

MISS TRACY & MISS RAYMOND

January 18, 1966

KEENE, NEW HAMPSHIRE

He was a brilliant student and a deep thinker. I think he was really above the ordinary little duties of the school, and I'm sure that he never liked clock time. He used to come up to call on me after he'd gone away in college, and he talked about going to military school. He could analyze himself well enough to know that that was what he should do. Going to military school was the last type of school to which I would expect him to go, because he just wasn't in my estimation much of the type to go to a military school. But he knew himself well enough to know that he felt he needed the discipline because, as I said before, he just wasn't interested in clock time. I think he was above it.

S: This is quite important. Did he ever talk to you about this?

Yes. He told me. He felt he needed it.

S: Because you are the first person, and I've asked many people this question, as to why Jon went to VMI.

He told me that too. But I was incredulous because he was so gentle and courteous and didn't like to be regimented. I don't think hours meant much. He was late I remember. So, I was startled and asked him because from his sophomore year--and that's when I had him in class--he was deeply interested in religion.

and planning at that time to go on to that. And it was such a shock to discover that instead of going into the ministry he was headed for a military academy, but he said, "I've got to learn how to discipline myself. I think that's the way to do it." And he made a remarkable record there, didn't he? Valedictorian in his class? Yes, he could, have done it in high school. Things came so easily to him that he didn't exert in the things he didn't need to have.

No. So many of the assignments seemed like busy work to him probably.

S: I've wondered why his VMI record shapes up so much better than his high school record?

Well, he had a goal and a definite purpose for being there. In high school, I imagine, he was just biding his time. He enjoyed writing and acting and music. So, he made the most of all those.

I remember his friendliness with the teachers. He was just as natural with adults as well as with his own age group. My route home and his were more or less parallel, so we used to meet sometimes on the way. He would always join me and take whatever packages I had and walk home and really seemed just as sincerely happy to be with me as he would to be with any of his younger friends when he was with others. When he came back

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and had friends with him, he'd always stop and introduce them to us. Many younger people simply would not...keep right on going. Jon seemed to be genuinely friendly.

It seems as though he should go around that corner now. I think of it many times when I sit by the kitchen window and look out. It just seems as though he should be going carrying packages for his mother.

S: Was he a frustrating student to have in school? I mean, because he did get so involved in so many other things? That he didn't academically perform as well as he might have?

I think he did perform well in English. I can't imagine anything that he wouldn't be a master of in English. I don't know what he would do in science or math or anything of that kind. But he had a natural gift in English, and if he didn't study a bit, he would be able to have ideas and express them much much better than anyone else would. I think the others were annoyed to think they'd worked so hard and compared so poorly in some ways.

S: What kinds of things did he read? Or what kinds of things did he write about and talk about in class? Was he more or less issue centered? Did he raise questions in depth at all at this time?

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I didn't notice then because...It would have put him above the others in the class and he was always one of them. I don't think he ever wanted anyone to look up to him as being superior.

S: Was he viewed by his peers as being part of the in-group or was he sort of looked on as somebody different?

I think his manner was the same with his own age group. I think they expected courtesy from him that would be surprising perhaps in somebody else. I think they had great respect for him.

S: In other words, when they chose him as 'most courteous' that wasn't with sort of a sneer?

Oh no! They really used good judgment...once they choose...They meant it well, I'm pretty sure. But, knowing Jon, that was instinctive for him to be thoughtful and courteous to everyone. It wasn't an affectation to impress anyone. And I think they sensed that too.

S: Did it surprise you that Jon went to Selma?

I think it was consistent with his character especially since I heard indirectly...He once said to one of his teachers that he wished that he had been living at the time of the Crusades.

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S: That's very interesting. Now that's the kind of thing I need to know.

So it all flows right along...You realize it when you read that story that he wrote.....

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S: He used to drop by and chat with you, I understand...you'd have tea together. Do you remember any of the things you talked about? Did he ever talk to you about Selma before? About the civil rights movement or about the ministry?

I didn't see him after he went down there...just in Boston one time with his mother and some friends...I think one of our last conversations was about death...I don't know how we got on that subject.....I really don't remember very well. Just death and funerals in general...This might have been three years ago. Yes, it did strike me as an odd conversation. I wondered what in the world are we talking about this for..... I think he thought that funerals should be changed. I don't know whether he was just listening to what I was saying or really believed it too but...

I didn't ever know him so intimately. I think Ruth perhaps knew him that way better because he did drop in. I met him more casually. We've both seen him growing up from a little boy, and we both think of all that his life might have amounted to



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and we try to think that something is accomplished by his death, and we don't know what or why. Of course, nobody does. Did he feel that his death was coming from his experience in the South?

S: Well, he was very aware of the dangers. He had been shot at a couple of times. He said he could always outrun the bullet....