

PART I

GENE FELCH, IV

January 18, 1966

Felch: I met Jon when we were probably in the fifth or sixth grade. He was a year behind me in school, and we were both members of a children's theater group here. One of the first things I recall about him is that I had gotten into a playful scrap with a fellow by the name of Henry Parkhurst. I guess Jon and I must have been friends prior to this. When Jon appeared on the scene, I was at the top of some steps with Henry sitting on my stomach and bouncing up and down on it, and Jon cried out, "A curse on thee, Henry Parkhurst." And perhaps it was out of character for Jon or in character for Jon. I was never quite sure, but it's something that everyone who was present remembered because of the way he said it. And I never see Henry without him saying, "A curse on meee, Henry Parkhurst." I think Jon had a certain amount of color to him always. There was something in the way he did it that made us all remember it.

I guess the next thing I remember about Jon was his being at dinner at my house one night. I don't think he could have been in more than the seventh or eighth grade. I'll tell you how you could determine just when this was: The book, The Cardinal, had come out, I don't think very long before this. And Jon had read it, and so had my mother, and it amazed her that Jon at his age had read The Cardinal. And it further amazed her that he

and she talked about it for an hour or so. And I felt pretty much out of things at the time, but they had quite a discussion about The Cardinal that night. It's a pretty big book and quite a big book for anyone Jon's age to have read. One of the things in Jon's personality that may not come out much is that he always had a little bit of mischief in his mind. It was never malicious mischief. It was always fun. A great deal of wit too. But there's no question but what Jon and I got into a share of mischief when we were in high school.

One time Jon was at the house. We were alone. This must have been again when we were in eighth grade or so maybe freshmen in high school. We were both boy scouts and had a bet as to which of us could tie the other up in the most efficient manner so as not to be able to get away. So Jon went first; tied me to one of the pillars in the basement. The phone rang. Jon went upstairs to answer the phone. It was Father Quinn who incidentally is someone else you might talk with. Jon became very friendly with Father Quinn at a later date. It was Father Quinn on the phone, and he wanted me to serve at 8:00 Mass the next morning. And Jon didn't take a message but stated that I'd call him back...I was quite 'tied up' at the moment.

I wish I could remember some of his other witticisms. Perhaps I will before we finish. You no doubt know the time that Jon was out with a couple of the boys at night after he

had presumably gone to bed...

(Story about the accident left out)

And, at that time, Father Quinn used to stop in and talk with Jon in the hospital, and they became good friends at that time and for some time afterwards. So I think he could tell you quite a bit.

S: Do you see any characteristics in Jon that announced that it would not be surprising to find him in Selma later on?

Felch: Yes and no. I certainly would not have recognized the things as being what they were at that time. Jon obviously wasn't born or wasn't always at the point mentally, intellectually, theologically, religiously...he wasn't always at this point where he was when he went to Selma. It was a growth and in every way a growth. He was always a remarkable individual...Effervescent, outgoing, a lot of fun always, bright, had a very remarkable facility with words from the time he was very young, an excellent vocabulary and he used it well, good expression in his speech, and all these interesting things to talk about. He stood out in a crowd this way. He was a nice looking boy always, always neat, held his elders always in proper respect and yet could joke with them, had always a fascination for the church. This goes back to The Cardinal. He was interested in the church at that time, and he was thinking of becoming a minister, and at that time I believe he was a member of the Congregational Church,

and I don't think he had thoughts of going beyond that. He was interested in the Roman Church at that time and perhaps talked with myself and my family more about it because we were Roman Catholic. But I'm sure that I learned more about my church from Jon than he learned about it from me. He studied not a particular church but christianity. He read a lot about the history of christianity. I think that the particular church he may have belonged to at any particular time was a vehicle, and he was always seeking the most appropriate vehicle for his christianity. But certainly the concept of christianity was foremost in his mind. It was not the church that was foremost. I think there are people in any particular church these days where perhaps the idea of christianity takes second place to the idea of the church. I find this in my own church. This was never the case with Jon. I think that the most permeating aspect of his personality was his integrity. In my life I've known only one other person whom I felt had as great integrity as Jon possessed. What I mean by this is that there were no double standards in his life. His fun, his intellectually curocity, his religion, were all tied together into a total personality. There was no evidence of any schizophrenia in Jon. I think many of us have a little of it, but he had none. So integrity is probably the first most importante..(End of Tape)

Felch: ...Religion was certainly predominant in his personality, intellectual curiosity and intellectual honesty. He had a teacher in high school I'm sure at least one year, Mrs. Collins. I had her for two. She preached intellectual honesty and intellectual curiosity always. And these were very strong characteristics in Jon. Of course he was bright but he was also full of fun. I don't know where to go from there in describing from an abstract point of view how I felt about his personality. As I said earlier, there are a few people that I knew I could sit up and talk to until 4:00 or 5:00 in the morning about an idea and Jon was certainly one. I have never known a person with whom I could speak as honestly about religion, and this would include members of my own church and include priests of my own church. And it was because of his honesty.

