

- to Miss Mary Elizabeth Macnaughtan
Washington Square
Walpole, New Hampshire
- Postmarked May 1, 1:00 p.m., 1965, Selma, Alabama

313-E G. W. C.
Selma, Alabama
May 1, 1965

[illegible]

Judy and I are now beginning to panic over papers and exams, so hopefully more of our time will be spent on same. Sure have gummed up the works academically! I hope we can get everything done. I may ask for an extension on one of my papers and do it the first week of June. We'll be arriving back in Boston, by the way, either the night of the eighteenth or the afternoon of the following day. Mum will already be in Boston for a checkup out in Jamaica. Suppose you could drive down to meet us after school on the nineteenth? When you see Mum you could discuss the details. I'm afraid that I won't be able to make it to Keene until after exams, what with schoolwork, inevitable talks, field work reports, etc. And I hate to wait that long to see you! Hope we can arrange something.

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Shall delay for the moment the letter about this summer. I've been too busy to check on a place for you to stay, though I know in advance that there won't be any difficulty. I assume you will be invited (after I've checked) to live right across the lawn from me in the project, with a delightful family whom I like very much. They would feed you/us and care for you like a member of the family, I know (having already been a grateful recipient of their hospitality). Technically, I haven't made my own decision -- but the chances are about a thousand to one that I'll decide to come back. ESCRU wants me to come back, and I'm so well acclimated by now that it seems a shame to throw it all away. We would definitely be involved in the following: keeping St. Paul's integrated, talking informally with members of the white power structure whom I've encountered at or through St. Paul's (doctors, lawyers, judges, the rector, etc.), relating with kids and adults here in the Negro community (for instance, I have been working some with my family, specifically on their marital difficulties, the father's alcoholism, etc.), and just constituting the presence of the Church in the social revolution which is gathering strength here. Other potential activities might include tutoring both kids and adults in basic reading & writing skills, demonstrating (that's almost inevitable once in a while: and you should have prepared in advance, both physically and spiritually, for the possibility of teargas, arrest, and I suppose even for death, though that's a bit unlikely). It is true abstractly (as I see it) that no white outsider here is entirely safe -- and I feel very strongly that one should make a realistic estimate of what that means. I say this because I decided a long time ago that the Holy Spirit had brought me here, that I believe very firmly in the Gospel and its faith, that my life is not my own but His -- which means that before anything else I am a servant of Christ, however sinful I may also be -- and that consequently the possibility of death, whether immediate or remote, cannot be a deciding factor for me. I can't decide all that for you -- only you, on your own knees and out of the context of your own commitment to the Lord and His Kingdom, can make the "estimate" for yourself. You will find people here who are not Christians or even theists, who have dealt with the question of danger on other grounds. I have no other grounds, so can recommend only these. If you come, we'll be as inseparable as you like -- that has been true even for Judy, who is in no way your competitor! So it will be doubly true for you. You will surely find things, situations, decisions, and people here that you wouldn't like anywhere. That has been very true for me. You will also find wonderful work to be done and a situation in which (I assume from my own experience) you will grow in holiness and devotion to His service, in social consciousness, and in your own vision of what life will be for you. Offhand, I can't think of a more productive way for you or for any college student (or any Christian!) to spend

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a summer. Of course there are more selfish motives for wanting you here to work with me! The Alabama moon is all it's cracked up to be. And you would be so lovely in it. I'm lonely for you. But I'd still love you if you don't come -- and break my neck to be with you at the end of the summer. So I hope your decision covers the ground it should. (I'll go ahead and say it: I'll be tickled to death if you come. More happy than I can tell you.)

Suppose I should run -- want to get this into the mail and then pick up some food at the Catholic mission (the family shelves are getting pretty bare). And then maybe some studying!

With so much love,

Handwritten at bottom of page: Jon

More pictures will appear as copies come back. Hope you like. I love you.

Handwritten in margin of last page:

Also: rustling up people who haven't registered to vote yet. Perhaps also helping to administer food and clothing sent from the North. There are any number of programs that will be available (recreation, etc.) and you might want to work independently some of the time - for instance if you don't feel like picketing!

Handwritten on back of last page:

Oh --P.S! We would have Judy's VW for the summer - whe will be in St. Louis for most of the summer. The only difficulty there is that we might have to drive her to St. Louis the first week of June. Anyway, we've got wheels, which will remain indispensable. More about this later - schedule, etc.

