

CHICAGO EPISCOPAL SOCIETY FOR
CULTURAL AND RACIAL UNITY

Dinner

Pick Congress Hotel

Sunday Evening, February 20, 1966

The Rev. John B. Morris

Introductory Remarks, by The Rev. John B. Morris:

On behalf of the Chicago Chapter of ESCRU, I presented their Second Annual Bishop Lichtenberger Award to Mrs. Philip Daniels, Mother of Jonathan Daniels, in the presence of the namesake for the Award, Bishop Lichtenberger. And the initial thing on the tape is my remarks of presentation followed by Mrs. Daniels. I am taping this now to ultimately send it to Bill Schneider in Cambridge, but, Bill, I m sending the whole tape first to some friends in San Francisco, The Rev. and Mrs. Bruce Kennedy, since the tape will contain a number of things that I had told them that I would send them, but I'll ask them that they forward the tape along to you at their earliest convenience. Following this bit from Chicago, the next day Mrs. Daniels and Judy Upham and I went out and interviewed Father Richard Morrisroe, and we'll have his tape. Then, going back a week or so earlier I'll have the interviews I had with The Rev. Morris Samuel in L.s Angeles and Mark Oliver in San Diego.

CHICAGO ESCRU DINNER

I would like to present to you Father John Morris of Atlanta.

Father Morris: Thank you, Mrs. McDonnell. Bishop Lichtenberger, Mrs. Montgomery, Friends and Members of ESCRU, I have never been so struck with the interrelatedness of witness and mission in ministering the church, interdependence of persons who inspire and affect one another,

as I have been tonight. I don't know whether Jonathan Daniels knew or what he knew about ESCRU before he went to Selma, but I do know that he must have been as we all were terribly inspired and encouraged when in the Spring of 1963 our presiding Bishop, The Rt. Rev. Arthur Lichtenberger, issued a statement we now call The Message of 1963. You will recall that we were in the crisis days of Birmingham then, and it was before the Civil Rights Bill of '64 and before a lot of things. His statement was probably the strongest statement up to that time and perhaps since from the leader and head of a church body and denomination in this country. He called on Episcopalians to take action, to get involved--become involved--in the Civil Rights Movement, both in terms of the great crises of Birmingham and the other cities of the country, in terms of segregation and separation within the life of the church. This caused a great stir through the church and tremendously strengthened what we have been committed to in ESCRU. Perhaps it was the most significant thing in the church in the last ten years, that one statement. This must have been heard by Jonathan Daniels wherever he was at that time. It certainly encouraged many Episcopalians to go to Washington on the following August of that year on the March to Washington and then to work for the Civil Rights Bill of 1964. And certainly it must have had something to do with Mrs. Plabody going to St. Augustine, the honorary last year and the dinner here; so, I feel the sense of interdependence on the leadership from Bishop Lichtenberger that we all were so grateful for several years ago. And I think it must have been in Jon Daniels' mind when on March 7 he heard the news from Selma that evening or the next morning. I was in Selma on March 7 at the time of the violence at the Bridge. I wasn't on the Bridge; I was back in the rear. I helped in the ministering to the wounded, and I then retired to a motel room to assist in the call of churchmen to come to demonstrate a nation's concern for what had happened. And somewhere up in Cambridge some seminarians heard

and all over the country people heard, and because they had heard Bishop Lichtenberger's call two years previous and because the ministry of others had come into effect, the group of seminarians responded from Cambridge as they did from all over. And Jon Daniels and Judy Upham and others came down to Selma and on March 9 we tried to walk again and then you know the story of the Great March as it did finally take place.

Jon and Judy and others, but for us chiefly Jon and Judy, stayed in Selma last Spring because they realized that it would become a terribly empty place if everyone left, all of the thousands who had come to show a nation's concern. They stayed and in their life and presence said something to the persons they came in contact with in the negro community where they lived and in the white community to which they went from time to time. All during this while we were wondering--ESCRU, the National office--what we could do to keep some continuing ministry of presence there, realizing it would only be token and symbolic. Well, Jon's ministry there was more than symbolic. I think it must have been for him and for those who knew him something as when the wealthy woman of Shunam from the Book of Kings saw Elijah passing by, and she said, "I perceive that this is a holy man of God that passeth by us continually." As I got to know Jon through the Spring and came to appreciate the depth of his witness and commitment as to why he was in Selma, it became increasingly clear by summer that, if he could, he should return there for us. He was going to return there anyway because he wasn't about to give up these people whom he'd become endeared to and whom he had grown to love. So, in the summer, after he had completed his period of service to the Diocese in New Hampshire at their summer camp, he visited his family, he returned to Selma. And there again in a ministry of presence and support and deep involvement where the action was and still is, he was a holy man of God passing by but not passing and gone, very deeply

there, loving and being loved by the people there.