S: What did you do together?

Felch: I suppose a hundred different things at a hundred different times. Jon and I, I remember once right after Jon got out of high school, went to a dance over at Hampton Beach. I'd been working all day and was dead tired. I was asleep in the back seat and I woke up...We were on the New Hampshire Turnpike and Jon was passing another car at ninety miles an hour in my father's Packard. I think he had a little bit of devilry in him.

We didn't play sports. Perhaps once or twice we went bowling. Occasionally we went to a good moview If we did go

to a good movie, it inevitably resulted in going to someone's house and talking about it for two or three hours afterwards. We went swimming occasionally. Jon was a pretty good swimmer. My family at that point had a place over at Lake. We would occasionally have a party...pretty normal things. But the highlights of everything we did were these talks that would go until 4:00 or 5:00 in the morning. As I mentioned to you earlier, we would go over to the place that Tony parents had in Dublin and take a stereo set and a case of beer and a lot of good records and some steaks and spend at least a night there and sometimes a weekend. We always had to be back in time for church Sunday morning...And talk about philosophy and history and what was going on in the world and problems we were facing, mostly intellectual problems or religious problems and hash them over 'till all hours. This was a three-story building with a widow's walk on the top, and many times there wasn't a neighbor for miles around, and we would turn the stereo up full blast in the library, aim it out the library door into the yard, go up to this widow's watch up on the third story where you had a beautiful view in the moonlight and sit and talk up there and listen to Beethoven.

One night we were sitting up there and Beethoven's Fifth Symphony was on and at the end of that symphony, it builds up to what should be an ending and then breaks into a little dance, and for some reason it struck us all hilariously. Perhaps we'd

had three or four beers, and we laughed for ten minutes probably, and decided that Beethoven has played a joke on the world, which no doubt we were wrong about, but it seemed logical fun at the time.

Jon's religion, and of course this is the thing...most about him, I guess, but perhaps we remember it so much because he led such a full life in every other respect. He wasn't by any means anyone with any tendencies toward the cloister. Jon's religion changed and grew as I said before. Perhaps the biggest weakness he had was, especially as far as his religion and possible career in the clergy was concerned, that he enjoyed society...I don't know how else to put this. He enjoyed people of social rank especially when he was younger, and this would go back to late grade school, early high school. He told me many times that he would like to be a minister in a college town. He would like the intellectual stimulation of the college. He would enjoy the position of a minister. He'd like to have an old black Jaguar. He felt that this would be appropriate and yet a little sporty. He owned a Jaguar at one time, a coup, which brought him more pain I guess than joy. It was somewhat of a junker that he bought. But he always, at this time, wanted to have this position as a minister. So, in a way, he was pampering this weakness, if it was a weakness, and at the same time following his desires towards the ministry and towards the priesthood.

Then, Jon's religion weakened, and I would say this began about the time of the death of his father. I won't say that he

ever rejected it but perhaps went through a period of time when he thought of Christ not as a divine person but as a great prophet, great leader of men, great philosopher. And then, as he came back later on, and I would say this is probably during his year at Harvard as an English major, he began to think more about this and began to come back to the more traditional viewpoint. During this time, he came to a more traditional viewpoint than he had held originally. He thought truly of Christ as being one with the god-head. It was important to him. So, in his own Episcopal faith, he tended towards the higher church forms, and of course you know more about this than I do.

S: How about conflicts? Do you think he was going through any personal struggles of any kind?

Felch: Yes and no. I feel very strongly about this...integrity as being Jon's greatest virtue, strongest virtue. And, of course, anyone with a great deal of integrity is going to be more torn by an internal conflict. But I think Jon's viewpoint was balanced such that he didn't have a great many of them. At least, I wasn't aware of them...

Do you think you can remember that?