XOX JMD

Envelope - from 118-C G.W.C. Homes
Selma, Alabama

- to Miss Mary Elizabeth Macnaughtan
Washington Square
Walpole, New Hampshire

- Postmarked March 29, 2:00 p.m., 1965
Selma, Alabama

Letter

Saturday

Dear One,

I miss you so very much. I feel as if we were ten thousand miles apart, and I am miserable about it. There is so much I want to say to you -- and all of it with my arms around you in the biggest bearhug you ever got. When I think about you (which I do often) I wonder why in the world I'm here. The urge comes very often to climb into the car and drive without stopping until I reach a very dear door in Walpole, New Hampshire! Mary, I hope you understand. I am reminded of Lovelace's line which goes (approximately?) "I could not love you so,/ Loved I not honor more." "Honor" is not precisely what I have in mind. In a strange way, this beloved community within the negro compound have become my people -- much as, in a very special way, you, dear Mary, are my people. I drove every mile away from you with anguished longing for you. Yet something had happened to me in Selma which meant I had to come back. I could not stand by in benevolent dispassion any longer without compromising everything I know and love and value. The imperative was too clear, the stakes were too high, my own identity was called too nakedly into question. I realize that the vision came to me as an individual person -- it is not something which can be spelled out in a policy for everybody I know. But I had been blinded by what I saw here (and everywhere), and the road to Damascus led, for me, back here. A very dear friend of mine in Cambridge, the chaplain to Episcopalians at Harvard and Racliffe, said, "You must go, Jon, wherever you find your Jerusalem. Yours and mine may not be the same. But wherever yours is, there you must go." Another friend, the beloved New Testament professor I've told you about, who at first was against our coming back, told one of his classes the day before we left: "When the call comes, you have to drop what you're doing and go. Sometimes the call comes at the least convenient moment you can imagine. But whenever it comes, you must go." Through all the bitter moments of doubt since I left (and they have been many) those words shine with untarnished brilliance. Though I have many misgivings, though

Letter to Miss Mary Elizabeth Macnaughtan
Postmarked March 29, 1965
Letter dated Saturday

at the moment I can't imagine that I have anything to give of any significance, I know with heart, mind and soul that the Holy Spirit has picked me up by the scruff of the neck. When that happened, my life could not remain the same. Though I cannot guess precisely where I am being driven, I have the haunting feeling again and again that I am flying with the mightiest Wind in the world at my back. I hope you understand what I'm trying to say. I'm not entirely sure that I understand myself.

And I hope something else, very, very much: I hope that the price for obedience to my funny call does not have to include losing you. That would be a very great price. Though I would understand if you are angry with me -- I think that probably, much against my will, I should be very angry with you if you were here and I at home (out of frustrated disappointment, if nothing worse) -- I hope against hope that you will forgive me. I know that this is not fair to you. But dear one, I hope. Your love is very beautiful to me, and it is more precious that I can tell you. A funny thing happened to me while I was back at school. I had returned on fire (partly, perhaps, because I had a raging fever?), and I was so obsessed with my mission that I could not really see anything else -- as Harve told me with a great deal of bitterness. Then your birthday card came, and everything cracked for a moment. I wanted so terribly to run to you. You still haunt me. I have all your letters here, and when I can muster the guts I shall read them through again. It will be a wonderful hour and a very sad one. Oh Mary, Mary, I am so lonely for you. I can't wait for the day when I shall see you.

Handwritten:

Sunday

Am going to cut this short so I can get it into the mail - and your dear hands. Will save the voluminous news I had planned - have got to accompany a priest friend to Montgomery and back so that he won't have to go alone (which is not a good idea). But have to tell you: the local Episcopal Church welcomed our mixed group of fifteen or so this morning. Glory to God in the highest! What a change in three weeks!

More soon. I hope you are all better - have worried about you - notwithstanding various chores here.

With so much love, Jon

Envelope - from 118-C G.W.C. Homes
Selma, Alabama

- to Miss Mary Elizabeth Macnaughtan
Washington Square
Walpole, New Hampshire

- postmarked April 12, 1:00 p.m., 1965, Selma, Alabama

Letter

Monday

Dearest Mary,

I'm so glad to get your dear letters. Bored? Fat chance, dear one. I guess you could write gibberish, and I'd still treasure your letters. Whatever you're doing and thinking, I care about. So there. Hope the feeling is mutual!

Relieved to know that you're better. I had been afraid that your bug might develop into another long siege -- which would be even harder to take with so darn many miles between us. Glad you're becoming a skier -- I'm already hatching dreams for next winter. Wish I could be going with you now, though. And wish I could see your freckles! Please multiply the X's at the bottom of the page by their number. Which I hope is about a million. I'll keep the pledge when I see you...

