Scholastic*, Notre Dame's student magazine, but even these have the cool tone of a lecture, not the lightheartedness of a young man joking with his chums. In only one article—"A Leap Year Ride," published in January 1903—does Walsh give the impression that he ever had anything to mention at confession during his youth. In the article, Walsh recounts a dangerous horse ride his friends took on a dare on a frozen February 29 in Chicago. The article confirms an-

other pattern in Walsh's life: while he had no obvious wild side of his own, he sometimes enjoyed the company of those who did. And they enjoyed his.<sup>12</sup>

Walsh received his bachelor's degree from Notre Dame in 1903. Fr. Morrissey then selected him to go to the Holy Cross house of studies in Washington, D.C., a mission founded by Fr. Zahm to enable Notre Dame priests and seminarians to study at the recently founded Catholic University. The leader of the house of studies at the time of Walsh's arrival was Fr. James Burns, a chemistry PhD and Zahm protégé. While Fr. Zahm had established the mission to advance his liberal ideas, it also served a practical purpose for Notre Dame's conservative administration. If their own priests obtained advanced degrees, they could then teach at the university, saving the administration money it would have spent to hire lay faculty. Priests and brothers, after all, worked without salary. In addition to the expense of lay professors, the administration was also uncomfortable with their independence and was always looking for ways to reduce their numbers. Sending bright young seminarians to Zahm's house of studies was an effective way of decreasing lay faculty jobs—even if it did appear to validate Zahm's progressive theories.

Walsh worked toward his PhD in American history at Catholic University. He wrote his dissertation on the political status of Catholics in Colonial Maryland and received his doctorate in 1907. His star was on the rise with the Notre Dame leadership; they appreciated a highly educated seminarian who wasn't a radical. Morrissey was so comfortable with Walsh that he allowed him to take courses in economics during the summer after he received his doctorate—at Columbia and Johns Hopkins. Sending seminarians to non-Catholic institutions had been considered unthinkable by Notre Dame's leadership, even by Zahm. Matthew Walsh, though, was nonthreatening enough to gain such latitude. In the process, he established himself as Notre Dame's wunderkind.

To Walsh, however, the degrees, the grades, and the praise he earned for his academic efforts paled in comparison to the honor

he would soon receive. On December 21, 1907, Walsh was ordained a priest in Washington, D.C. Afterward, he boarded a train in Washington and made the long, uncomfortable trip home to Chicago. He was an old hand at trains now, much changed from the boy who had traveled with his mother to Notre Dame ten years earlier. On Christmas Day, in front of his mother, father, nine siblings, and proud parish family, Matthew Walsh sang his first Mass at St. Columbkille's Church.

He was allowed only a two-day vacation in his hometown. Notre Dame had accepted Walsh as a ninth grader, paid for his education all the way through postdoctoral work, and trained him for the priesthood. Now it was time for the school to recoup its investment. Walsh was named a professor in both history and economics. In the 1908 yearbook, his first as a faculty member, Walsh was notable for his youthful appearance as well as for the rare "PhD" after his name.

The Notre Dame that Matthew Walsh returned to in 1907 was quite different from the university he had left four years before. For seven years, the defining dynamic of the institution had been the feud between Fr. Andrew Morrissey, the school's president, and Fr. John Zahm, who had been appointed provincial of the order at Notre Dame in 1898. In 1905, the battle had reached its inevitable conclusion: Zahm, with his authority as provincial, forced Morrissey out of office and installed Fr. John Cavanaugh as president of the university.

Morrissey engineered his revenge during a yearlong exile from Notre Dame. He traveled extensively with Fr. Gilbert Français, the superior general of the Holy Cross order, who had named Zahm provincial. Over the course of their travels, Morrissey gently convinced the superior general that his appointment of Zahm, while well-intentioned, had turned out to be a mistake. The man, Morrissey told Français, was a renegade. Morrissey's numerous friends in Holy Cross houses throughout the American province corroborated the story. Morrissey had always been the more skilled politi-



cian of the two adversaries. In the end, his lobbying worked. When Zahm's term as provincial expired in 1906, Français appointed Morrissey to the position. The Kilkenny Chieftain promptly banished Zahm from campus.

