

CARLETON RUSSELL

January 8, 1966

S: I don't know what you brought with you. Did you bring copies of your own letters?

R: Well, I brought probably nothing that you don't already have. You have everything that I have.

S: Yes, because I didn't know if there were any comments you might want to make on these letters along the way.

R: There are three, I think, and that's all I have.

S: I thought maybe if we could start kind of at the beginning and if you could in your thinking with me be rather specific, that is, try to be as accurate about at least years if not months or days in recounting any conversations or any incidents be as detailed as possible. Little things I have found already are beginning to take shape and are adding up to bigger things, you know. So, I thought maybe if you could just start from the beginning when you met Jon and then anything you want to talk about.

R: Yes. I'm not sure how specific I can be except for the instances that I have--Do you have the set of letters which I wrote to Dr. Wolf?

S: I have a couple of letters which you wrote to Dr. Wolf.

R: Well, I guess that's all; maybe that's all there were.

Now, those contain a good share of what I can do in the way of specific information except I don't go back very far...

S: Yes, even in taking these, for instance: "For as long as I can remember Jon was intense, spontaneously interested in and warm toward others, razor sharp in conversation, aware of the entire gamut of experience from the obscene to the divine." Now that's a marvelous statement, but I need an illustration for everyone of those, because when I start working up this material, people will say, "Well, there certainly ^{is} no evidence for that" --so, you are wide open critically unless you can come through.

R: These are the things that are so difficult to remember.

S: Were you life-long friends?

R: Well, yes, insofaras--I understand that Jon, I don't know exactly when, how old Jon was when he came to Keene--but certainly we knew each other from before high school.

Certainly when I was a year ahead of him; so when I was a sophomore in high school and he was a freshman, I'm sure from that time on we had a very close friendship. In fact, one of the first things I remember about him was that we were in the band together, and he played, of all things, the tuba, the sousaphone to be exact, and I was a sousaphone player against my will. And

so, it was my responsibility to teach him to play. So, it was always a lot of fun. But I remember we used to, during the free periods, we would have every now and then,--the two of us-- would take these two monstrous--a sousaphone is about 45 pounds of brass all coiled around--we'd take these things and we'd go down backstage in the auditorium with them. Supposedly we had the sousaphone lesson, but we'd end up most of the time telling stories, and smoking cigarettes, you know, and that sort of thing.

S: This you would place about 1955?

R: Ah, let's see now. I graduated from high school in '56 so it must have been, it must have been--well it could have been--well, I can't be sure when he started to play. I would think that this would be '53 or '54--ya, I should think so. And let's see, Jon, if I can remember specific instances, in high school Jon was a (how shall I say) very imaginative boy. I remember he always had, as long as I can remember, he had this marvelous flair for the language. I was on the editorial or on the literary magazine--one of the editors or something--and I remember he used to contribute a lot of articles to that, and even though he hadn't quite sifted out the--you know, he had quite a lot of big words and he used them and it was a very heavy style--but he certainly had this marvelous command of the language. Of course,

that was back before his life had as much focus as it was to have later on. And I can't remember specifically now what he wrote about, but I do remember that he was prominent in that regard.

S: Are there copies of those around?

R: Yes, there are. I thought about that today, and I bet that I could get ahold of them for you. There must be copies on file, and I, in fact, probably have a few of them myself. I remember I had the whole--they came out twice a year--and I had all eight of them at one time, but I know I've thrown some of them out. I can check on that for you. Why don't I make a note of that. I can get them for you...Yes, I know he was quite a frequent contributor of the Enterprise, it was called, our literary magazine.

Well, Jon was, as I say, very imaginative and (what shall I say) his imagination got him into a little trouble every now and then as you can imagine it would. He was known as a pretty mischevious boy all right. He was always doing funny things. I remember one night he --his mother would be able to tell you more details about this than I would--but--he ended up (the word went around school that Jon had, now here again you want me to be specific, I think it was a broken leg or something like this, you know, a sprained or broken ankle or leg or something--and it came out that what he had been doing was speaking out of the house to go and raise the devil with it.

