Part One

DISCOVERING SOLUTIONS

Chapter 1

STARTING FROM VALUES

A Tale of Values Conflicts

"No women. No minorities."

Within days of the start of the Mississippi Blood Services Organization (BSO) project, the general manager demanded that both I and my Chinese American teammate, Kevin, be replaced. He simply would not tolerate women and minorities on a team serving his organization.

It was the spring of 1993, and I had just moved from graduate school to the Upper East Side of Manhattan for my first real job, as an analyst with a major management consulting firm. Shortly after my arrival I had received a call. "You're going to Mississippi," Chris, the staffing coordinator, had told me.

My first reactions? "Mississippi—how do I get there from here?" "How hot is it down there?" "Will I understand their accents?"

"You'll be joining the team that is helping the Blood Services Organization of Mississippi get out of its financial problems," Bill, the partner and most senior leader on the project, had barked, also over the phone.

Our team's charter was to solve the financial problems facing the Mississippi BSO. For nearly half a century, the BSO had been collecting, processing, and delivering blood products to area hospitals. It was one of the pillars of the community, like the local university and major area hospitals. However, it was suffering from shrinking revenues, escalating costs, and mounting financial losses, not to mention low morale and departures of talent. In fact, it now sustained $22 million in annual expenses on only $20 million in revenues. It was hemorrhaging cash. Without a successful, substantial improvement in performance, the BSO would have to shut its doors.

Friends had warned me that the first few weeks, and especially the first few days, of a new job and a new project could be a bit unnerving. They were right. After quick phone conversations with teammate Glenn, the day-to-day project manager, and teammate Kevin, the business analyst, I tried to make sense of the facts (as I understood them) about the BSO. This Mississippi organization supplied blood products in-state by collecting voluntary blood donations and then testing, processing, and distributing these products to area hospitals. However, in the previous year or so the BSO's profits had swung into losses. The newly appointed chief executive of the national BSO was old friends with Bill, the partner in our firm. Both having come from the pharmaceutical industry, they had worked together on health care issues over the preceding ten years. The new BSO executive asked Bill to put a team together to assess and help turn around the deteriorating situation.

At least that is what I thought before I got to Mississippi. Once there, the challenge seemed to become that the general manager wanted neither women nor minorities on the team that would serve his BSO.

Growing up rather sheltered in Indiana, I had never encountered such outright prejudice. Shocked, I tried to determine how I might have caused the manager's reaction. Because it was only my first week on the job, I finally concluded that I had not had enough time to offend him. Then I was furious. How could the same person who had nearly bankrupted the BSO now think he could impose his beliefs—and prejudices—on the team dedicated to turning around his organization? From my perspective, he and his BSO were damn fortunate to get our talented, dedicated team.

After calming down, I quietly watched what happened. On the one hand, everything I had seen in our consulting firm—both on paper and in the way that everyone interacted—emphasized the importance of merit and serving clients well. On the other hand, Bill was a young partner under huge pressure, and the Mississippi BSO was our demonstration project for an entire network of potential future health care clients. Then, too, Mississippi was a long way from our home office in New York, and Glenn, Kevin, and I were very junior staff with little influence within our firm.

To his enormous credit, the following day Bill told the general manager that we were the best team to save his beloved BSO, and BSO could take it or leave it.

Although I did not fully appreciate Bill's courage until many years later, his stance earned him Kevin's loyalty and mine. My feelings for the general manager and his Mississippi BSO? Well, I felt a deep respect for the mission and good works of the BSO. And then there was my stubborn pride.

We stayed to prove our worth.

Values and Problem-Solving Efforts

A problem-solving effort begins and ends with values. Without some integrated system of values, one cannot say a proposed solution is optimal or even appropriate; one cannot even establish goals for a problem-solving effort. Values influence the division and prioritization of analytical work. In fact, without values, what is the reason to take the problem on?

