

MRS. THERESA P. ROBERTS

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Roberts: They didn't do it every year, but they did it frequently enough so that it was fun.

S: Those are very nice.

Roberts: Just beginning to look like the Jon you knew. When did you meet Jon?

S: I met Jon two years ago in September just after arrived in Cambridge. Jon and I had a mutual figure in our lives, a person who influenced both of us greatly, and this person put us in touch with one another as soon as I got into Cambridge. Because of this particular person, we moved very quickly in our relationship...became very deep, very close, and we saw each other a great deal until Selma, and then I didn't see him as often until I was down in Montgomery. And then I saw him several times when he came back. Then I didn't see him after June because I went away.

Roberts: I know that Connie has said that he admired you very much and was so happy to have met you and gotten to know you and all so that's good. Because, two very worthwhile people getting together is a real treat. But Jon had a faculty for friendship and I am sure that you do too. But I think that's always been one of Jon's strong points, his faculty for friendship. His

interest in people. Of course, he comes by it rightly enough. His family, both his father and mother, are the same type, so you could hardly expect him to be anything but interested in people.

S: As you think about Jon, can you think of any things that sort of come back?

Roberts: No. Since I talked to you yesterday, I thought well, now, there must be things about Jon, but Jon is just one of those people that is part of your life, and you can't imagine not having him around. He isn't God, and he couldn't be God. I don't know how things are with you, but people don't seem to leave very much just because they've departed, and you don't expect them to come home. They don't seem to be particularly gone, and I don't think Jon seems particularly gone to me. I think his personality is far too strong. But I think it's so unfortunate for our world that Jon had to go so soon, because it seems as if he couldn't possibly have accomplished all the things we would have wanted him to do for us, but there it is. Of course, being the older generation and being his mother's friend and not Jon's first in his generation, why we probably see it a little differently/ But knowing Jon ever since he was born, it's always been fun having him around, and it's certainly been fun watching him grow up, because we don't always see children making as much of their talents as Jon did.

On the other hand, he was so undecided for so many years that you wondered if he would really be able to find just the one thing that was going to bring out all of his capacities most. And I think he finally had reached that point. And he had just gotten to the point where he could give so much. And, of course, I have marveled ever since August that in twenty-six short years he could have reached out so far as he had. It isn't every boy at twenty-six that would have carried the impact that Jon has done, and that I think is remarkable. Jon, as a little boy, wasn't very different from other little boys growing up. I don't know how many other people stress that point. He went to camp with the boys. He was just as much one of the boys as any of them. He was never one to say, "Well, we shouldn't do that." He was right up coming with all the other boys. I'm sure you know as well as I do that Jon was always ready for what was under foot. Of course, there wasn't anything deadly wrong in it. I don't think he'd ever expect--try to make himself a burden on society. On the other hand, he was always ready for fun wherever he found it. He wasn't going to hurt someone else. And I think of Jon, because I was librarian in the high school for years--Jon was eight years younger than my son. I don't know if he ever happened to mention him or not, They always enjoyed each other. I guess they knew each other as well as they did because we were family friends. I think with eight years difference they probably wouldnt have gotten to know each other--if it hadn't been that the families got together so much. But

they always enjoyed each other. I think of Jon home on vacation and coming down to just sit and listen to records with Alan. I don't know where Jon got his deep interest in good music. I know pretty much where Alan got his. But, they both had it, and they enjoyed just listening to records. I know you can believe that of Jon. He enjoyed good music. And I know, it was always a joke to me, when my son was in high school he wasn't always as respectful of my gray hairs perhaps as sons maybe should be, but my name is Theresa and I'm called Terry. So, my darling son started to call me Tess, and I thought that was a terrible name. I didn't like it. I said, "Don't you call me that. Don't you call me that where anyone else can hear it." So he would get out in the middle of the street with a whole crowd of boys and step out and say, "Hi, Tess." And I said, "Oh, you brute you." So, Jon, of course, picked it up right away. And he'd poke his head in the library and say, "Hi, Tess." It wouldn't hurt anybody. And, of course, by now it's only my friends--my family and my very close friends--that call me Tess. So, by now I treasure the name. I did not treasure it at that time. Jon was definitely out for as good a time as anybody else. He was like all the other boys--maybe not all the other boys--but like so many boys today that have plenty of capacity and they go out of their way not to use it until something motivates them to get going and get on the ball. And Jon wasn't any different than the rest of them that way. I never saw him working his heart out in high