Zahm became a well-known priest-adventurer in exile, at one point even venturing to South America with Theodore Roosevelt. He would not return to Notre Dame until he was buried in the community cemetery there in 1921.

The lesson was not lost on Walsh. Fighting openly with others was not the way to settle disputes. It was best to leave it to others to fall on their swords. Walsh knew that he would never be a visionary like Fr. Edward Sorin, the founder of the school, a man destined to have buildings named for him. But he would never end up like Fr. Zahm, either, banished from a place he loved because of a personal dispute.

Walsh quickly became a favorite professor at Notre Dame. Even though his style was a little formal, he was always exceedingly well-prepared and his lectures were interesting. He had a natural talent for working with young men, having grown up with the rambunctious boys of St. Columbkille's School and West Town. He knew instinctively when to assert his authority and when to cut the men a little slack. The men of one senior class liked Walsh so much that they dedicated their yearbook to him, "whose scholarship has elicited our admiration, and whose simplicity, earnestness, and quiet dignity have endeared him to us."<sup>13</sup>

The Notre Dame administration noted with pleasure that Walsh was dependable and absolutely loyal to the university. The school's president, Fr. John Cavanaugh, was especially impressed with Walsh. A Zahm protégé, Cavanaugh was committed to raising Notre Dame's academic standards. To his credit, he went about doing this without declaring open warfare on the established order. When the position of vice president came open in 1911, he decided it was time to put someone in the university's front office who had a PhD, although he himself did not have one. Matthew Walsh, while

young, was the perfect vice presidential candidate. The Zahm camp admired him for his sterling academic credentials, the Morrissey camp appreciated his noncontroversial personality, and his superiors praised his loyalty. Just four years after Walsh became a professor at Notre Dame, Cavanaugh asked him to be his vice president. The twenty-nine-year-old Walsh accepted.

Fr. Cavanaugh's personality was a striking contrast to his stoic vice president's. When a campus priest began writing sonnets in memory of every member of the Holy Cross order who had died, Cavanaugh said that the poet had "added a new terror to death."<sup>14</sup> When a young boy wrote to Cavanaugh asking what he needed to study in order to become a cowboy, Cavanaugh replied with a light-hearted note that outlined a course of studies.<sup>15</sup> Such frivolity was unimaginable from the pen of Matthew Walsh. Likewise, Cavanaugh's bellicosity regarding his homeland occasionally horrified his young vice president. On the subject of Irish home rule, Cavanaugh's playful rhetoric veered toward reckless. When the war in Europe began, three years after Walsh became vice president, Cavanaugh openly cheered every British defeat. In a speech he gave in New York City, Cavanaugh declared that Germany was only doing to Belgium what England had been doing to Ireland for seven hundred years.<sup>16</sup>

Despite their personality differences, Walsh and Cavanaugh were united when it came to developing and nurturing the young men in their care. This nurturing could be challenging, as it was one night in 1916 when the young men of Notre Dame decided to right a wrong committed by the South Bend Streetcar Company.

There was a long-standing feud between the students and the streetcar operators on the route from the Notre Dame campus to South Bend. The students were convinced that the cars on that route were the oldest and least comfortable in the system and that the operators were deliberately rude to Notre Dame students. The streetcar operators complained that the Notre Dame students didn't

pay their fares, smoked on the cars, and were generally obnoxious. Things got so bad that the streetcar company hired a couple of enforcers to rough up two Notre Dame students in an attempt to teach them some manners.

Later that week, a student mob, planning to set things right, stormed a streetcar as it headed toward campus. To their embarrassment, one of the passengers on that streetcar happened to be Fr. Cavanaugh, who was traveling back to campus with two professors. Cavanaugh stepped out of the car to assess the situation.