By values, we mean the principles, standards, or qualities that you consider worthwhile or desirable. By norms we mean the principles of right action that guide and regulate proper and acceptable behavior within a society or organization. We argue that all problem-solving efforts encounter values conflicts. Consequently, you as the problem solver must examine your own values. But just knowing these is not sufficient. We argue that you must also stay true to them—first to your values, and then, if possible, to the norms of your organization.

We introduce practical approaches to resolving conflicts either among the values of different individuals or between individual values and organizational or societal norms. One can, and indeed must, harness values and norms toward developing pragmatic solutions to complex business challenges. Other scholars have written eloquently on business ethics and broader societal norms; where appropriate, we draw on their work and direct you to their contributions.

Values Conflicts in Setting Goals and Allocating Work

Bill's decision about the BSO team got me to closely observe the personal convictions of my teammates and the norms of our consulting firm.

Regarding goals and work allocation, right off we faced potential values conflicts even within our four-person team. Our day-to-day project manager, Glenn, wanted to complete the work as efficiently and quickly as possible. For efficiency's sake, he could have made Kevin responsible for building the financial model of BSO's operations by which we could test turnaround scenarios, analyze the profitability of products and customer accounts, and assess pricing and other opportunities. It would have been easy to do that, because Kevin, the more junior business analyst, had been staffed on the team as an expert in spreadsheet analysis and financial modeling from previous projects. But Kevin wanted to move beyond his current expertise. He wanted to interact more with clients, interview customers, broaden his experience.

Glenn did not take the easier, more efficient path, because our consulting firm also valued professional development. One could argue that it was one of our core organizational norms. As long as there was no negative impact on client service, partners encouraged teams to allocate project activities so as to build and broaden members' skills. Both Glenn and Bill, the partner, believed in and respected this norm. So Bill took Kevin to interviews and coached him on client interactions while Glenn and I sorted out the financials.

Values Conflicts in Prioritizing Options and Deciding on Potential Solutions

Bill, Glenn, Kevin, and I shared values (often implicitly) that helped us to prioritize options for BSO's financial turnaround. We stuck to the facts of the case, open to wherever our data and analysis might lead. We attempted to prioritize options in a straightforward, fact-based way. According to size and speed of potential impact, difficulty, and risk, we identified sufficient opportunities to return the BSO to financial solvency. Chapters Two and Three describe the problem-solving framework and process we followed. Specific solutions included cost reductions (in the nursing staff, laboratory procedures, and administrative functions) and revenue increases through improved blood product inventory management.

But from early on, there was a serious chance that the BSO general manager might reject our proposals because of the ongoing conflicts in values that went beyond the original ones over race and gender. Numerous BSO managers stubbornly opposed many rather straightforward ideas. After some reflection, I began to understand that the BSO managers were afraid that our team would make them look incompetent, harming their professional reputations and careers.

We eventually overcame this opposition by framing our recommendations in the context of the one fundamental value on which everyone agreed: the broad Mississippi community's benefits from a local blood supply. In retrospect, the confluence seems obvious: the community valued a local blood supply, especially in times of disaster and need. Mississippi BSO's mission actually rested on this goal, and at some level every employee's and consultant's personal convictions supported it.

Having discovered this overarching common good, we set out to turn the BSO around as humanely as possible, trying to avoid major layoffs. Fortunately, most of the savings could come from eliminating overtime expenses for nurses during blood drives, so BSO could avoid laying off its three hundred dedicated nurses.

Values Conflicts and Bottom-Line Trade-Offs

The preceding discussion raises the question of what leaders should do when adherence to personal values might compromise the bottom-line objectives of the firm—as was Peter's experience as CEO of the global health care company in the introductory tale.

As another example, take a publicly traded, major retailer that consistently provides value for customers while—unlike its competitors—also granting employees such generous health care and other benefits that applications for positions far exceed hiring needs. Despite growth and profitability that also far exceed the competitors', Wall Street analysts consistently criticize the CEO for higher-than-necessary expenses. To date, the CEO has weathered criticism and garnered praise for affirming his company's norm of fairly treating employees. But the bottom-line fact remains: the CEO's tenure depends on the company's delivery of excellent economic value to its shareholders. Were performance to deteriorate, all improvement options would certainly be on the table, including benefit reduction. At that point, the CEO might be forced to compromise the fair treatment principle to the extent required to lift shareholder returns.