Jon went to New England Music Camp one summer and it was quite an experience. It was the following year or perhaps the second year after that Jon and I went up--I as Jon's guest--to

an alumni weekend up there. We, both my parents and his offered the use of a family car, but we insisted on one of these little English caps that you see people in old cars...and going up in a 1936 Plymouth Roadster which I had. We got up there, I don't know how...It was quite a weekend. There was a wonderful concert. We had friends both of us up there. Mr. Cook who was director of the high school band was up there. Jon thought a lot of him. We had a lot of fun. We had a wonderful concert. We left the music camp about midnight, picked up some Smith girls who were hitchhiking back to girls camp, talked with them for a couple of hours, got back to our hotel about three, and typically talked until the sun came up, slept for a couple of hours, got up, Jon went to church with me. We went to the last mass and then headed for home. My problem was when we went to head for home the car wouldn't start. I was a bit of a mechanic. We got it to the top of a long hill; we rolled it down and Jon stayed in the car and kept it running while I set the carburetor up as high as it would go, and we zoomed down the Maine Turnpike...It was a 1936 Plymouth Roadster, rumble seats. We had the top down..were wearing these little caps. The Maine Turnpike fortunately has a lot of downhill sections or we wouldn't have made it. I remember in passing a Cadillac, Jon and I laughing as they waved to us wondering how the car would pass them. We knowing that if it ever reduced its speed, it would never get up to that speed again. We never turned the engine off all the way home.

We kept it running when we filled it with gas. Jon went into a restaurant and got a couple of sandwiches and we ate them in the car because we didn't dare turn it off. We got to Concord, New Hampshire, and we were running on four cylinders out of six...The third cylinder went, and we went from Concord to Keene on three cylinders. The generator went out at Concord too. We followed a big truck with our lights turned out to conserve the battery. We got to near Concord Hill and we knew we could never follow the truck up that hill on three cylinders so we got a flashlight with a red filter on it and Jon flashed the red filter flashlight on and off. So the truck driver thought he had a cop or a sheriff or someone behind him. He pulled over off the road so we went by him, got the car up to a speed where we could finally make the hill, and went right to my house, backed it into the garage, and that engine never started again until it was given a complete overhaul.

Jon was always a lot of fun. We could joke. We joked about the condition of the car we were in, how crazy we were to be there...we were no doubt downright silly for a few hours. This must have been about junior year in high school or the end of senior year, one or the other.

We taught one of our friends how to drive. He took us out for a ride and I'll never forget that ride. Two-and-a-half "S's" on a single "S" turn. The car stopped broadside across the road and we got out of it in time, and wondered how we were alive.

But I guess all these experiences tamed us down a little bit. I often think myself that if I ever get to be a parent I would really think about all the tight scrapes that I've had and wondered how I got through them. Jon certainly had his share of these--this--type of boyhood incidents.

We had a friend by the name of Jim Fox over in Dover. I haven't seen him since the morning we went to Maine on that almost ill-fated trip. We called him up at 7:00 in the morning to get him out of bed and had breakfast with him. Jim had stayed either at my house or at Jon's, I forget which, during a band festival we'd had here. Jim and Jon Daniels and Max Young and I had spent a couple of evenings together during that time. Jon could tell a good joke...more so a few years ago than recently. I don't think he wasted as much time telling jokes in the past couple of years...except the fact that he wasn't an athlete, he could certainly qualify for the All-American Boy.

S: Why do you think he went to VMI?

Felch: He wanted the military discipline. He considered VMI and the Citadel, and I don't remember now why he chose VIM between them. I think perhaps there was a scholarship involved.

S: Why did he want the military discipline?

Felch: This is an interesting point. I'd almost forgotten about that. Perhaps he felt himself a little frivolous and wanted the discipline. But the reason for the military school

was that he felt that he wanted to be disciplined. And he hated it. He thought he'd get smart with the upperclassmen down there... his freshman year when they asked him who won the Civil War he was forewarned that in a southern military school a yankee would be asked that question. And his reply was, "Sir, who ever heard of a war being civil?" He told me how many penalty tours he walked. He walked a good many penalty tours I gather in his first year or two down there. And, of course, he went on to become editor of the yearbook...no, the newspaper. And valedictorian of the class which didn't surprise anyone. He hated the place so much that one weekend he took a bus from Roanoke, Virginia, on a Saturday--I think he got out at noon Saturday--took the bus to Washington, D.C. where I was spending the weekend with a college roommate of mine. We picked him up in Washington probably about 9:00, had a pizza, went back to John Judson's--my roommate's--home and talked until about 3:00 or 4:00 o'clock in the morning. The next morning we got up, went to church, and drove Jon back to VMI. That's probably the longest trip anybody ever took for a pizza.

