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Welcome back to College Bound, Notre Dame Admissions' podcast. This is Maria Finan, one of the assistant directors in the Office of Undergraduate Admissions. I'm digging kind of a bit deep this week back into my days as a former tour guide, so we'll be digging into Notre Dame's history, Notre Dame's mission, we'll talk about the land that Notre Dame's on and also some of our favorite moments kind of in Notre Dame history. But before we do that, I want to give Zach an opportunity to introduce himself.

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Hey everyone, this is Zach Klonskinski. I'm also an Assistant Director in the Office of Undergraduate Admissions. Super excited to be here with you today. I was a history major at Notre Dame, so this is absolutely right up my alley.

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Well, before we get started, we do want to acknowledge the land that Notre Dame is located on, so we acknowledge our presence on the traditional homelands of a few different native peoples, including the Haudenosaunee, the Miami, the Peoria, and particularly the Pokagon Potawatomi. They've been using the land for education for thousands of years, and they continue to do so, and they actually predate Father Sorin and the University of Notre Dame in our current location in South Bend, Indiana.

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Yeah, absolutely. Thanks, Maria. It's really exciting to still see many of those native peoples here in the South Bend area. For example, the Pokagon Potawatomi are actually headquartered in our twin city of Mishawaka, and they come over and do some events on campus and share their, you know, their experiences and their history with students and the Notre Dame community, which is really exciting every year.

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So turning to the university itself, though, you actually have to go back a little bit further before Notre Dame because Notre Dame is actually founded by the Congregation of Holy Cross. And so a Congregation of Holy Cross was founded in Sainte Croix, France, or Holy Cross, France by the Blessed Basil Moreau. So Father Moreau was beatified in 2007, so he's on his way to hopefully becoming a saint. But he founded the Congregation of Holy Cross, kind of on the principle of holistic education. He wanted

to make sure that the children of France were receiving education that really challenged them and really helped them grow as people.

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And through this kind of a motto of the Congregation of Holy Cross, his philosophy on education is mind, body and spirit. He, Basil Moreau, wanted to make sure that students were challenged not only in their mind, but also in their body and their passions, as well as spiritually on their faith side as well. And that really guided the University of Notre Dame when it was founded in October of 1842 by a young Holy Cross priest by the name of Father Edward Sorin.

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Father Edward Sorin came over from France with the intention of founding the university. He came to this land in South Bend, Indiana, and wrote, one week after arriving on what would become Notre Dame's beautiful campus, that this college will be one of the most powerful means for doing good in this country. And Maria, what did that statement really do for the University of Notre Dame?

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Yeah. So that letter, I think that vision it was November. He has one building, the Log Chapel, at that time and that idea of being a "force for good," of using education to serve others is really something that has been foundational to kind of Notre Dame's ethos for the education that we hope to provide. There's been a lot of kind of great writing talking about how "the mind will not be cultivated at the expense of the heart," and this idea of a holistic education, not just of the mind, but also of the heart, and the spirit, I think, is really something that's key to what distinguishes Notre Dame from maybe other top universities.

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So we see our graduates, our professors, our students really trying to embody this idea of being a force for good. Something that I happen to really love is our "What Would You Fight For?" series. And that's been going on, I think, for almost a decade at this point, discussing different work being done by professors, students, alumni who are in some way in their chosen fields, bettering society, and that's something that kind of inspired one of our essay questions this year, and I think really just gets back to kind of what distinguishes a Notre Dame education from other places.

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Thinking back to the history piece beyond our mission- do you want to talk about maybe some kind of important moments in Notre Dame history? I think something else that's unique to Notre Dame, not just this idea of being a force for good, but I think also, you know, resilience and overcoming are other kind of important aspects of the Notre Dame story.

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Yeah, absolutely. So with the mission and the vision of the university, you know, we're always looking to bring people together here who want to make the world a better place. That doesn't always mean Notre Dame was a great place because there have been some challenges in the universe's history, two main ones. The first is that the first Main Building that was built at the university, actually burned down in 1879, burned down completely to the ground. And at the time, that was basically the entire university; it was the classrooms, it was the residence for students, there was all sorts of administration offices in the main building as well. And so really, that was the entire university that burned to the ground just a little over thirty years after the university was even founded.

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So there was a lot of effort and students came together faculty, staff, the priests who were the professors at the time, and they came together to actually rebuild the main building bigger and better than it had ever been built before, in time for the next school year. And on top of that new Main Building is the iconic golden dome that the University of Notre Dame is kind of known for, certainly has become our iconic building that was actually the second Main Building.

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And the second major challenge to the university was actually during World War II. So at the time, the university was only a single-sex university. They only had male students. But obviously at that time, many of the young men across the country were off fighting in World War II. And so Notre Dame's enrollment actually dwindled dangerously low to the point where the university would have almost had to close. Well, the University actually turned to the Navy and said, "You know, we don't have any students here, would you like to use the university as a training base for soldiers going off to World War II?" And the Navy said "Absolutely." And that actually saved the University. And so we have a very special relationship with the Navy, especially with the Naval Academy now as well, because we continue to play them in football almost every year.

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Our last episode focused on football traditions, and if you want to come to a very tradition rich weekend, the Notre Dame-Navy game is absolutely one of those. It's not Army-Navy or Navy-Army, depending on your perspective, but it is a lot of great traditions there as well, and something that just harkens back to this partnership and these bonds that were forged during World War II. So a couple of big challenges: the Main Building burning down, as well as World War II and almost having to shut the university down at the university, really came through and really displayed that great spirit of Notre Dame that defines our school nickname and our school mascot. So, Maria, do you want to touch on that?