school. He did later but not during high school years. It was more fun than it was work. I know my son was that way, and I've seen thousands of other boys. My son--well, he flunked two subjects senior year and graduated cum laude from college because he went because he wanted to. So, it wasn't because he couldn't. I think many boys come along the same way. Not all boys. I don't know whether you did, but you must have known boys who did...that dawdled their time away through high school and then--when they really know what they want--they go and get it. But, as I said to you over the phone, Jon is just part of life. I just can't think of really incidents.

S: Well, you were librarian at the school, weren't you? What kinds of things did Jon read? Or did he read?

Roberts: Oh, he read. That's something he always enjoyed. I don't seem to remember what he read particularly. I think he was browsing and taking in everything. As far as I remember, I don't remember that he was following any particular bent then that I know about. I know later he was so torn out whether to become a doctor or a minister. He really gave it a lot of thought before he settled for his final choice, as you must know. He was all set to be a doctor for quite awhile. But, in his high school years--later high schools--he was going to be a minister. That was all settled for many years. Then he decided to be a doctor. I know we had some conversations on that, and I said,

"But Jon, you've never liked science; you've never been strong in science." But he said he could do it well enough, and he wanted to be a doctor; he'd decided. And you know that wasn't the final outcome.

S: Do you think that his father's influence perhaps was one of the factors that influenced his thinking about medicine?

Roberts: Oh, I'm sure it must have, because his father was such a fine person. I'm sure both of the children would have wanted to live up to him and follow him and idealize him and so forth. On the other hand, I'm sure that it was the quality of helping people, being with people, being of service to people. And, whatever he had done, I'm sure that that would have entered into it. Because it was people he was interested in. And, as he was choosing his profession, it was a choice of helping people.

S: Even in his high school years he was interested in helping people?

Roberts: Yes. He always was out to help the underdog. If he saw any real inequality in high school years, he would do what he could to straighten things out.

S: You mean in terms of the racial situation?

Roberts: We didn't have terms of racial situation here particularly.

S: What did you mean by inequality?

Roberts: Well, if some kid was not getting--if he would see that something was going wrong with somebody else, if there were something to do to help them out, he would do it. As I say, I can't remember any specific incidents. But if he felt that some kid was getting a raw deal, he would, I'm sure, be one of those to pitch in and try to straighten it out...square it out. Keene is a city of 'lost boundries' if you know that book, and yet, actually we have so little racial problem that that's why Lost Boundries could be written here, because we think nothing of it. We have a few families here. I suppose actually if we got into the racial question, it's no different than any other place. And I've heard it said that the educated people could manage to get along whether they're black or white. It's the uneducated people that make the trouble. That tends to be true here, I think, because I have known of people of the colored race who've been very unhappy in the treatment they have received, and they have received it from the people who are not the thinking people. But there was never a problem like that in school. But I'm sure if there had been a poor child or a child that didn't have enough to get along with so that this put him in an unequal position, Jon would be the first to have helped out. I wish I could think of some incidents...

S: Well, you had a lot of conversations with Jon. Do you



remember just the nature of the subjects that you talked about? Did you--did he ever talk to you about the ministry, the profession, or about his religious interests, or...?

Roberts: Well, I don't seem to remember any long involved conversations on this. I don't think that I ever had any great influence on him that way. But when I knew what was going on I would ask him about it, and he would talk about it. I remonstrated a little bit about medicine, because it seemed to me that he had been interested in the ministry for so long that now all of a sudden to work so hard to become a medical man where science had never been a strong point with him would seem to be a difficulty that would be too bad for him. On the other hand, he was determined at that time to do it, but obviously he didn't get very far because he got into the Danforth Fellowship and he was all set to do college work. I know that he enjoyed all these things he did. He was just as sincere in making it his final goal as he was when he finally went to E.T.S. And that's why it is obvious he did quite a bit of strong thinking. I imagine that he talked perhaps more to Alan than he did to me.