Jon improved in another of his weaknesses in recent years. He was perpetually late. I say he improved...of course, I hadn't seen a great deal of him the past couple of years.

S: I was told he was one of the people in the history of the school who was tardy most often in high school.

Felch: I'm sure he was. He was never on time for anything. But

I think this was because he was always trying to do so much. And, again, probably because of the demands that were put on him by his mother. But he would inevitably be going to meet a group of us for some reason or other in the evening, and call up and he'd be two hours late. Many times he stopped in to see me at 11:30...12:00 at night. Perhaps this is one of the reasons our discussions have been so late at night or early in the morning, because he tried to fit so much in....Yes, four or five hours seemed to be...although it sometimes it went longer and occasionally shorter, but not very often shorter. But four to five hours seemed to be a good length of time for some of these bull sessions. And, of course, Jon read very widely. But we could take an idea and just work on that idea for hours. And it was mostly philosophy and religion, but sometimes it was politics, sometimes literature, sometimes just people, rarely specific people...just people in general.

S: Why did Jon stay at VMI?

Felch: He knew he wouldn't like it before he went there. He stuck it out because this is what he had chosen to do, and he felt that the discipline would be good for him. This is why. I guess perhaps he would have to be on time for four years, and he thought that would be good for him. Perhaps he felt the need to organize himself a little better, and perhaps this is why he didn't tend to be late after he got out of VMI. Perhaps he

learned to organize his life a little better. Because recently I've been amazed to find I've waited for him in New York--we met on a number of occasions in New York when he was going to Virginia and I was going to Philadelphia to school. Either coming or going from school we'd arrange a meeting--And I waited two hours for him in New York at a train station or an air terminal. One time he was late...excuse me...One time I was late. I was probably an hour and a half late, and he was unusually prompt for him...showed up about ten minutes after I did. I never did let him know that I had been late. This was something he took an awful lot of rising about, but he took it well. But as to VMI, I can't give you much better answer than that. His reason for it was because he wanted military discipline, and he felt it would be good for him. And Jon was one who might just latch on to an idea like that once in awhile, when he made up his mind about something like that without ever giving anyone reasons for it.....

Other than being concerned about good health, I don't think he was ever too concerned about being a muscle man. If he had a fight to fight, he'd fight it...As I said before, he was probably the most nonviolent person that I have ever known. I can't imagine him engaging in a fist fight. I can't imagine him getting angry about something, but not at a person...at an idea...

S: What about his weaknesses?

Felch: The problem is that Jon had been on the run really for four or five years. I've seen him in business in Keene, occasionally in Cambridge. Yes, to answer your question. He had a great deal of humility. It is not something that would have been immediately obvious about Jon...a person meeting him or seeing him...but he did feel perhaps a lack of sufficient charity on occasion. He's mentioned that to me. He had no need to feel it in my estimation, but he did. And this is something you might say he was working on.

I mentioned earlier and I don't know how much I went into this, but he was interested in the social aspects of the ministry. This was when he was first interested in the ministry...Before his religious feelings waned after his father's death. Later on, after he became, as he said, re-converted, this was no longer very much in evidence...of course, slightly so...but in a more sincere way because he liked people. He was very much interested in people, was perhaps less impressed with people than he was when he was younger, if you know what I mean. So this was one weakness that was overcome. He was always sincere, more sincere than the average person, but this sincerity is something that grew. Perhaps the things he worked on were not as much getting rid of weaknesses as trying to improve virtues. I don't think he was conscious of these things, these virtues; I wonder sometimes if he was fully conscious of his own integrity. But, it was certainly there and was certainly a great deal of what made him what he was. He was frank but never untactful.

S: How did he get along with the guys and girls in school?
Was he liked in his class?

Felch: Yes, he was very well liked. Oh, there were perhaps a few people who didn't like him, but there are a few people who don't like anyone. But, very few. He got along with a strange group of animals. He didn't get along well with, let us say, just those of us who were in the academic program which he was in. He got along well with some of the fellows who were--and seemed to have interest in--fellows who had an undue share of problems...seemed to be able to gain their confidence and perhaps help them. There were a number of fellows who he palled around with from time to time that were certainly no scholars, perhaps drop-outs and even drop-outs in high school...were in trouble perhaps with the law in one way or another...be it just too much beer at an early age, fast driving and this kind of thing...nothing very serious. One of these, Billy Parrott, was killed in an automobile crash about three or four years ago. He stands out in my mind. There were others. Mrs. Daniels could tell you who they were. He brought home the puppy that nobody wanted more than once. And I would say as a general rule that these were not stupid people. I don't think he was--would--enjoy spending any time with people who were stupid, but they certainly were people who were off the beaten track...Jon was of course off the beaten track too but in a different direction.