friends--his room was on the second floor and he crawled out on the porch roof, slid off--you know this story--he slid off the roof and on to the ground and there he was, embarassingly enough. Well, that's the sort of thing he was always doing during high school. I'm trying to think if I can think of any other such instances or not...Oh boy...very difficult. Well, I can remember many nights when we would go out with a bunch of us--this Gene Felch which you met--and some others up there-- Gary Howard and others--and, you know, just sort of kick around, tell stories and, you know, just sort of the kinds of things that adolescents like to do. Oh yes...We had a quartet in which I was the baritone, Gary Howard was the bass, and Jon was-- I think that's right--Jon would have been the first tenor, and Felch was the lead, second tenor. And we had quite a time with that. We used to sing "Sweetheart of SigmanChi" and I don't remember what else. But we used to meet down at Felch's house. And we sang at a couple of things. I can't remember what. We didn't have much of a public, you know, but we did have this group. Jon had quite a voice. I don't know if you know anything about this. He was prominent in the choir as well as the glee club. He was a very busy boy in high school and he was sick a lot and I think partly because he was so worn out...He was always doing things. His health was not good. Anyway, I think to start

with, he tended toward the sickly. And he was active, as I say--I think he was in the band council at one time. He certainly was active in the acappella choir. And he had quite a tenor voice. You remember his speaking voice had quite a nasal quality about it and his singing voice was very distinctive also--but good. And he was very musical. He'd done very little with his music, I understand, in the last few years. More important things came along. He certainly had the musical ability. He played, as I say, bass, and then he did sing.

I remember the first time that I ever heard this very lovely Vaughn Williams setting of "The Call," a poem by George Herbert from The Temple. It was when Jon sang it and I played for him at St. James for a wedding of a friend. That reminded me of something else...What was it...Oh yes, along the lines of musical activity he was (I'm afraid this isn't helping you...It doesn't tell you anything about his personality.) But I went to New England Music Camp one summer. That was the summer of '54. (There! That's the first bit of specific information for you.) And I went up there at the instigation of Bob Cook who was the director of music and Jon was very good friends with him. And this was up in Oakland, Maine. And I remember Jon that summer was sick, as usual, at the end of the year and so he couldn't come up there. It was an eight-week session, and he came up half-way through,

and while he was up there he was starting to play, of all things, the french horn. I don't know, that didn't ever amount to anything, but that's what he was fiddling around with at the moment. It wasn't his idea. It was the director's idea. And he had a minor, I think, in voice or something. As I say, he was only there, I think, for four weeks. And he was just that one year younger than I, just young enough to put him in the--what they call the "junior cabin"--so I really had very little to do with him that summer.

S: Would you say that he was musically sensitive?

R: Yes, I would. He had, as I recall his singing, a good sense of pitch, a good sense of rhythm. He didn't ever, as far as I know, play the piano, although he may have, along the time when everyone takes some piano lessons, taken some. But I never heard him play the piano. But I do know that he sang. In fact, I think if I had been--see in the high school I was not in the choir--but I'm sure that he sang some solos. I certainly accompanied him, as I say, later on singing some solos. He needed a bit of help. He did read music but he was not--he had not had a lot of musical training, but he certainly was musical; once he got it he was all right.

S: Do you think he understood music...You know the distinction I'm trying to make between being one who could stand up and

sing or someone who could sit and listen or participate in the playing of a composition with some real comprehension of what was going on.

R: Yes, I see what you mean...I don't really know whether one would--I don't know how far he carried--I know that he was very sensitive verbally; now, whether he was sensitive in the same way to musical talents and their combination, I really couldn't say. I had the feeling probably not; that this was--maybe this was a potential that he had, that he never developed. I think this is probably fair to say. Now whether he sang in the glee club at VMI or not, I don't know.

S: He was the president of the Timmon's Music Society at VMI.

R: Is that a singing group?

S: It was a group that listened, primarily, to music and I know there is one story that one of the cadets told me of his coming into the music room when Jon was in there. And he put on the Marine song and for about a few seconds, Jon kind of hit the ceiling--"Take that off"--and then he did and put something else on, I guess, or maybe didn't put anything else on--but anyway, a few minutes later Jon came over and apologized to him for having behaved in that fashion toward him and said "Well, perhaps you get as much out of listening to the Marine Hymn as I get out of listening to something else."