Articulating Your Own Bedrock Values

The bedrock of leadership and problem solving lies in the values that each of us holds dear. Yet sometimes it is difficult to know just what those values are. This section may aid your examination of your own values and surrounding norms. We begin by discussing four cardinal virtues that influence business decisions, then take on the tough topic of motivation, before continuing with a few ways to deepen your understanding and commitment to values.

Personal Values and the Four Cardinal Virtues

Values are principles that individuals may hold worthwhile; virtues are those values that a society deems right. Aristotle, Aquinas, and many other philosophers in the Western tradition have argued moral character rests on four main ("cardinal") virtues: prudence, justice, temperance, and courage. Basically, prudence is a strong, steady disposition to choose appropriate means toward good ends. Justice is the continuing commitment to render unto each his or her due. Temperance is the rational disciplining of desires. And courage enables one to do the right thing despite the threat of personal injury or loss. We maintain that these four cardinal virtues are essential to sound business judgment.

I still greatly respect the tough nursing manager at Mississippi BSO for how she handled my difficult messages regarding the high costs of her nursing department. A major portion of the BSO turnaround depended on modifying scheduling procedures for blood drives to eliminate most overtime nursing costs—which was deeply unpalatable to nurses wanting overtime pay. The nursing manager displayed all four cardinal virtues in handling the decision. Prudently, she did no more and no less than was necessary, but she did eliminate all overtime pay. She was eminently just in the way she accomplished this, not looking at seniority or performance or even her favorites in the nursing staff, but applying the policy equally to all. She displayed temperance in patiently explaining why her decision was correct and appropriate, given BSO's overall challenges. Finally, she showed tremendous courage in abolishing overtime pay despite loud resistance from the nursing union.

Aristotle, Hobbes, and Human Motivation

My often comical experiences in the world of investment banking illuminate two opposing perspectives on human motivation and on related contrasts in organizational norms. Aristotle and Thomas Hobbes defined the basic distinction: whether people's motives lean more toward cooperation or competition. The orientation can be attributed to an individual's nature or to the social context.

About 2,400 years ago, Aristotle made the case for cooperation as the basic human motivation, arguing, "Man is by nature a political [social] creature," designed to live in the *polis* or society.[1] The state, he said, is a creation of nature whose purpose is to teach its citizens how to live a virtuous life.

Contrarily, about two millennia after Aristotle, Thomas Hobbes argued that humans are basically more competitive than collaborative. Without a strong power to keep all forces in check, a situation of " . . . war of everyone against everyone" naturally ensues. Government, Hobbes maintained, is based on the need for security, not—as Aristotle contended—on fostering the good life. Absent some central authority to keep man's natural aggression in check, said Hobbes, " . . . the life of man [is] solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."[2]

Understanding your own natural disposition and the motivation of colleagues is a way to determine the degree of harmony or conflict in your work environment. As for me, I was an Aristotelian in my mind, living in a Hobbesian world. That, in a nutshell, was my challenge when serving a large New York City bank in 1995.

My Indiana, Catholic, and immigrant upbringing emphasized helping neighbors, friends, colleagues, and those in need. Naively, I assumed the same in others. I quickly learned these expectations were completely inappropriate on the trading floor and among international banking executives whose success depended on fostering raw competition and conflict.

Of course, no industry or organization is entirely cooperative or competitive. Contrast the ruthless vendor management of American car manufacturers with the more Aristotelian cooperation across the automotive supply chain of their Japanese counterparts—with vastly different long-term results. In many industries and companies, the sales force's performance incentives are specifically designed to encourage competition. By contrast, however, in rapidly evolving industries in which intellectual capital and creativity are a competitive advantage, companies specifically foster cooperation to ensure the combination and exchange of knowledge.

In the absence of values, there is nothing inherently right or wrong with either an Aristotelian or Hobbesian organizational mindset. Still, we would not be two Notre Dame professors if we did not argue for rather more Aristotelian approaches.