S: I think he had a lot of vocational questions. I'm not sure that they weren't resolving themselves, but I know he told me at one point that he had been thinking about medicine.

Felch: Yes, he did. I think this also was after his father's death and while he was still at VMI. He had trouble with chemistry. I think perhaps this was one of the factors. Also, I think he found when he was studying chemistry that he didn't have enough time to read...literature and the things he wanted to read. And I think perhaps the thing that finally--this is just conjecture on my part--brought him away from medicine back to the Humanities was the fact that he had elected Humanities--He liked particularly philosophy and English...While he had interest in people, I think his interest was more in their minds than in their bodies...in their souls. I never felt that Jon would become a doctor when he talked about it. I'm sure that it was his father's early death that aroused his interest in medicine and I didn't think that it would remain, and it didn't. I wasn't surprised when he started his masters degree at Harvard, but I wasn't surprised when he gave it up in favor of going into the seminary either. I wasn't at all surprised, because that had been in his mind from such an early age. Now, his approach to it, as I say, changed substantially from the time he entered high school to the time he entered the seminary. Nevertheless, the same idea...the service of God, the service of people through the service of God, was strongly in Jon's mind. And I don't mean

to imply that back when he was in high school, or at that time when he was beginning high school that this notion wasn't there either. It was. It was not there in the same traditional or classical sense that it was later when Jon went into the seminary, and, of course, grew there. Now, I speak of Jon growing towards the more traditional aspects of christianity, as far as church structure and doctrine and that type of thing goes. I don't mean, again, to indicate that he wasn't very much abreast of what was going on in the church and in philosophy. I know he had read some of . I know he'd read Martin Buber. I know that he thought very highly of Paul Tillich. These people, certainly in reading their writings, made an impression on Jon. He was progressive...I didn't mention him merely because I've read some of the other three and know them better, and so when Jon spoke of it meant nothing really to me, and yet some of the others did...He and Carleton Russell used to accuse me at one point of being a classicist, as they called me. At one time I was very much interested--rather influenced by--Thomas Aquinas, and still am. But Jon, of course, became as much if not more in some ways in that direction than I did... Of course, he was interested in the Roman Church, and we used to kid a lot about that. I never tried to convert Jon, and he never tried to convert me, but I always used to tell him I'd be very happy to see him in our church because we'd finally have someone in the church that would give a sermon. The only thing...

S: Do you think he really seriously thought about it?

Felch: Yes, I do, but I certainly have no way of knowing whether he ever would have become a Catholic. But he had to because Catholicism is certainly an important part of Christianity, and he left no stone unturned. And he studied other religions, non-Christian religions, too. But he certainly moved in the traditional direction when he became an Episcopal...He moved in that direction. And in the Episcopal Church he seemed to lean towards the higher liturgical forms. He certainly had an interest in the Church of Rome. There were points where he disagreed and some of which I disagree with myself as a Catholic. Of course, I doubt that anyone who becomes interested in the church, or Christianity, or any religion, is going to not find a point they disagree with or don't feel quite right about. Jon was very close to Father down in Selma, and he spoke very highly to me of Father and I think the negro family he lived with down there were very dear to him.

S: Is Father negro himself? He's now in Connecticut
I understand.

Felch: No (not negro). He was pulled out of the South very shortly after Jon's death. I don't know whether his relationship with Jon had anything to do...but it was I think a week or so after Jon died that I heard on the radio of his being transferred out of there. Jon and I think Judy Upham also went to dinner

there at the monastery. Jon would enjoy going there...went to the Catholic Church every Sunday with the negro children he lived with. I think that Father was the only clergyman with whom Jon felt at home in Selma and felt he could sit down and communicate with and be honest with...be able to sit down and not have an antagonistic conversation is what I'm trying to say. And I think he mentioned...Father made quite an impression on him. But he only spoke to me about Father the night that I visited him in May. I wish I could remember just when it was, but I think it was late May when I was in Boston and went out to the Seminary and spent the night in Jon's room.