And, this person remembered this very clearly because he thought it was such a sensitive kind of admission, and it meant a great deal to him to have him come and do that.

R: Well, that implies that he had indeed developed his music. I don't doubt that he had. See the main problem here, Bill, is that after high school Jon's and my contact was retained at about twice a year or three times a year--usually in the summer--we would get together and talk about things that were of mutual interest. And it was basically Christianity, and various aspects thereof. But we talked about, naturally, other things as well, you know, girls I suppose, and mutual friends, and so forth. But, as far as knowing him as an undergraduate, I really don't. In fact, I rather lost touch with him while he was at VMI. I think a couple of years went by there that I didn't see him at all. And then I renewed my contact with him, basically in the summer of 1962--during the year 1961-1962, I was considering going into the ministry myself, and this drew me to Jon because I knew he was going into the same sort of thing and I always felt that he had a good deal more to offer, being very thin-skinned in more ways than one and being very sensitive to the intensities of life, you might say, that somehow he seemed in religious matters to be able to offer something. Now I gather, reading over these letters, that he found me also someone that he could talk to--not so much,--I think he is overly generous in his letters in

attributing to me a certain, you know, inspiration, and so forth. I think what actually happened was that I was a good listener, and he was, by talking with me, he was able to create some meaning out of some thoughts that he was--before he decided to go into the ministry he was going through quite a bit of change of heart. He'd had this falling away from his faith, as you know, and then he had what he called a re-conversion. There were still a lot of questions in his mind. He wasn't sure whether the ministry was the place for him or not. And I can remember him thinking-- He at one time wanted to be a doctor, as you know, falling in his father's footsteps in that regard.

S: His father was a very powerful figure in his life. I think even after his death he played a very important role.

R: I gather so. Jon had from everything we could tell the greatest love and admiration for his father.

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

R: About the actual moment of it?

S: Yes.

R: No. Not about the actual circumstances. About the ramifications of it, yes, I suppose so. But about the actual nature of the circumstances, I gather not. Was this around Easter of 1962? It was. I knew when it was and he talked--let's see, the summer of '62 was when we talked perhaps more than ever

before. And I had just finished my general examinations and a couple of other things that had been weighing on my mind. And I was able to turn my thinking to these other matters, and he at that time was, I guess, coming to the decision that he should go to seminary. Not that this hadn't occurred to him before. From one of his letters it would tell that this is when he appeared before the Board of Examiners, etc.

I'm trying to think now if there is anything else though from that early period...

S: How did Jon get on with his peers generally in high school?

R: Oh I think very well. First of all, he had a steady girlfriend he went with all the time--a girl, you maybe knew about this--well, you must know all of these things.

S: But it's important to hear them from different people and get a more fair picture by adding up...

R: Yes, well the girl's name is Carolyn Pierce--it's Carolyn Pierce Howard now; she married Gary Howard, the boy who was in class with me. Have you talked with him?

S: No I haven't.

R: He might have a little something to offer, although he would probably be in worse shape than I would about memory and so forth...Well, anyway, Jon went with Carolyn all during high

school. She was--it doesn't matter whether she was in his class or a year behind; I don't remember. So there was that relationship which I gather was quite strong for the age period, and so forth. They always went to dances and so forth together. Then there was--his friendships generally, his close friendships (and we always kidded him about this) were with people in my class. We always said, you know, "Jon, you should have been in our class." Somehow, he did not have the--you said "get along,"--yes. I think in the sense of being amiable he had a marvelously charming manner, as you know, and sincerely so too. But he always got along well in that sense, in at least the trivial things, with his contemporaries--even people with whom he had very, very little in common. But for the really close friendships that really meant something to him, he came to our class--to me, to Gene Felch, to Gary Howard--and well, Freddy Fox actually was even younger, I think, than he, but that's an exception. Basically, his friends seemed to be in our class rather than his. I have the feeling he was really quite popular in high school. He was quite a smoothy, you know, albeit that his eyes were always on the more important things. He was a good dresser and a good dancer and had a very--now when I say "smooth line" I don't mean that he was faking any--he just had a very good way with words, and I think the girls found him charming although he was always tied up with this one.