At some point in the summer I talked with him on the phone, and he told me that they wanted him to come out into Lowndes County, and I knew that Lowndes County was an even rougher area than Dallas County or Selma, and it was my inclination to discourage him, but on the other hand, having gotten to know him, to tremendously regard and respect his integrity of his own decision and conscience on this. So, I said to him, "Fine. If you feel you should go we will still stand back of you." They didn't want any and everyone to go to Lowndes County. Stokely Carmichael said that Jon was the only one they decided could take Lowndes County and could present the kind of person that they would want out there in terms of someone who is white. But he went into Lowndes County; he heard the call to come over into Lowndes County; and he went. And at some point later in the summer others came to Lowndes County and at one point he met Father Richard Morrisroe who is here with us tonight, and you know the story of how on August 20 two shots were fired.

And now some months hence we all from different vantage points recall Jonathan Daniels, recall the tragedy, but let us recall moreso perhaps the beauty, joy, of a man and his witness. We are so seldom so close to such witness in the life of the church. It always seems like it was someone way back there who was a saint, who was a martyr. But let us not be deceived into thinking that this was not a real man. Let's not be deceived into thinking that he was so exceptional that we can call him a martyr, for he was just like you and me. He was obedient, but he was not unafraid. He was courageous, but he was not reckless. He was committed, but he was not always sure. He was serious, but he was also lots of fun and enjoyed life.

He was gentle, but he was acquainted with anger and could be angry. And I could go on but let him speak in his own words as I read the last portion of an article that he wrote together with Judy Upham who is also with us tonight. They wrote this in the Spring after--toward--the end of their first period in Selma in the Spring. He said this of Selma: "There are good men here just as there are bad men. There are confident leaders and a bungler here and there. We have activists who have risked their lives to confront a people with the challenge of freedom and a nation with its conscience. We have mutually so cautiously sought to calm troubled waters. We have men about the work of reconciliation who are willing to reflect upon the cost and pay it. Perhaps at one time or another the two of us are all of these. Sometimes we take to the streets; sometimes we yawn through interminable meetings; sometimes we talk with white men in their homes and offices; sometimes we sit out a murderous night with an alcoholic and his family because we love them and cannot stand apart. Sometimes we confront the posse, and sometimes we hold a child. Sometimes we stand with men who have learned to hate; sometimes we must stand a little apart from them. Our life in Selma is filled with ambiguity, and in that we share with men everywhere. We are beginning to see as we never saw before that we are truly in the world and yet ultimately not of it. For through the ramble bush of doubt and fear and supposed success, we are groping our way to the realization above all else we are called to be saints. That is the mission of the church everywhere and in this Selma, Alabama, is like all the world, it needs the life and witness of militant saints." Jon speaks far more ably for himself than any can speak of him.

And now I'd like to ask his mother to come stand with me and Bishop Lichtenberger so that we might present the Award.

Mrs. Philip B. Daniels, Constance Daniels, Mother of Jonathan Daniels, throughout the country in recent travels I have seen and known something of the great witness that Jonathan Daniels has been for all of us, and I know something now of what it means for the church to rejoice in the lives of the saints. Only the week before last in the Diocese of Los Angeles there was a resolution passed unanimously in memorial of thanksgiving to God and to you for the life and witness of your son Jon. I think that's what we are here tonight to say to you. Thank you for what you meant to Jon that made him mean to us what he has meant so very deeply.

MRS. DANIELS: Thank you, Father Morris.....Father Morris, Mrs. McDonnell, Bishop Montgomery, Bishop and Mrs. Lichtenberger, Members of ESCRU, Judy, and Father Morrisroe, Friends, I accept this award for Jonathan proudly because of him and humbly because of the cause for which he gave his life. If I can make a wish this would be it: that if Jon could come back it would be for an America where he and every citizen could sing without irony "The Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave."

(Father Morris remarks here on the tape: "Inserting here parenthetically, Mrs. Daniels told me later that her son Jon found difficulty with--or in fact would not--sing that part of the National Anthem where the reference is made to "the Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave." Now to somehow round off the Chicago meeting a bit where subsequently following the presentation we heard Carter and then I spoke somewhat further about ESCRU and the future and then Jim Jones spoke about Chicago Freedom Movement, I will now put on the tape here for the Kennedys and for anyone up in Massachusetts, the singing of "We Shall overcome" at the dinner and then we'll go right into the interview with Richard Morrisroe.)