

L: Can you just give me a test, test, John?

Tillson: Testing, one, two, three, four, testing.

L: Perfect levels.

Tillson: (coughs)

L: So, um, let me just run this in a little ways, to get of the black. (camera runs) OK-- OK, let's see, want to think back, to last summer, that portion of the interview, when, um, when we talked about how you met Jonathan. Just that part.

John Tillson: When was he killed? What month?

Larry: He died at the end of August of 65, it was August 20th. He was arrested on August 14th. And then, killed on the 20th.

John: So this would have been spring of 65.

L: When you were--it must have been when he came back, in March, and he came to see you about funding, I guess.

John: Well, Bishop Lichtenburger sent him to me.

L: That's right.

John: And ah, I controlled a fund that Lichtenburger could --

L: You just met him that one time, then.

John: That's the only time I laid eyes on him.

L: You spent about an hour talking with him.

John: Oh, at least two. I would think, Some poor devil, I think it was Judy, was sitting out in the car, but I discovered that afterwards.

L: Oh, God. I think she did a lot of sitting out in cars.

John: But, you know, we just hit it off and I was fascinated by him, and --

L: Maybe you could just talk about that, and not --and don't be intimidated by any of this, I've got plenty of film, the grant's paying for it, so just, feel --I don't want you to--

J: Are you going to ask questions, or am I just going to recite all this?

L: Well, only if I feel you have to get back on the track, but, it's so broad, I just want to know more about what your impression was of Jonathan when you met him, what brought him to you, did he ask for money, was he pushy, was he, you know, did he have a mission, was he --what was your impression of him, you know. That's all. So, is that all right?

John: Yep.

L: OK. Make sure everything's all right.

J: What was the year of the march on Montgomery?

L: That was of March--14th, 1965. The Selma to Montgomery march was in that same year.

J: Cause I went on that, but I wonder why I didn't see him there. He would have been alive then.

L: You went to that, that's right.

J: Yeah. Took two of the kids with me.

L: So you went down after Bloody Sunday, after they finally allowed the march to --

J: Yeah, I picked them up--thousands of people at that Roman Convent outside of Montgomery.

L: You flew to Atlanta?

J: No, we flew to Montgomery. Two chartered planes. Do gooders, from Boston.

L: Not just EDS people.

J: Oh, no--I wasn't even connected with EDS then. I was treasurer of the diocese.

L: Oh, you were treasurer of the diocese.

J: Yeah.

L: Then, you didn't really have a connection with the school.

J: Well, except, you know, it was--

L: Nothing's running, I'm just thinking --so then how come?-- Jonathan didn't get ETS money, then.

J: All the seminary allowed them to do --see, Coburn was on Sabbatical, he was in England. And, the acting Dean--

L: I'll turn this off. (tape recorder pauses)

J: ---chartered these two planes.

L: Did they ah, -- and they were interested.

J: The money poured in. I was oversubscribed by the next morning, and I said, it had to be done in a hurry, we didn't have time to--the money--people walked in to Joy Street from the streets of Boston. One woman that I had known at Christchurch Cambridge, she was a divorcee, with two little kids, having a hell of a struggle, and she came in with tears in her eyes, and gave me enough money to buy one ticket, and explained she couldn't leave her job to go, but she wanted somebody to go in her place.

L The desire to be involved must have been amazing.

T: I was able to take two of our three sons, the middle and the youngest one, who were home, I took them with me.

L: I thought you took Bill, I thought you mentioned that.

T: Took Bill, and Chris. And, um, we flew down, --

L: When Jonathan was on that march, part of that march--

T: Yeah, he was on the early part, and I'm sure he may have been on the final day, but, you know, (clock chimes), there were literally tens of thousands of people, finally.

L: So there'd be no way that you would know him, at that point.

T: No. I think I probably hadn't met him, by that time. I met him later. And, then, the only contact I had with Jonathan was that I got a phone call from Bishop Lichtenburger, who was the retired, presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church, and was a visiting scholar in residence at the seminary in Cambridge, ETS. And he knew Jonathan, he knew what he was doing, he believed in what he was doing, and he had access to some funds that I was the signatory of. And he called me, and he said, "I want you to give a hundred dollars out of that fund to a young man that I'm sending in named Jonathan Daniels." And so he was duly announced, and in he came and sat down, --

L: Let me run it from here, is that all right?

Tillson: Yep.

L: OK.

T: We haven't been doing anything so far, except talking.

L: That's right. I'm just going to--(BEEP BEEP)

T: You want me to pick it up where I left it, or start--



JOHN TILSON

JAN '91

SYNCL

INTERVIEW

L: Well, who don't you start again with, ah--

T: Lichtenburger calling?

L:--the call to get the one hundred dollars.

T: OK.

L: You can just kind of look at me, which is fine.

T: You ready?

L: Yep, I'm all set.

T: OK. Ah, in the spring of 1965, I was treasurer and business manager of the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts, with offices on Joy Street, in Boston. And I got a call from Bishop Lichtenburger, who was the retired Bishop, presiding Bishop, of Episcopal Church, and had been made a visiting scholar in residence, at ETS, the Episcopal Seminary in Cambridge. He knew Jonathan Daniels, and he also had access to a fund, he could designate the spending of a fund that I kept in my office. And he called and he said, "I'm sending a young man in to see you, and I want you to give him a check for a hundred dollars." Or two hundred dollars, I've forgotten the amount. And, in due time this young man came in, introduced himself, and I said yes, I have the check for you, sit down, let's talk. And two hours later, we had talked it all through, unbeknownst to me, somebody was waiting for him on Joy Street, in a car, probably Judy Upham, and -- we talked about what he did, who he was, where he came from, my wife had certain ties to Keene New Hampshire, so that was a mutual point of interest; and then I was just fascinated by what motivated those kids, what he was doing, the people he worked with, the people he met. He was quite critical about the pious members of the civil rights movement, who want to do a lot of pious praying and, and, prayer groups and hand-holding, but really didn't want to do much to help the black people. He was interested in helping the kids; he was interested in getting people registered to vote; he was scared to death most of the time, he was quite frank about admitting that. And, we must have talked for at least two hours, and I -- he was leaving that night or the next day to drive back. And I gave him a check of my own, ah, no I guess I sent it to him later. He got it somehow, because I do know that I was told when they took the clothes off the body, that my check was in his pocket, uncashed. And, I assumed that we would see each other again, and I can't honestly tell you whether our meeting was before or after the end of the march on Montgomery, but even if it was, there's no way we could have found anybody in that haystack of people. But the next contact I had--well, I went home that night to Francis, and I said, I probably was late getting home, and I said I met a real live one today. Because, I believe in the social Gospel, I was active in the halcyon days of the Church, when the Church--there were no holds barred. It wasn't ashamed, it wasn't being second-guessed, and --that is the Church and the faith that I believed in and frankly don't think it exists today.

L: We can cut at that point. We can always do a take, we can let things go and , we have plenty of film, if there's

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anything else you want to say, or we can just chat for a few more minutes, if you want, because I know we went through this last year. That was good, the part about Jonathan is great. I think we can use that. I mean, because there's a man named Colonel Roth at VMI who said when Jonathan drove through on his last time to go to Selma, he said kind of the same thing, he said, I believe in the Christian religion, he said, and Roth said, and Jon looked at me and said, all of it. And that's what you said. And the guy, had this very clear idea of what he wanted to do.

T: Now, the only other involvement, you've got that on tape, there's no point in doing it again, is the phone calls -- that they discovered who he was through me, and all that, but -- (end of tape)