And I think he was very popular. Whether he was quite as popular with the boys, I don't know. Although I never knew anybody who had a grudge against him. I can't think of a single situation in which he was at odds with anybody or anything serious. I mean, he had--being so sensitive--naturally he got very angry with people once in awhile or at least the way we all do. There was certainly never any feud between him and anyone else.

I was trying to think if he had been elected to any offices in high school. I'm sure he was something probably in the accapella choir. I imagine he was some sort of officer before he got through. I don't know about that organization. As I say, I have a feeling he was on the band council which is the governing group of the band at the time that I was. It was the source of some very subtle, both humorous and touching conversation--we both had a good deal of affection for this girl, Julie Canfield. This may have come up...The Canfields were good friends--in Keene they were members of the parish Jon was in--he started out as a congregationalist, you know, in the church which is nominally my church, I suppose; the church my parents are now members of...And this was a family he had known...Well, the father had died when we were still in high school, and this girl was younger than he--two years younger than I was--and a very attractive girl, very intelligent, artistic...went on to Rhode Island School of Design

and so forth...And we both used to--this was in the post-Carolyn period--sort of yearn, you know. We were bachelor students and whenever we got together this always came up about Julie Canfield and how she was just the ideal girl. And in many ways, I guess she probably is. She got married...let's see...it must have been...!61 or '62...I don't know...somewhere along there somewhere. And I played for her wedding, I remember, and there was quite a bit of weeping and wailing. Of course, Jon went to the wedding, and I remember we went to the reception afterward out at Winding Brook Lodge there. Anyway, there was always quite a bit of joking about how we'd lost out. There she was married to someone else and we were both the worst for it. He mentions the Canfields. In fact, when he refers in one of the ~~the~~ letters to our friends at something-or-other Cross Street he says "I had a remarkably good visit with them." Have you contacted any of the Canfields?

S: No, I'm going to Keene for three days of conversations and that's being set up now.

R: Well, I would definitely go to see Mrs. Canfield and, if possible, her daughter, Julie--her name is McBride now--Because he always made it a point to go and see them. And he was very interested in them and in--besides his sort of quasi-romantic feeling toward Julie--also interested in them as a family--the

fact that it was tough going for them when the father died very suddenly. And the younger sister was something of a problem, a very independent and difficult child. And I remember he had quite an interest in that case (if I may use the word). It's not critical, but in some one of these letters he does mention..."I trust by then to have seen your folks and checked on our friends at 67 Cross..." (Well, if you want to know what that reference is, it's to the Canfields.)

It's so hard to...The few really specific remarks, for example, and situations I can think of, I've put in here... He had a very picturesque way of speaking. Every time I was in Keene, of course, I would always (as soon as I could) get to the phone and call Jonny, and he always had a very cordial way about him and a way of saying "You bet!" That was his phrase. My parents found him absolutely ingratiating. He used to come over and he had a wonderful way with people of all ages. He'd come in and he'd come over and shake hands with my mother and sort of pat her on the shoulder, you know. And she just liked it. I mean, she didn't feel he was slobbering all over her, because he was obviously sincere. He liked her and my mother has an uproarious sense of humor and they always get along very very well. And so my parents liked him immensely, and enjoyed him. He'd come over to the house frequently, usually when I was there but not always. There's one specific thing I remember...This business about "Christ, that old Son-of-a-gun..."...I cleaned that up a little bit so I could write

it down. Actually the word was something considerably more picturesque, shall we say, than that...You probably don't care about exactly what it was. This is what I say by obscene. Jon was not basically obscene anymore than any sensitive literarily inclined person is obscene. He just had a tremendously versatile mind and obscene things, if they were funny per se struck him funny, and he saw no reason to--I mean, there was nothing stuffy and inhibited about him, that's all. And we had a marvelous time with him. And I must admit that a good deal of it was pretty raunchy in the conversation. It would be on the one hand very deep and very meaningful and, then, on the other it could be a real series of--conversation with him was always a very lively thing because he was so quick. It could be very obscene or subtlety so. I remember, for example, when he came up to the house--this is Christmas time, a little after in '64--to deliver this wedding gift for something which we had; I remember there was a good deal of kidding that day. He had a great time with my sister because my sister deals it out pretty strongly too. I remember there was a good deal of kidding about this fur hat that he had. And one of the remarks--I've got one of them in there--another thing he said that day--He

had a marvelous way of catching the possible connotations. Even if you weren't thinking of something possibly a little off-color, he would. If the situation was such; and, of course, with us, we were old friends. So, I remember that day we got to talking about this hat. Somebody referred to it as a little warm thing, and my sister said, "It's good to have a little warm thing." And suddenly, you know, he got that glint in his eye and he said, "Yes, it's good to have a little warm thing." And somehow it became clear--I sort of pointed to my wife and said, "Yes, it's good to have a little warm thing--the implication that she, in this case, was the little warm thing. That sort of repartee was going on all the time...