S: Why did he go to VMI? I mean this is pretty much of a scientific school, VMI.

Roberts: I'm sure Connie must have told you why he did. He went because he thought he needed the discipline.



S: That's all I have heard. It seems that that to be the only reason you choose a school seems odd to me.

Roberts: Well, I don't know why he couldn't have gone to Norwich as well as VMI if he felt that way. I don't really know. I was kind of surprised when he selected VMI....

S: It has very little reputation in humanities. It is a good engineering school.

Roberts: But I do know that that's the one thing that one heard. And, of course, Jon from the year 'one' was always late. I don't think he ever quite got over it, but I think he felt that this business of VMI was perhaps getting--would perk him up. Certainly, if he didn't feel strongly about it somehow that way, he wouldn't stay, because it was pretty rugged. And he was not too happy. And yet he stayed of his own choice. No one insisted he stay. I can only feel that he felt that there was something to this self-discipline deal.

S: oh, there is. There is something to it.

Roberts: I think he made it very hard for himself. But, if it did him some good, that's good. But I can't imagine that Jon wouldn't have come up smiling and with a lot of influence if he had never gotten it through there. But who knows. We don't any of us know what directs our steps, and maybe he needed to get that

far South to make the step that he made. And I'm sure that Jon's life in Selma had more impact than almost anything that has happened down there.

S: Yes. Did--were you surprised when you heard that Jon had gone to Selma the first time?

Roberts: Well, no, not in a way, because one would know that Jon would want to be where things weren't working for people, and he would want to help out wherever he felt that there was something he needed to do. I was with him a little bit that night, but he had obviously made up his mind, and nobody was likely to change it. I was with Connie the night he came--not the night he came back from Selma--I remember that time too--but I went down with her--where had he been?

S: He had been to the Youth Conference.

Roberts: Oh, yes. And we went down and was there and Judy was there. We had a long talk about whether he felt he must go. It seemed to me it would--it was pretty hard on Connie and Jon both, their being so far apart in their wishes. He felt he had to go, and she could just hardly stand to have him go. But I was wishing he could finish things up first and then start crusading, but he couldn't see it that way, and he had obviously had done his thinking and made his decisions before we ever got there, and there is not much point in talking about things after

that. He did try awfully hard to ease it as much as he could for his mother, but there wasn't too much to ease things off with. And, obviously, she had a good right to worry.

S: Why weren't you surprised when you heard that he was going down the first time? Did this seem to be in character as far as you were concerned?

Roberts: Well, yes. Jon had been quite strong about what he wanted when he wanted it. He's been very positive about doing what he felt was the thing he needed to do. He'd gone to VMI; he'd won his Danforth and he'd gone down there and he'd worked at it. Of course, he'd worked hard enough at it, but he was never quite caught up in it, and he was always racing to catch up all the way through. But he did it, and he kept plugging at it. The last time he was up before that, I just didn't even see him because he said he had to get this paper done before he went back. And obviously, if you went up to try to see him or invited him out for supper, you were just getting into his time that he needed so badly to finish up something. He hadn't finished in time. Then, he'd made up his mind right along all the way through, so that when he said he was going I figured that this is something he felt he must do. I wasn't surprised when I heard he was going to do it, just because, if he heard the call and was going to go, I was sure he would go.



S: Did Harve and Judy get involved in that conversation?

Roberts: Not too much. We were all kind of wishing...I think we all wished we could think up something that would carry some weight, but there wasn't too much that seemed to carry any weight. It was obvious he had made up his mind and that was it. You knew that to say, "You might get hurt, Jon," wouldn't do any good.

S: Well, he knew that anyway.

Roberts: He said he knew that all the way through. I can't help thinking that if he had gone a little slower, he could have been a second Peter Marshall and done so much more for so many more eventually. On the other hand, at this particular time, this apparently was what was needed, and you can't argue with an accomplished fact.