Neoclassical economists took a page directly from Hobbes in developing their assumptions: that humans are selfish, rational, and atomistic. Yet Hobbesian rationality and competition cannot provide the full foundation for all economic activity. For example, no matter how detailed, contracts cannot foresee every possible future contingency, and are thus incomplete. Under conditions of cooperation and basic trust, transaction costs among individuals and firms will be lower, because every contingency need not be written into a contract. As one of our colleagues pointed out, even economists cooperate.

Cooperation within an organization or society can further lead directly to more positive payoffs for its members. Within a community, dense horizontal relationships reinforced by commonly held norms yield the benefits of freely flowing information, surveillance of and sanctions against deviant behavior, and overall encouragement toward collective action. Within a firm, the payoff of increased cooperation can be a competitive advantage. Think about recent investments that many professional firms, research and development organizations, and high-tech companies have made in the knowledge economy. In our rapidly changing world, their investments aim to increase their competitive advantage by fostering cooperative networks that create and manage knowledge.

In short, it is worth your while to spend some time reflecting on your own and your organization's cooperative and competitive views.

Broadening One's Experiences and Perspectives on Values

Further broadening your perspectives regarding values can prove indispensable. To this end, an overseas posting presents at least one unique benefit: it can help managers not only learn about the norms deemed important by a foreign society but also come to recognize more clearly their own values back home.

Because of the shift in cultural context, overseas assignments also frequently give rise to business conflicts. In 1998, I was assigned to a large team assisting a Southern California biotech firm in integrating an acquired Austrian health care company. For six months, our team shuttled constantly between Los Angeles and Vienna. But it was not the travel and long hours worked that caused the most tension. The tensions stemmed primarily from conflicts between American and Austrian business and societal norms.

They started with seemingly trivial matters. On the first day, the two sides disagreed about appropriate formality and salutations. In Austria, meeting attire was "business casual." Austrians understood that to be conservative dress—dark suits—whereas Americans understood it as any casual clothing except jeans. The Austrians expected much more formality in conversation. For example, Austrian business colleagues would greet each other as "Herr Doctor" and "Herr Professor" even after twenty years of working together.

These tensions escalated, complicating and massively slowing integration. In the political context, Austrian society valued gradual broad-based consensus, so major business decisions required consulting with unions, city officials, health ministers, and other stakeholders. Major Austrian corporations played vital roles in social services and beyond, so business decisions in Austria sometimes ran counter to the American tendencies to first and foremost maximize shareholder returns. And culturally, Austrians were not the "rugged individuals" that the Americans considered themselves to be. Indeed, an Austrian's place in the community is incredibly important to his self-perception.

Given the extensive need for consensus across disparate Austrian and American stakeholders during the course of the study, I longed to find just one person who might have the sign that President Truman had on his desk, "The buck stops here." It would never be that easy to make decisions in Vienna.

The six-month assignment in Vienna helped me better understand not only Austrian norms but American ones as well—and also just how American I was.[3] With increased globalization, effective leaders must expand their horizons to deal with different values systems, even within the United States. As the Austrian example strongly suggests, business executives disregard societal norms at their own peril—even here at home.

Organizational Commitment to Norms

Organizations vary in how they adopt, modify, and disseminate their own norms and support certain personal values. They vary also in how their norms compare with the norms of the broader society.

Company Ethics and Societal Norms

Historically, many American economists and business leaders defined company norms narrowly: first, efficient use of resources; second, fair competition. Indeed, in 1970 the *New York Times*

Magazine quoted the Nobel economist Milton Friedman: "The doctrine of social responsibility . . . is fundamentally subversive . . . There is one and only one social responsibility of business—to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase profits so long as it engages in open and free competition without deception and fraud."[4]

Current vibrant academic and public policy debates sound quite different. Not surprisingly, two separate considerations drive this recent transformation: responsibility and money. Citing the four cardinal virtues, longtime business scholar Keith Davis proposed, "If business has the power, then a just relationship demands that business also bear responsibility for its action . . . The Iron Law of Responsibility is that . . . in the long term, those who do not use power in the manner which society considers responsible will tend to lose it."[5] Business leaders ignore changing societal values to their own detriment. Although most probably agreed with Friedman in 1970, by 2000 a *Business Week*/Harris poll revealed that only 5 percent did so. Well over 90 percent of Americans surveyed believed that business had some obligations toward its employees and communities.[6] Other polls have shown similar changes.