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Felch: One of the things that I haven't mentioned about Jon's image is he was always polite. Someone meeting Jon--perhaps especially when he was younger, because it's more obvious in a young person...We learn to be polite as we grow older. But he always stood up when an older person came into the room. He never forgot to say please or thank you. His table manners were perfect. He was a gentleman always. Over and above this, I don't...I doubt seriously that he ever did anything in his life that was really in very bad taste...Always tasteful in the way he dressed, yes. He always looked neat. Whether we were out having a picnic somewhere and he was wearing a pair of trousers and a sweater or whether he was full-dress uniform, he looked neat. He was always immaculately clean, except for one evening after our return from that eventful trip to Maine when he assisted me in rebuilding the engine we had ruined on that trip...but that was quite a weekend--one that we have gone back and talked about... That was one thing that came into mind.

Another, something that happened at Jon's funeral which made me kind of sad and made me feel that some of his contemporaries at the seminary really didn't know him very well. Do you recall after the funeral as everyone was leaving the seminary, there were a group--I believe they were from CORE--and they sang "We Shall Overcome." There was someone that I should remember in that group...someone that I know, but I can't think who it was now, who

was with them. And this aroused almost disgust on the part of some of the seminarians who were in my car as we left the seminary. And I didn't feel that way at all about it. That song had, in the first place, become a hymn to Jon. He sang it a lot; he knew it. They felt that this singing, swaying as they sang around the grave, was disrespectful. And Jon would have felt it anything but disrespectful if he could have been up singing with them. And I said that. And they said, "Did you know Jon?" I just kept quiet, but I felt like saying, "Did you know Jon?" It disappointed me...the person who said that, because I won't call Jon broadminded. That isn't the word for it, but I'll call him openminded. He didn't think that the only way to worship--although he tended toward the higher liturgical forms--that was not the only way to worship. But to him the real way to worship was in your life. But if there was another culture that had another way of saying the same thing, if it was done with respect, with the proper attitude, this could have been a prayer to Jon just as much as the "Our Father" was. I think he certainly would have been pleased with that group that sang, "We Shall Overcome." I don't think that the boys who condemned that singing understood it in the spirit in which it was intended.....Perhaps they hadn't talked with Jon enough about what he did in Selma. Of course, I only had two opportunities to talk with him about what he did down there. One was the night in Cambridge in May, and then when he

came home...Well, I spent a short time at his house one night, and my wife and I were living in Brattleboro then, and he and his mother came over and had dinner with us one night before they went back. Perhaps they had had the same experience that I had which led me to want to talk Jon out of going to Selma before he went. Perhaps the people they had known who had been involved in the civil rights movement weren't the same caliber of Jon, and perhaps they had contact with some of the hypocrites in the movement...

Then Jon told me he had been followed by people with guns. He told me this in May, and he was afraid of something violent happening but this didn't deter him from going back. He knew that his car was known and watched, and this bothered him...

S: Did you talk to him about the possibility of his being killed?

Felch: Not directly. I wanted to say, "Don't go back," but his spirit--what he was doing down there--and his attitude towards what he was doing and his understanding of the problem were such that I couldn't say, "Don't go back." I felt that here of all the people--not that I've known that many who have been involved in it, but I have known some both colored and white who were involved in the movement--I hadn't known any of them who seemed to have the grasp of it that Jon had, who could have written about it the way he did...And, of course, the thing about Jon was that he didn't hate white people. He was annoyed with them to the very devil, but he didn't hate them. Perhaps this is why--there

is hatred on both sides of this problem--and Jon had no hatred, and I think this is perhaps why his attitudes were what they were and his thinking on the problem was what it was. There was one white lawyer in Selma that he had talked with a great deal and with whom he felt he was beginning to communicate with, and just who this man was or what the substance of their conversations were I don't know. But he did understand the viewpoint of the white man down there and understood the reasons for it. He understood the parts of it that were perhaps a little bit justified. I think that he felt that there was need for compromise on both sides, that it wasn't all the whites; the negroes had to do something too. I wish I could be more articulate about this, but I can't because I didn't have enough time to talk with Jon.

S: Did he ever talk to you about his re-conversion?

Felch: Yes. Again, this was during a period of time when I wasn't seeing an awful lot of Jon. When we did get together we talked about areas which were of mutual interest--theological problems, moral problems--and not a great deal about that except that he mentioned his re-conversion more as an 'after-the-fact' thing. I didn't see much of him while it was going on...