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Yes, I think you've definitely hit on some difficult moments and there have been many of them. Notre Dame students clashed with the KKK, and they ultimately drove them out in Notre Dame's history, so I think there are some great moments of triumph tied with the difficulties. But I think an interesting piece that we often get asked about is, you know, Notre Dame is founded by a congregation of French priests. How do they become the Fighting Irish? And so I think that is kind of a good story as well.

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There is a little bit of debate about the origin of the name, but Notre Dame did have a lot of Irish immigrants, a lot of Catholic students since it was founded as a Catholic university, so one of those stories is tied to the idea that we had these Irish students. In 1909, there was a player giving a speech at halftime of the football game against Michigan and sounded like he was yelling at his teammates who were all Irish, saying, "What's matter with you guys? You're all Irish and you're not fighting worth a lick?" So there's been some discussion that a newspaper picked that up and kind of attributed the victory to the "Fighting Irishmen."

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That's kind of one version of the stories, but the more common one is that especially during the 1910s, the 1920s, stereotypes and ethnic slurs against Irish people were pretty common and often also attributed to the Notre Dame football team. So Rockne era, he's a really important coach for Notre Dame, he's really, I think the coach who we can all say kind of put Notre Dame on the map. At that time. Notre Dame was not

yet the Fighting Irish and during that era is usually what's agreed on when the Fighting Irish nickname came out.

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So this idea of Fighting Irish not being a slur as it was kind of originally meant as, but being an underdog and being tenacious and fighting and triumphing. So it is something that becomes a point of pride in Notre Dame history. It's a little bit later, actually, that the leprechaun ultimately follows. So the Notre Dame Leprechaun was not kind of the official mascot until the 1960s. So Fighting Irish, I think, really kind of captures this idea of like a "never say die" spirit, really kind of during Rockne era and since 1927, our university president at the time, Father Walsh, decided then that the Fighting Irish nickname would be official, that's when it was officially adopted. So it started kind of with the football teams, and it really is something that I think characterizes the Notre Dame spirit and the spirit of all of our students, regardless of where they originally hail from.

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Yeah, absolutely. And so, so in many ways, a Notre Dame's first two pieces that put it on the map were the fact that it is a Catholic institution and that is know very key to our mission and our vision and what we want the university to be, and then the fact that, you know, football did help put us on the national map. You know, we have won eleven national championships, many of them were in these early days of the university. But really, a turning point in the university's history was the tenure of Father Theodore Hesburgh.

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So Father Theodore Hesburgh was president of the University of Notre Dame for, I think, like twenty-five years and under Father Ted, Notre Dame's endowment, their academics, their academic prowess, and the opportunities academically for students in the classroom just absolutely flourished. And so really, what became the University of Notre Dame today is a lot in a large way due to the vision of Father Ted that this is a place that, yes, you can have the big Division I football, and yes, you can have that great spirit, and yes, you can be a Catholic institution, and yes, you can also have great academics, absolutely.

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We've been very fortunate through our great endowment to be able to offer all sorts of research opportunities and study abroad and ways for students to really pursue their education in the way that fathers saw and blessed Basil Moreau really envisioned for the University to have that holistic education for students to grow in all facets of themselves, your mind, body and spirit. And really, that was one of the great kind of turning points into what Notre Dame is today, during the years of Father Ted Hesburgh.

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Father Ted Hesburgh is just such an interesting character. We could devote probably a whole series or a whole season of our podcast just to Father Ted. But one of the things that I think you should also know is that Father Ted was also so involved in the national and even international stage. He was very good friends with the Pope, he also served as one of the five members of the Civil Rights Commission that essentially produced the framework for the Civil Rights Act of 1964. And truly, you should absolutely go out and watch a biopic on on Father Ted called just "Hesburgh." It's absolutely a great way to introduce yourself to the character of Father Ted Hesburgh that really helped define the spirit of Notre Dame and the academics of Notre Dame, and it helps give you a sense of what the university has really strived to become.

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Yeah, I really love the Hesburgh movie. I do have a cameo, so if you ever happen to be watching it, maybe you'll find me in the movie, really just amazing to be part of the Father Hesburgh legacy. Father Hesburgh is the one who admitted women to Notre Dame, so also we'll give him a shout out for doing that in 1972. He opened my own path to Notre Dame, so we really love him. It's a great movie.

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Some of my other kind of favorite Notre Dame movies, if you want to dive a little bit more into Notre Dame and pop culture, if you're up for a black and white movie, Knute Rockne All-American is a really fun one, all about Rockne, who I talked about. That's the era when the Fighting Irish nickname comes about. It stars Ronald Reagan before he was president, so kind of a fun figure there. And another movie that I think is beloved on campus and always shown each year is Rudy. So based on a true story sports movie that happens to be one of my favorite movie genres, I love that the students now have the tradition of watching Rudy on the football field during one of the first weekends of the fall each year.

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So I think that's kind of a fun tradition. So this is by no means an exhaustive history of the university, but we've talked a little bit about, you know, kind of favorite aspects of tradition. We've talked about football and thought that we owed you just a little more insight kind of into Notre Dame's mission, Notre Dame's origin, Notre Dame's ethos, so hopefully, we've provided that for you. Thanks for joining us this week on College Bound. Next week, we're excited to dive into South Bend, answering the question, "Where is Notre Dame?" We'll talk to you next week, but thanks so much for joining us.