Scholars besides Davis have argued that more ethical and socially responsible firms tend to be more successful financially.[7] Widely differing reasons drive this commitment. Perhaps most frequently, companies adopt ethics policies to manage risk—avoiding legal or financial problems arising from wrongdoing by employees. Companies may also do so to align personal values with organizational norms, thus improving performance and encouraging employee commitment and trust. And companies may adopt ethics policies to enhance market position and build better relationships with customers. There may be some additional benefit in being perceived as a good global citizen.

Disseminating Company Norms by Credo or Osmosis

Observing my colleagues' actions on the BSO project helped me understand both their personal values and our firm's norms.

Some organizations disseminate their values through formal positions like the Johnson & Johnson Credo. The Credo asserts simply that J&J has four responsibilities. The first and foremost is to provide its customers with high-quality products at fair prices. The second is to treat its employees with dignity and respect and to pay them fairly. The third responsibility is to the communities in which J&J operates, to be good corporate citizens, and to protect the environment. The fourth and last is to provide its shareholders with a fair return. In 2002, Ralph Larson, the Chairman and CEO of J&J, outlined his thoughts about the Credo, saying, "In the final analysis, the Credo is built on the notion that if you do a good job in fulfilling the first three responsibilities, then the shareholder will come out all right."[8] The principles underlying the Credo go back to J&J's founding.

Others let values permeate their organization through a more informal, osmotic process. Our consulting firm definitely transmitted values through osmosis. How does the osmotic process work? How (and how well) did it work for me personally? Consider, for example, two norms frequently affecting work assignments: excellence in client work and ongoing professional training. At first, my commitment to my firm's norms arose from the end-of-study performance evaluations, which explicitly asked partners to evaluate whether each associate and project manager created professional training opportunities for their teammates. Later, my inspiration to help others develop professional skills came from a strong desire for external recognition within my office. Every year our office publicly honored the best mentors, and I vowed that I would make that list. By the time I was elected a partner, I constantly thought of development opportunities for my colleagues—even when no one would ever see or know about my efforts. The institution's norms had become my own values.

Scholarship suggests my experience is in keeping with a common pattern. Daniel Katz and Robert Kahn delineate three sources of commitment: rule enforcement, external rewards, and internal motivation.[9] Initially one obeys rules out of respect for authority and avoidance of penalties for wrongdoing. Secondarily, one responds to financial and recognition rewards for prescribed behavior. Finally, one internalizes organizational norms into one's personal values.

Resolving Inevitable Conflicts

Regrettably, there is no magic formula for resolving values conflicts in problem-solving efforts. After much reflection, however, we offer these thoughts:

- Make explicit the hierarchy of values and norms.
- Search for "the oasis in the storm," or common ground.
- Stick to "the safety of the data."
- Stay aware of the bottom-line requirements.

Hierarchies of Values and Norms

Although at times controversial and certainly never transparent, a hierarchy of values and norms always exists in some form. Recognizing this hierarchy enables making the difficult trade-offs that solutions to tough problems require.

The BSO achieved its turnaround without laying off its nurses. Let us, however, examine a hypothetical solution that required BSO to lay off a quarter of its nursing staff. How should BSO managers react? The implicit hierarchy of values would be as follows: first and foremost, the societal norm of maintaining a local blood supply; second, the needs of individual nurses. If all other avenues of cost reduction had been exhausted, and there were no other alternatives, then the Mississippi BSO would have to execute the layoffs despite the hardships imposed on individual nurses. One should characterize the implications of different solutions for the organization, society, and individual managers. In this case, societal and organizational needs outweighed personal ones.