Yes, I remember him talking about Easter Sunday, but I can't remember the details. I know that he didn't feel right -- while he was at Harvard. I know that this is one of the reasons there were two reasons he didn't go back the year after he started

One was that he wanted time to think. And I did see more of him that year, but I was in New York that year so I'd see him when I would get up here on a weekend now and again. I know that he was doing a lot of soul-searching during that year. And, as a matter of fact, is that the same Easter Sunday morning that he was picked up for speeding going through the Square on the way to a sunrise service? I think perhaps it was. He was late as usual that morning. He had picked up either the soloist who was going to sing or the music she was going to sing, I believe. He'd forgotten something, went back to get something, at 5:30 in the morning he was going through the Square and he was stopped for speeding...not reckless speeding I'm sure. He was doing 35 miles an hour in a 25 mile-an-hour zone or something. But I'm sure it must be the same day. I wouldn't be at all surprised if the moment of decision came at that particular time....

This would have been the Easter Sunday before he entered the Seminary. That would be the same year. Of course, he was undergoing a period of self-examination and examination of the church at that time. He was concerned always, I think, with "What am I meant to do?" You mentioned before weaknesses, and charity was one thing that seemed to be on his mind a lot. I recall his mentioning to me frequently, Did he have enough charity in his heart? This was certainly something he thought about during that year. He worked at the hospital. I don't think he had any thoughts of medicine at that time. That was his father's

death. It was a reaction to his father's death. Of course, he was very close to his father. There are two men that I have known in my life that I've never heard anyone speak a bad word about. One of them was Doc Daniels, and the other was Mike Griffin who was a cop in the town. At one point they tried to rename Central Square, Griffin Square. When I had my appendix out, Jon's father had nothing to do with the operation, but he came up and sat in the operating room and talked to me while they were performing the operation. Not that he didn't have other things to do at that time. He should have been spending the time to catch a cat-nap if he had any to spend. But he was certainly a very remarkable man, well-liked, dedicated. I've been at Jon's house at night and there again early in the morning and see his father go out at night and see him come in the next morning. Jon used to fish a little bit. I was never much of a fisherman, but he used to go up with his father on camping trips occasionally. They meant a great deal to him. I think they set up a tent and fished a little bit. Those trips with his father were very important to him.....

S: ...area that would tie in with his whole theology was the whole area of love and sex and charity. How do you love people? And where does physical love fit into this picture? He was very wise and aware of sex. He had fun verbalizing with lots of innuendoes, lots of double entendre in his remarks...in conversations...smirk on his face...He was reading it two ways.....

Felch: ...Yes...Very quick...He has always had very high verbal skills from the time he was young, and they increased tremendously as he went along. What you mention now...Jon was perhaps a bit more puritanical about sex in his high school days and perhaps even during his college days. I think perhaps it came to bother him. He came to a conclusion that sex wasn't a dirty word. That a puritanical attitude towards sex was not the right attitude, was perhaps as wrong as a promiscuous attitude. It wasn't something to be hidden nor something to be waived in public. I think perhaps this did bother him.

S: I keep wondering. A question that has often occurred to me since Jon died--I'm not sure it didn't occur to me before he died, but I never talked to him directly about it. I talked with him about girls and relationships that he had with various girls. Out of those discussions I've asked myself, if I could have predicted the future, would Jon have ever gotten married? And I'm not really certain that he ever would have. He always seemed to withdraw. He'd move with a girl in a relationship to a certain point and then he would seem to withdraw. He couldn't get any more involved.

Felch: I think he would have gotten married eventually. I don't think he ever found the right girl. Of course, he went with Carolyn Pierce who is not Carolyn Howard for three or four years. As a matter of fact, I think it was at a party that I gave over a Silver Lake where Carolyn first started going with

Gary Howard. Jon and Carolyn were at that party and Gary was with another girl. I think that Gary ended up marrying Carolyn after first having become interested in her at that party. And the girl he was with that night ended up with another fellow. It was quite a party. Jon and Carolyn had some kind of a scrap that night. I don't know what it was about. Carolyn is a nice girl and she is a bright girl...very pleasant. I don't think she was Jon's intellectual equal. And I don't think Jon could ever have been happy with a girl who was not his intellectual equal. So this limits it to a pretty darn few to start with. And I don't think of the girls I've known who Jon dated--there was one girl who was a nice girl, but I think Jon felt a little sorry for her. She didn't know anyone in town and so he took her out. There was a girl who came into Keene whom I met who was perhaps the most coquettish girl Jon ever dated.

S: Is this the girl of whom he used to speak of of questionable reputation? He mentioned one girl he had gone with for some period of time. This was a girl in Keene who I suppose you would say was from the other side of the tracks.