S: No. And you can't argue with Jon Daniels. That is, if he hadn't gone back to Selma, he wouldn't have been being himself.

Roberts: No, that's true. If he hadn't gone back to Selma, he would never have forgiven himself, because he would always have felt that it was a mistake that he'd made.

S: I think Jon went back primarily because he had made friends. That he felt he had a trust.

Roberts: Well, he went back because he felt that that was his place. He felt that his friends needed him and when he went the first time, that was something else again. It just seems to me that to go way off to Selma and to hope to keep up with his work and graduate when he should and get all the things that he should out of his career at E.T.S., that he was sacrificing a lot of that even if he had done enough out of the books to pass the exams. He was sacrificing the give and take with minds that could be of so much use to him that he couldn't ever get again. And that is one reason I didn't want him to go to Selma--to see him get out of that atmosphere so soon when he wasn't ever going to get back into it once he'd gone. I mean, you all keep a religious spirit and you keep your mind and hearts open, but you are not in the atmosphere of the seminary, and you don't have the contacts with so many splendid men again as you do while you are in those years. And I hated to see him missing that. That's one of the things I thought it was too bad for him to go to Selma just then. It seemed to me he could have gone later. But it didn't work; it didn't take; nothing took; he went. It wasn't any great open battle or ruckus or anything, but Connie and I were both old enough that we hated to see him going off then when school was there--so much for him to get out of school.

S: Was it at your house that Connie was when she got word?

You got the word, didn't you?

Roberts: My daughter had been up to Hanover with her husband and they heard it on the radio coming down. And I just had nightmares thinking about what if Connie had been traveling from Lindenville or someplace all alone and had the radio on. It just gives me nightmares to think about it. It was her birthday, and I had been just too busy to do anything about it. So we did get out and go to dinner together. I asked a couple of more gals in to play bridge. I hadn't even told them it was her birthday. So we had gotten back from dinner. I guess they had tried to locate her, and they couldn't because we were at dinner. And while we started to play bridge, my daughter called up and she said, "Mother. I heard an awful thing on the radio," and told me. But, she said, "It may not be Jon, because it said something about there was a Jon Daniels in New Haven too." And I said, "That must be a mistake; it can't be." And I promptly went off to forget all about it. Then, somebody else called and said, "I heard an awful thing on the radio,"--it couldn't have been ten minutes--and I thought I can't just overlook it. And Connie was very helpful that night. She answered my phone for me...I live in the house, and the kennels are over on the other side of the yard. So, I excused myself again and went to the kennel to call my daughter and asked her to check it out,



because I thought I ought to know. I thought, "Connie will never forgive me if I just say nothing."

S: And, by this time she still didn't know?

Roberts: So, I called my daughter back and, of course, the phone rings as well in the house. I had gone to the kennel so Connie answered the phone for me. So, I said to Natalie, "Would you check it out and let me know. If there is anything in it, we had better know about it." She said, "Where will I check it out?" And I said, "Well, I don't know." I said, "Why don't you call Doc Newell; he is the editor of the paper--managing editor." And Doc, unfortunately, had gone off to the fair that night; so, he wasn't available. But Frank went down to the police station, and they had been trying to get Connie, and by the time they had talked to the police and this and that, it seemed definite enough that I felt that it was not the night to play bridge, even if it was her birthday. So I told her, and I am glad that I could. I don't think I was happy to do it, but I don't know anybody else I would rather have had do it.

S: Well, anybody else that could have done it in quite the fashion that you had.

Roberts: We've been friends a long time. And I expect that it wouldn't be easy for either of us. On the other hand, I'm sure she knew that things were not the way they should be before I

told her, although I don't think she really connected it with herself. I think she thought that I was concerned about Natalie's husband because he'd been up to Hanover. I think she thought that I was disturbed over them, until I finally did tell her, but she knew I was disturbed. I suppose she wasn't too surprised that I actually had something to say. But the whole thing is just unbelievable; because of all that had gone on before for Connie, this also must come to her.

S: Yes. It's remarkable to me how well she carries on.

Roberts: She has certainly born up under an awful lot.

S: ...really admire a person that...New England fiber...