One can test the hierarchy of values by talking through its implications for solutions. At the BSO, I had to explain to the nursing manager how her stubborn protection of the nurses' compensation threatened the BSO's entire existence. Once she understood that, she changed her decisions toward doing everything possible to save the BSO.

Another test of often implicit values is to delve into the criteria by which potential solutions would be judged. Between the judgment criteria and the proposed solution's implications, one can unearth the values hierarchies that different managers hold dear. For the good of the problem-solving effort, these hierarchies need to be as transparent as possible.

Oasis in the Storm

Frequently, values come into conflict because various parties' objectives are not aligned. The problem solver should try to find the common ground, which we call the "oasis in the storm." The mission or objectives of the organization are always a good place to start. In the Mississippi BSO case, the common ground was the unquestioned benefit to the community of a local blood supply, especially in times of disaster. As long as our team focused on that objective, managers would be more willing to commit to our recommendations.

If your current perspective yields no common ground, then keep expanding your perspective until you discover it.

Let the Data Speak for Themselves

When managers argue about, say, BSO's market share in Mississippi, the argument should be short. One can define the market, estimate the sales of BSO and its competitors, and then calculate the appropriate market share. The lesson? The safety of data—their relatively less controversial nature—can significantly reduce conflicts in problem-solving efforts. In tricky circumstances, let the data speak. People may see different implications in it, but presenting the data without commentary sometimes can be the most effective way of beginning the problem-solving process. The more difficult discussions arise from what to *do*, based on the information.

Stay Aware of Bottom-Line Requirements

Organizational norms tend to address the means by which results should be achieved. For example, the J&J Credo addresses the treatment of customers, employees, and communities before talking about creating economic value for shareholders. But stay aware that they are *means* to providing that value. J&J's attentiveness to customers establishes its reputation, customer trust, and, consequently, repeat business. Good treatment of employees builds a culture of loyalty and, among other things, minimizes the disruption of turnover. By respecting its communities, J&J builds good will. The three norms form the basis for effective top- and bottom-line financial growth and performance.

Bill's Decision and Lessons for the General Manager

Many years after the Mississippi BSO project, I ran into Bill at Chicago's O'Hare airport. Those first days with BSO had made such a lasting impression, I had to ask him how he had decided on his response to the general manager's demand to replace me and Kevin.

Having been elected a partner by that time, I could imagine the pressures on Bill as a young partner trying to prove himself. Bill observed that, sadly, we do not always know our own personal values, nor can we predict what we would do when confronted with specific challenges. Most of the time, we are lucky simply to get things right. We laughed and agreed.

However, Bill then described staying up all night thinking about how changing out the team would make him feel. "Lousy," was the answer. Thinking about how to tell the client that his demand was wrong and would not be accommodated also made Bill sick. From there, he meditated on how he would advise a colleague facing the same decision, then on how he might be remembered for his choice. Still no help. Finally, he thought about how he might explain this to his recently deceased mother. In that light, the decision became crystal clear.

When I asked where he had learned such a sensible approach to making difficult decisions, surprisingly Bill cited Saint Ignatius of Loyola and the "discernment rules" that Loyola developed to address his own challenging times—the 1500s.[10] How relevant could a sixteenth-century Spanish priest's thinking be to modern-day business? Loyola understood the challenges of moral uncertainty, empathized, and gave good pragmatic advice: Involve the whole person—feelings, intellect, and will. Ask oneself imaginative questions, such as Bill had asked: "How would I counsel a colleague facing a similar problem?" "How would I feel at my own deathbed looking back on the choice?" Human reason comes up with the useful questions. One's heart and will finally make the choice.

Integrity in Problem Solving

Success in solving problems depends on integrity. Absent values, solutions tend to be based on weak standards or unguided by established principles. To general managers facing complex business challenges, we suggest examining one's own personal values often and making them as explicit as possible to colleagues. Diligently and frequently explore one's organization's and community's norms. The foundation of the effective discovery of solutions, and their implementation, is a thorough consideration and embrace of meaningful values.