Nearby, another group of students had commandeered a different streetcar and were in the process of destroying it. Shocked, Fr. Cavanaugh ordered them to stop, which they did immediately. He then had them march back to campus while he and the professors returned on their streetcar.

When he arrived back at campus, Fr. Cavanaugh went immediately to his vice president's room in Corby Hall and proudly recounted the incident. "You know, Matt," he said, "they're fine boys. All I had to do was tell them to go back to their halls!" As he said this, something caught his eye outside Walsh's window. The smile on his face disappeared.

Walsh joined Cavanaugh at the window. A streetcar at the edge of campus was in flames.

The students had waited until Cavanaugh had walked out of sight before recapturing the doomed car. After ejecting the operator, they had poured gasoline over the car's rattan seats and set it aflame. They cheered and shook their fists as it burned to the tracks before the fire department could save it.

While officially horrified by the behavior of the students, Fr. Cavanaugh thought the streetcar company was at least partially responsible for the incident and refused to pay the five thousand dollars in damages.<sup>17</sup>

For Walsh, it was merely an introduction to a young man's capacity for violence.

WORLD WAR I HAD BEEN RAGING IN EUROPE SINCE 1914, BUT the United States had steadfastly stayed out of it. U.S. interests did not seem to be in imminent danger, although there were occasional disasters, such as the sinking of the *Lusitania*, with 128 Americans aboard, in 1915. Certainly, U.S. territory was not threatened. Many Americans felt that God had blessed their nation with its geographic distance from Europe. The natural tendency of Americans to stay clear of “European entanglements” was strengthened by the presence of two diverse and enormous immigrant groups. Most German Americans did not want the United States to take up arms against the fatherland, and most Irish Americans did not want the United States to do anything to help the British. The immigrant sentiment was not out of the mainstream. When President Woodrow Wilson campaigned for reelection with the slogan “He kept us out of war” in 1916, he won. As long as the vast majority of Americans felt safe, this convenient pacifism held sway.

Gradually, though, events eroded Americans’ sense of security. The sinking of the *Lusitania* in May 1915 was the first to cause a breach. American indignation over this and additional submarine attacks during the next few months led Germany to restrict its submarine operations to military targets. On January 31, 1917, however, convinced that it would win them the war, the Germans announced to the United States that they were resuming unrestricted submarine warfare. President Wilson ended U.S. diplomatic relations with Germany a few days later, but it wasn’t until the publication of the Zimmermann Telegram in March 1917 that public opinion solidified on the idea of going to war. The intercepted telegram revealed that the German foreign secretary had conspired to strike a deal with the Mexican government: if the U.S. went to war against Germany, Mexico would become Germany’s ally, and Germany would in turn recover Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona for Mexico. Once the American public learned of this plan, they were ready to fight. Wilson went to Congress and received a declaration of war on April 6, 1917.

At Notre Dame, Fr. Cavanaugh and Fr. Walsh moved to immediately and conspicuously support the war effort. Cavanaugh's hatred of the English evaporated with the declaration of war—no one would accuse him or Notre Dame of being anything less than 100 percent patriotic. After all, even the Irish in Ireland were enlisting in droves; many thought it would help them gain concessions from a grateful England after the war. Like Cavanaugh and Walsh, their students were eager to demonstrate their patriotism. The president and vice president agreed to let seniors in good standing graduate early in order to enlist.

Cavanaugh and Walsh didn't want their young men going to war alone, so they encouraged their staff to enlist as well. Eighteen Notre Dame priests volunteered immediately. When Fr. Morrissey, still the provincial, looked at the list of names, he said, "As long as we're in this thing, let's give the best!"<sup>18</sup> Six of the eighteen were designated to go first. They were a diverse group, including a prefect of discipline, a professor of chemistry, and a professor of rhetoric. The most prominent member of the group by far was a professor of history who also happened to be the school's vice president. On a cold day in January 1918, Fr. Matthew Walsh left for Camp Sheridan, Alabama.