S: When Jon went to Selma and when he made up his mind to stay in Selma, to go back and really stay there--what I guess I'm really asking you is, Did this surprise you?

R: No.

S: If not, then, in looking back, do you see things leading up to this in Jon?

R: Yes. Jon had--I remember a remark my sister made--When he came to the house there on his way back to Selma in late June (or whenever it was that he went back), there were quite a few remarks about the fact that he might get himself killed.

And my father and I got into quite a conversation about the whole problem of these people being there. My father was wondering how we would feel if a lot of Southerners came in here under similar circumstances. I don't know whether it was then--no actually I think it might have been the day of the funeral. We came back to the house and my sister said something to the effect that Jon probably would have gone off the deep end anyway. Now this is a way of saying what she feels. We were talking about it, in fact, when I was up there at Christmas time--the subject of Jon came up and religious sensitivities and so forth-- that Jon was in some sense the kind of person psychologically, I think, who did things to the hilt. In other words, life was very intense for him. He became very involved in things. As long as I can remember, he did things all the way. In high school, of course, I assume he matured later on, but in high school we got together--I remember that we used to have these Max Annuals. They were little get-togethers which Felch and this guy Tony Reading, another friend, that I referred to, and Jonny and I--the four of us--would get together and go up to Tony's--his father had a mansion up in Dublin which is near Keene. And we would go up and have what amounted to a beer blast. We'd go up on the roof of this 32-room mansion and blare the record-player (the Ninth Symphony) out over onto Mr. Monadnock. It was quite picturesque. And

we'd drink and drink and talk. Jon usually drank too much and got sick. And, in fact, he was sick from over-drinking, lying on the couch in the main room (one of these huge, open-paneled drawing rooms with a fireplace and everything) way into the morning (2:00 or something), sick and barfing on the floor in the middle of which giving an exposition about Christ and how remarkable it was that Christ would have given himself for such a miserable sinner as he. And this was presumably during his period of conversion after his original conversion. (He went over to the Episcopal Church sometime during high school.) It must have been early along the way. This was after that (conversion) because Max Young was killed in an automobile accident. He was my classmate. He was killed during the Spring vacation of 1957. So these Max Annuals (I think there were three of them) must have taken place in the summer of '57, '58 and '59. And this was one of those (probably '57) at which I remember this specific instance of his getting drunk. Well, we were all drunk, but he was just drunker than the rest. Well, just over the limit there...It was quite impressive, you know, if I remember. Here he was in this pile of stuff on the floor, you know. It was that kind of intense, you know, This is It! and by gosbb... The fact of his being sick to his stomach and his being drunk and the music blaring away and the whole atmosphere...well, you know...a sort of unreal atmosphere.

Oddly enough, this mansion has burned to the ground and doesn't even exist which is something to me very strange about this whole thing...As if a whole era out of the past has gone...Jon's gone...Everything is gone...

But anyway, the whole scene with us there seemed somehow to typify this...

A lot of things suggest themselves. You want specific instances. A lot of theories suggest themselves to me about Jon as to his psychological makeup. I've often wondered how it is that he apparently...I really have great envy, let's face it, for a person of this sort. I run along on too even a keel and I don't tend to have these intense experiences, and I have envied Jon his experiences in faith, for example. And I was just reading over these letters this morning and thinking how wonderful it was that he had reached this point in his thinking and how illuminating it is. His theology, such as it is, being such a practical thing, based on human experience, you know, was so much more real than theology often seems to be, although I'm very enthusiastic about that too. But, anyway, why was Jon the kind of person he was?... Why, for example, did he have these very strong religious experiences--I mean, his conversion, his leaving the church of his parents and the church he had always been brought up in and suddenly going into this new tradition and really becoming very involved in it. It wasn't the religious too, either. It