Felch: Let me say this. No, she certainly wouldn't have raised eyebrows at the time he went with her. The one I'm thinking of. There is a girl...I mentioned a girl that Jon went out with because he felt sorry for her, and I think this might be.

S: Maybe he was projecting more into it than was actually there.

Felch: I wouldn't be surprised but what that might be the case. If it's a local girl. But the girl up at the hospital was a different color. That was rough in many ways...But he never would have been happy with this girl. But I think there was quite a lot to that relationship. But you see Jon never found the right girl. This is why his attitude towards girls might have been one that would lead you to think he'd never get married. Yet I'm sure had the right girl ever appeared on the scene he would have.

S: Oh, I don't think he had anything against marriage. I think your point is exactly it, that he never found the right girl.

Felch: But he thought Carolyn was the right girl for a long time. They actually, as high school kids do, talked about marriage. Of the girls I've known whom Jon dated, she would have come the closest, but she wouldn't have been his intellectually equal. So it wouldn't have worked. He dated a deb down in Darien, Connecticut, and was quite impressed with the fact. This was at the time when he was impressed with society and wanted to be part of it and enjoyed it thoroughly. But there wasn't anything phony about this. He enjoyed it. He didn't do it because it impressed anyone else. He did it because he

enjoyed doing it. I think he perhaps at that time even laughed a little bit at it, but he still enjoyed it. But this, as an aspect of the ministry, of the social position of the minister, this existed no longer when he entered the seminary...Perhaps this is one reason why the waning of religion at the first point. It didn't have enough meaning to him then. It was something good to be done, but it wasn't a full life to him then. Then, of course, at the time of his death, it was a full life to him. He lived his religion. This is part of what I mean when I speak of his integrity, because when I think of Jon integrity is the most important characteristic that I think of. I think of him as a guy I had a heck of a lot of fun with in high school. We had a lot of kid fun. I always enjoyed his wit. He was always a pleasant guest, but the integrity and the intellectual understanding he had, the faith he had, and the complete intellectual honesty. This was why Jon and I would be able to talk, because he possessed this intellectual honesty. And there's never been anyone with whom I could speak as frankly about religion as I could with Jon. And I couldn't believe it when I heard he died.

S: You were shocked?

Felch: Well, I hadn't cried for a long time. I would say that I didn't have a premonition of it. I had a premonition of it when I heard he'd gone to Selma--when he wanted to go to Selma.

My wife met his mother somewhere--Oh. My wife teaches in Brattleboro, and Jon's mother was up in Brattleboro before he went to Selma the first time for some purpose, and Sally came home and she said, "My gosh! You know what Jon's going to do?" The first time Sally met Jon I think she and Jon and I sat up until 4:00 in the morning. And Sally is not a catholic, and we had quite a beneficial discussion that night...I had less of a premonition after talking with him in May. He'd been down there and come back. And he said people had followed him with guns, and I was afraid for him. But, on the other hand, when it happened, I couldn't believe it. My father heard it on the radio and called me and I said, "Well, how is he?" And Dad said, "Well, he's dead." And I couldn't believe it. And I kept listening to the radio. I thought well maybe they made a mistake. Or maybe he's just in critical condition; maybe he's going to pull through. I don't think I could believe it until I saw him. As a matter of fact, I was alone here in the church with him, and I had to touch his hand before I could believe it. Because he was the oldest of my friends. I'd had playmates, but I never had a friend that lasted until I met Jon. When I was probably twelve years old. I think I learned to play chess with Jon. Jon's range of interest was wider. I found him a more stimulating companion than I did the average guy. Jon was my first friend--I was interested in electronics when I was a kid. I built radio transmitters

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and telephone switchboards...Jon was my first friend with whom I had a great deal of discussion of a non-technical nature. When I was in the eighth grade I had built an [redacted] and a geiger counter and that kind of junk and stuff that I couldn't repair today if I had to because I've been away from it for so long. But Jon was non-technical and interesting. As a matter of fact, I was a science major initially in college and then switched later on to philosophy. But it was after I spent a year in prep school where I studied the humanities for the first time when I began to talk more with Jon along this line. He was quite a bit ahead of me--well, always ahead of me--but to the point where we couldn't have that deep a conversation probably until some time in late high school and early college. And yet, I was always interested in religion and studied it sufficiently so we did have deep discussions in religion but not into philosophy. I don't suppose Jon read too much philosophy until he went to college anyway.