AROUND THE TIME THAT MATTHEW WALSH WAS PREPARING to embark on an academic life at Notre Dame, another young boy was struggling against poverty and circumstances to obtain an education. A thousand miles away from Chicago in Houston, Texas, David Curtis Stephenson, born the youngest son of a sharecropper on August 21, 1891, was showing academic promise at his Catholic grammar school. Although not Catholic, Stephenson's family had sent him to the school because it was near their home. His mother was thrilled when the sisters at the school reported that young Stephenson was an energetic student, an avid reader who devoured histories of Caesar and Napoleon. Stephenson's father, Andrew Monroe Stephenson, embittered by a lifetime of sharecropping,

made a point of remarking within earshot of the boy that such learning wouldn't do him a lick of good behind a plow.

Already in his fifties, Andrew Stephenson longed to leave the sharecropping life and farm his own land. In 1901, he moved his family—including his wife and their other two children, Clara and Arizona—to Maysville, Oklahoma, during the last great Oklahoma land rush. Maysville was a tiny, dusty town about halfway between Oklahoma City and the Texas state line. To the children, the higher social position achieved in land ownership was not immediately apparent. Their first home in Oklahoma was a dugout house, a hole in the ground with a straw roof. Andrew Stephenson hoped that he might save enough money in a year or two to build a sod house. For ten-year-old David, the worst thing about Maysville was not living in a hole, or the screaming winter wind, or the backbreaking farm work—it was the lack of a school. His father didn't mind this; his son's education in Texas had served only to distract him from work, and he needed David's help as he tried to scratch a living out of Oklahoma's hard prairie.

For two long years, David Stephenson worked at his father's side on their isolated piece of land. Now that he didn't have to ride his son about the uselessness of an education, Andrew Stephenson took to ranting against the boy's good looks. Blond-haired, blue-eyed David bore an attractive softness despite the family's hardscrabble existence. Andrew Stephenson linked his son's "pretty" face and aversion to farm work to overall laziness. David in turn enraged his father by carefully combing his hair in front of him and by reporting for chores doused in cheap cologne from the Maysville drugstore. "A farmer doesn't need to smell like a whore!" Andrew Stephenson would scream at David. "And we're farmers. That's what you will always be." He might have been right had a rail line not cut through Maysville in 1903.

The railroad brought with it people and ideas that would change David Stephenson forever. To serve its increased population, the town opened a school in a new Methodist church. David enthusi-

astically resumed his studies despite the grumblings of his father. He graduated from the eighth grade at the top of his class in 1907, the same year Oklahoma became a state. Maysville had no high school. Stephenson's formal education had come to an end, but his on-the-job training was about to begin.

Among the people who came to Maysville with the railroad was a man named John Cooper. Short and broad shouldered, with a bushy mustache and twinkling eyes, Cooper was a successful farmer, but his real love was politics. Statehood had sparked countless political debates across Oklahoma, and in Maysville, Cooper—a proud Socialist—was almost always at the center of those debates.

In 1910, Cooper bought a controlling interest in the town's only newspaper, the *Maysville News*. He gave Arizona Stephenson, D. C. Stephenson's older brother, a job running the typesetting equipment at the paper. Eager to help his brother escape their father and their depressing home outside of town, Arizona talked Cooper into hiring D. C.

D. C. Stephenson set about learning the business with the determination of a young man intent on leaving the farm for good. He wrote copy, set type, ran the presses, and delivered papers to homes and stores in and around Maysville. When he wasn't working, Stephenson relished Cooper's wild political rants and his animated predictions of a Socialist revolution. "The Socialists stand for the common man, the working man," he told Stephenson. "If you vote for a Democrat or a Republican, you're just a sucker for the rich man."