was the sexual also. I mean his affairs, his dealings, with girls. He was (I don't know exactly how far these things progressed, but judging from what he wrote they got pretty hairy) very aware in a way that I don't think I've ever seen before--very aware of his own base desires, of what he considered his own sinfulness, his own lust. I remember he created (well, it's very easy to create a scandal in a little New England town), but he created very close to a scandal by dating this girl. (In fact, if you could get ahold of this girl, she could give you a quite different picture of Jon from any that you already have. Maybe you already have contacted her.) Her name was Georgia Something-or-other; I could find the name for you. Do you know this girl? This might interest you. Jon was an orderly at Eliot Community Hospital during a time...

S: Yes.

R: It was not too terribly long ago. In fact, it was, I think after '62 or '61?

S: Yes. And did he go to New York with her or something? I think I do know about this girl.

R: Yes,...She was, bless her heart...This is just between you and me...She was for all intensive purposes a real slut. She had a reputation around town (her sister did especially and the whole family had a reputation for being really, may I say, low class. They had very low moral standards...Her sister had

been married several times...I think. That may not be exactly true. But, in any case, this girl...I know this because I met her one night when Gene Felch was...I remember. I was home for a vacation, and you can date that because he refers to that in a letter to that evening at the Vermont Squire. And that was the evening during a vacation, Christmas perhaps. You know he spent a year out of school working for , the electrician, and it was during this period that he struck up this relationship with this girl. I think her name was Georgia. I met her one night and, really, an impossible relationship in, okay, cultural terms (I realize Christ ate with sinners and all this sort of thing), but from a practical societal standpoint, which I am not necessarily defending, this was just an impossible relationship. This girl was stupid. She was uneducated. I don't think she was even clean, frankly. I don't know about that but...And she was not even beautiful. She was really a repulsive girl to look at, I thought, although she had quite a bit of physical appeal, I suppose...in that sense. But somehow Jon (we talked some about this) was drawn to her partly for a kind of feeling that he could help her, that he could raise her life somehow. Partly maybe a feeling of sympathy for her, and partly just plain physical lust. She probably had a very attractive body and was free about giving it. Anyway, he went

out with this girl for quite sometime (I don't know how long it went on but I have the feeling it went on for at least a year, if not more), and the relationship got rather intense. I was at his house one night (I'd go over there frequently and sit and drink beer on the back porch with him and talk about things), and I remember this night we were in the kitchen and we were talking about this girl, and he described what I gather was the culminating episode in his relationship. How they had (whether they completed it or not I don't know) some kind of sexual act relationship that had just disgusted him...All of a sudden he just lost all appetite for this sort of thing, and I gather that this was just the end of the relationship...How he had just sort of force himself to do this and it was really a sickening experience for him. And I think that was probably the end of that relationship. But people around town were really quite concerned...What if he marries this girl, you know...and You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear... Well maybe you can and maybe you can't...But anyway, people around town were really quite concerned. But in any case, this would really have been quite a challenge for him. But he met her anyway at the hospital is why I brought that up. He was an orderly. She was a nurse or a nurse's trainee or something.

She was about his age. And she was, as I say, with us that night at the Vermont Squire with Gene Felch and Sally, now his wife, and that was quite an evening because Jon was in sort of a cynical mood that night. He'd never hurt anybody because he was just sensitive enough to know when to stop. But Felch was sort of a target for Jon. I like Gene immensely but he's not very bright...He's not very quick. He's rather dull, and, in fact, I think you might say that intellectually he's rather dull. He had a lot of trouble in school. It took him five or six years to get through college, and he had to try several colleges, and he didn't do well in high school at all. And he had a lot of imagination, but he also had a lot more confidence than he did ability. But, in any case, he was sort of dull, and he would tell jokes that weren't really very funny. He was just a perfect target for a guy like Jon who was so sharp and who could make comments. You know, Jon would grin and say something to Gene for my benefit, because he knew that Gene wouldn't understand them and I would. So here we were. We went and spent this horrible evening at the Vermont Squire that he talks about. I was with a girl I didn't even know, someone Gene had fixed me up with. We were just sitting there, Jon and his girl (who said very little...She knew enough to keep her mouth shut...She knew, I guess, that she would have made a fool of herself)...But anyway, he was sitting there across