We are slowly getting into motion here. Communication amongst us is improving, and some sort of organization is emerging. Of course Dr. King's outfit is still calling the shots -- but Atlanta's a long way off. He, by the way, is one of the greatest men I've ever laid eyes on. I pray he doesn't get bumped off -- the whole country needs him. The snipers are still doing their dirty work -- a hacked up black body was found today in a nearby county. One of my good friends here, an Episcopal priest from L.A. -- and an activists if I ever saw one -- got two threats on his life today from members of the sheriff's posse. I wonder how long the southern white will get away with rule by

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terror. Sometimes I think this place isn't even civilized. Sure is strange country -- sort of like being deep within enemy lines.

Plans for the future here (in our somewhat independent organization, which is nevertheless led by a member of the SCLC staff) include steps toward improving hygiene (exterminating the army of cock-roaches!) in the negro federal project, a birth control project, continuing negotiation with members of the white power structure (Judy and I have made a start, even if we don't think much has happened), the nurture of an indigenous protest movement at all-negro Selma University. Etc, etc.

Next Monday

Oh dear (my dear), I've -- obviously -- gotten sidetracked. We got involved in the Camden ruckus (managed to get myself amply teargassed leading a march there last Wednesday), which kept us busy through last Friday. The civil authorities were very anxious, however, to avoid what began increasingly to look like the beginnings of another Selma, so Friday they were most cooperative toward our protest march on city hall.

Sunday we had one heck of a time getting into early Communion at St. Paul's with our black kiddoes. They seem to be getting used to our presence at Morning Prayer, but evidently the thought of contaminating their holy cup is just too much for them. Anyway, they called the cops on us and refused to let us into the church -- until the rector summoned the guts to announce that even if

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it meant his job, they had to admit us. We were made to sit in the back, and we had to wait until last. But we went to Palm Sunday Communion, by golly! When we went back later for Morning Prayer with the batch of kids who hadn't wanted to go to Holy Communion, a man going into Church with us greeted us with "You god-damned scum...." The rector looked as if somebody had been cussing him out ever since we'd left the early service, but he was friendly afterwards and actually asked me to wait and talk with him. Judy and I (who are now the contacts for John Morris of ESCRU in Atlanta) have agreed not to ruin their Easter by bringing the kids next Sunday. I feel badly about running the risk of disappointing the kids, but agree with my superiors that this concession may be an important guarantee of our good will. So Judy and I will go alone to an early service -- I'm preaching at our family's negro Methodist Church later in the morning.

This afternoon Judy and I had a most fruitful talk with a white doctor and his wife (who are communicants at St. Paul's). They actually invited us into their home and fed us cokes and cookies! They were very gracious, if not quite so liberal as they think. They don't go for my hero Dr. King at all, deplore the boycott, and are generally suspicious of the movement. But we each tried, I think, to listen to one another with something like compassionate understanding. I suspect that love will have to be crucified many times before the battle is over, so I may as well get used to the frustration. There are still moments when I'd like to get a high-powered rifle and take to the woods, but more and more

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Letter Dated Monday

strongly I am beginning to feel that ultimately the revolution to which I am committed is the way of the Cross. Something in me doesn't like insisting that my black brothers walk it any longer, yet I must remain faithful to the One Who above all others is my Leader. And I am convinced that in the long run the "strategy of love" is the only one that will bring real health and reconciliation into this mess. I'm glad that Dr. King walks the same road (which he does, however forceful he sometimes must be). Yet I sure understand when negroes get impatient with "non-violence." "How long, O Lord, how long?"

You should see me in my seminarian's collar and dungaree suit! -- I look like a jailbird from way back. With my dark suit, however, I must say I look most proper. Will have to send you some pictures when I get them developed. There ought to be some wonderful ones of our kids. I bought a super-duper camera, by the way, cartridge-loading, automatic film advance (a tiny spring motor), electric eye, and a distance rangefinder. It cost a small fortune, but it's very fast and very accurate. We got it primarily to record violence if and when it occurs (when we're not the recipients, that is). But it's going to be fun to have good pictures of our friends and various bits of local color.

Haven't done a cussed lick of school-work in ages. Got to be about it! How are you faring in that department?

I miss you so much. And love you so much. How I long to see you. ~~More soon!~~
More soon.

Handwritten: xxxxx With love and prayers,xxxxx
Jon
Best to your folks.

Handwritten:

P.S. Paid \$32 today for going more than 15 mi. an hour through a dirtroad intersection!