Talking to Cooper, it seemed to Stephenson that the Socialist Party was the place to be for any ambitious young man. In 1907, during Oklahoma's first gubernatorial election, the Socialist candidate had garnered almost twelve thousand votes,<sup>19</sup> the support of about 3 percent of the male voting population in the state; three years later, the Socialists earned more than twice that many. While they still lost, it was an impressive gain. In other parts of the country, Socialists were winning political offices: in 1910, Milwaukee

elected a Socialist mayor and Wisconsin elected a Socialist congressman. Cooper's enthusiasm over the success of the party inspired Stephenson to join. He had learned firsthand that the most effective salesman is a passionate salesman.

Stephenson spent the next few years working under Cooper and honing his skills as a newspaperman. Cooper thought he could see something of the salesman in Stephenson as well. When it came time for the next gubernatorial race, Cooper convinced the Oklahoma Socialists to hire his young assistant as an organizer. Although just twenty-three years old, Stephenson had solid credentials. Anyone who spoke to him could see he was smart. He had a four-year apprenticeship in the newspaper business under his belt. He had grown up in poverty, another important qualification for any worthwhile Socialist. And perhaps most important, he was good-looking. His blond hair, piercing blue eyes, and winning smile would be valuable assets to have in his job of drawing a crowd. The party offered Stephenson twelve dollars a week to travel the state, drum up crowds, and deliver speeches in favor of Fred Holt, the Socialist candidate for governor. Stephenson could hardly believe his luck.<sup>20</sup>

On the campaign trail, Stephenson learned the ropes from pros like Socialist Oscar Ameringer, a pragmatist who once defined politics as "the gentle art of getting votes from the poor and campaign funds from the rich by promising to protect each from the other."<sup>21</sup> Veterans like Ameringer knew that politicians and their dry discourse wouldn't draw the crowds. Organizers needed showmen, not politicians. They needed musicians and singers, tents and parades, watermelons and lemonade to get the rugged farmers and their families to come out and hear the Socialist message, which they would sneak in between songs and plates of fried chicken.

Stephenson learned an age-old political truth during that campaign: make people feel like they belong, and they'll go along with whatever you say. By simply gathering poor farmers together and showing them a good time, the Socialists were delivering a message.



Even before the first speech was delivered, they were saying that they understood those farmers and their families, that they liked being around them, and that they cared about them. Stephenson learned the power of inviting people to belong, especially people who may have never before been invited to join anything.

Despite the Socialists' picnic campaign, Fred Holt lost the Oklahoma gubernatorial race in 1914. Stephenson's political career was over for a time.

After the excitement of the crowds, the rallies, and the travel, Stephenson had difficulty settling down into a normal life. He floated across Oklahoma, getting newspaper jobs and losing them in short order. In 1915, he landed in the town of Hugo, where he drifted into a marriage with Nettie Hamilton. He left her while she was pregnant with their child. For months Hamilton tracked Stephenson across Oklahoma as he skipped from newspaper to newspaper in the towns of Sulphur, Ada, Cushing, and Miami. Hamilton gave birth to their child on May 16, 1916, and then resumed her chase. Finally, Stephenson left the state to escape her, fleeing to Iowa. Hamilton gave up at the state line, filing for divorce in February 1917.

Stephenson was working for a printer in Story City, Iowa, when the United States entered the war in April 1917. Like most Americans, Stephenson was itching to join the fight. Even as a newspaperman and somewhat of a political insider, by now familiar with the forces that were driving the populace into a patriotic frenzy, Stephenson was not cynical about the war. He held the same romantic notions that were making men line up across the country to get "over there." Stephenson enlisted at the Story City post office and was ordered to Fort Des Moines.

The young man who had memorized accounts of Waterloo and Austerlitz undoubtedly had dramatic visions of himself charging across the battlefields of Europe. The army bureaucracy, however, saw that Stephenson's natural ability was in sales. They made him an officer and a recruiter. He never left American soil.