the table and Felch was right opposite me and really making quite a fool of himself...He was putting his foot in his mouth left and right. And Jon was just sort of sitting there poking holes in him. And it was really a terrible evening, but it was funny in retrospect. We didn't want to be there in the first place. It was Gene's idea, and here we were just sort of bored, and Gene was sort of trying to be the life of the party. But I think, on the other hand, that Jon had a real love for Gene. Gene is one of the people who retained contact with Jon and, as I say, one of these letters had what must have been... Toward the end, Gene had what must have been (and I hope he can remember it) a very illuminating conversation with Jon about specifically what he was doing in Selma...which I had only, what, a half-an-hour to talk with him about with other people present and I have described all the results in this letter of anything I can remember.

Gene, on the other hand, went to see Jon during his exams, I guess, which probably went over well, during that short period when Jon was back at E.T.S. for his finals, and they stayed up quite late, much too late, I understand, from Gene, considering Jon had an exam the next day--just talking about very critical things. Gene's a Roman Catholic and has always carried on the kind of discourse with Jon--a kind of unequal one in that Gene could never keep up with Jon. But, on the other hand, I think that Jonny felt that Gene represented a certain way of thinking which fascinated him.

S: Jon was very enamored of the Roman Catholic Church.

R: Yes, and I think you could say that Jon loved the Church, and I think that Jon loved a lot of the æsthetic aspects of the Church. I think one of the reasons...I remember his saying once, it sort of struck me, something about his loving the Queen because she was the titular head of his church and this struck me as sort of affected, you know...what is he trying... Anglican or something, but now I think he really meant it. I think he was very fond of the hierarchy of the Church as an institution with its Bishops and its priests and the institutional aspect of the Church through the ages and as it existed. Jon had a real aesthetic sense, as you know...a real sensitivity toward beauty in all of its aspects. And I think the liturgy must have certainly been one of the things that attracted him in his original conversion because, of course, he came out of what I consider now to be a kind of an arid, free-church background. You don't kneel and you don't chant and you don't have vestments and all that sort of thing. And I'm sure that although there were much more important things that this must have entered in back when he was in high school...adolescent...This must have entered in to his very strong change of heart in this conversion--well, really a conversion to Christianity, but it took the form...It was in the Episcopal setting that this took place. I don't think before that time he had any really strong religious connections at all. I don't think he felt that his

activities (although he was very active in the youth group at the Congregational Church, I don't think this was anything but a social relationship).

S: How much of a part do you think Ann played in...

R: Yes...Where to begin on that...Where to begin on his mother and Ann both. This is an ambiguous...I remember once...Well, now that's irrelevant...You don't want my opinions, you want what Jon said.

S: Well, I want your evaluations, because I've got some of mine and I really need...

R: My feeling always was, from the time that Jon was in the hospital after falling out of the window and doing whatever he did to himself and was recovering, I went to see him once and I remember his mother came to visit, and she has (I like her...you know...) and she has a very cool way about her if she wants to put it on. And I remember her sitting there at the foot of the bed--She was probably pretty annoyed with him... After all, he'd got into a lot of trouble...He'd fallen off the roof running away at night, and, naturally, she couldn't be expected to be very friendly toward him. But I remember I came home from that visit and told my mother, "Boy, I wouldn't want to have her for a mother." And, ever since that time (maybe I'm prejudiced), but I have had the feeling that Jon--Yes--was very close to his father and not as close to his

mother. Now, that's a terrible thing to say, and it may not be true, but I always felt he was always kind to his mother and would help her and help her with her coat...I don't have any evidence of this at all, and he never mentioned it. But I think there was something less warm about this...that, of course, when he had to take over the family when Emily had her difficulty there, her breakdown, he had to...

S: Do you think that was triggered primarily by the father's death?