Values are a pervasive, complicated, conflict-engendering part of problem solving. Resolving these conflicts by finding common ground strengthens efforts to determine solutions. The following essay by Father Theodore Hesburgh, CSC, President Emeritus of the University of Notre Dame, speaks more to the challenge of discovering common values. The next chapter moves into diagnosing a problem's root causes from the usual mess of symptoms.

My Toughest Problem: The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights

Father Theodore Hesburgh, CSC
President Emeritus, University of Notre Dame

> *We discovered that we didn't have three Southerners and three Northerners on the U.S. Civil Rights Commission—as everyone thought—but rather six fishermen.*

Serving on the Civil Rights Commission was certainly an honor that no one seeks, yet its work and impact on American society is one of the proudest achievements of my life. In 1957, President Eisenhower appointed and the U.S. Senate confirmed the six members of the commission: John Battle, former governor of Virginia; Doyle Carlton, former governor of Florida; Robert Storey, dean of the Southern Methodist Law School; John Hanna, president of Michigan State University and former assistant secretary of defense; J. Ernest Wilkins, undersecretary of labor and the only black member of the commission; and myself.

Whichever way we turned, we faced immediate and major challenges, even to the extent of finding places to conduct our work. Many of my students at Notre Dame now cannot even fathom how segregation and discrimination had scarred our society fifty years ago. Our only power was to subpoena testimony to document the dismal state of civil rights in the country in general, and voter disenfranchisement in particular. Because no hotel or restaurant in the South would serve both the white and black members of our commission together, President Eisenhower had to intervene personally to clear the way for us to stay at military bases and conduct our hearings in federal buildings. It was no wonder that Commissioner Hanna called ours "a God-awful job."

After two years of work and before making our recommendations to the president and Congress, we were to conduct one more set of hearings in Shreveport, Louisiana. Under the scorching heat and humidity, and the noise of military aircraft landing at all hours at the SAC airbase accommodating the commission, tempers frayed as fatigue set in. Then a federal marshal announced that a federal judge had enjoined us from holding our hearings, on the grounds that the U.S. Civil Rights Commission was unconstitutional. Well, I knew then and there I had to get my fellow commissioners out of Louisiana. We would never reach agreement as to our recommendations under these trying circumstances.

We went from what felt like Hell to as close to Heaven as possible. With the generous donation of a Notre Dame benefactor's private plane, we flew from Shreveport to the university's retreat in Land O' Lakes, Wisconsin. Calling ahead, I made sure that we would have steaks, corn on the cob, baked potatoes, and cold martinis waiting for us when we landed. Then, as my fellow commissioners collapsed from exhaustion and slept on the flight, I went to the back of the plane to confer with our excellent staff. During the five-and-a-half-hour flight, the staff and I worked out the resolutions that the commission should recommend.

All I can say is that the Spirit was with us. During dinner at Land O' Lakes we discovered that all six of us were avid fisherman. I quickly called our guides and got our boats ready for an evening of fishing for bass and walleye at twilight.

Afterward, we settled in our screened-in porch to discuss the commission's recommendations. John Hanna handed the role of chairman to me for the evening, because, as he pointed out, I had spent time with the staff developing the resolutions. I think the whole environment—cool air, pine trees, good food—provided the magic we needed to discover the common ground that I fervently believed we shared. We passed eleven of the twelve resolutions unanimously, covering issues as wide-ranging as voting, employment, administration of justice, housing, and education. The twelfth—on school integration—passed 5 to 1, with former governor Battle voting against.

While holding Mass the following morning, I overheard the three Southerners discussing what had happened the previous night. They agreed that the atmosphere was so pleasant, they had not wanted to fight about the recommendations. True Southern gentlemen, they kept their word. And all twelve resolutions became the law of the land in 1964 with the passage of President Johnson's Omnibus Civil Rights Act.

Tough problems require bold and brave actions, and the occasional inspiration as well. My fellow commissioners were dedicated leaders who, on hearing the repeated stories of racial injustice across America, felt a call to action. A peaceful evening of fishing and the subsequent black, starry night in northern Wisconsin supplied the inspiration to enable those actions.