R: Well, now, that's a question I don't feel equipped to answer. I don't doubt that the father's death had something to do with it. Emily too, though...I think you have to start with the fact (here I go again. I'm a musician, you know... And here I am trying to talk psychology, but...)...I think you have to start from the fact that the Daniels' are basically what my sister--my sister's very sort of realistic and maybe overly so...She's that kind of person...But she thinks they're a bunch of nuts, you know? And I think that basically they probably are, the Daniels'. I think there was a streak of mental unbalance back in the family somewhere, and I'm afraid it was on Dr. Daniels' side. So this may mean that Connie is the more normal one. But, in any case, I think there is a streak of nuttiness back there somewhere. I think you have to start with the fact that both Ann and Jonny were very...

were on the brink. I mean, they were the kind of people who would have breakdowns, who would go over the line into...And this doesn't take away in any way from Jon's significance as a religious...as a christian, because, let's face it, Christ must have been this kind of guy,...Right?...Yes. And I'm just thankful for this kind of nut...that we have this kind of nut. Well, this was interesting, this whole thing with Ann because Emily became...Well, you've spoken, well, more probably with Emily...I don't know how cooperative she would be now, but Emily was a fine one. My nephew was in her class in high school and knew her better than I did. But, in any case, she was quite dramatically inclined and interested in the theater and always in plays and everything. And, before she had her breakdown I remember I guess she went to Barnard...But before that I remember she was always the kind of girl walking around with long hair and dungarees and so forth. And then, she had this breakdown, and, as you know, she was suicidally inclined. She was always trying to do away with herself...

Come on in! They might even be able to add something to this...

S: Don't you think Jon was too.

R: Well, this is interesting...Is there evidence...It never went as far as it did with Emily, or did it?

S: No...

R: I mean, Emily would actually take overdoses of things. I remember his talking about her having caused them so much... You remember...Were you there when?...I remember him saying once...My mother was expressing sympathy about Emily, you know.,, "Too bad it's been so long."...She had been taken out of St. Luke's and put over in Concord because it was less expensive, and Jon was having to shoulder all of this. And I remember my mother expressing sympathy about her taking so long to recover. And, then, he said, sort of gritted his teeth and said, "Yes, she's taking her own sweet time about it." As if, this wasn't all. I mean she was making a pretty good thing of this too. But, on the other hand, she was definitely suicidally inclined. And I remember his describing...One time I was over there and she had just tried to do away with herself by taking an overdose of pills of some sort...But, of course, her father had left a lot of medicine and stuff around the house so she had access to a lot of stuff there. And, she had come down to dinner-- I guess it was Connie and Ann and Jonny and I don't know who else--and in the middle of the dinner it became evident that she was getting sick, and it turned out that she had taken this massive dose of something. So, they had to rush her to the hospital and pump out her stomach. And he was not at this point very sympathetic, because he felt, you know, she was home on leave from the hospital, and she was just making it as damn difficult as she could. And there was always this element of

tension in the family. Now, I'm not equipped to describe it in detail. I know that he made some reference to this difficulty with Emily, and I always had the feeling that there was this difficulty running through the family, and that it did become considerably worse when the father died. Now, he was overworked...He virtually worked himself to death, as you know. He wasn't around the house very much, but, still, he was a very strong influence. The kids loved him, I gather. And, when he was gone, this removed a kind of cohesive element in the family. And, I have a feeling there was a lot of strife after that.

S: Well, I'm going to say some things, and, while I'm holding you in confidence at this point, I want you to hold me in confidence.

R: Yes, of course.

S: I am forming the opinion, at any rate, that Jon was very dominated by the father figure, more than he was by his own personal father. That is that he surely influenced this, but that Jon just inclined to authority, and God figure, and that father figure, and personal father all had some influence. But I gather from what I have been able to uncover that what you have just said is quite true, that Jon really didn't see very much of his father.

R: No, he was so busy. He was always on call. He was a GP, and, well, a baby specialist.

S: And that Jon's mother certainly had more influence than it would first appear...You know, just in looking over his life. That she was really a very powerful person. I'm not sure that this is not reconcilable with the father figure in it, because she was the one who was around and in a lot of ways carrying the father's role, which is not the community picture because the community was the one who saw the father. The father was dominant in the community because they saw him, but in the home, because he was the dominant one in the community, the mother was the dominant one in the home. And Jon felt this very deeply, I think. I wouldn't want to say, unless I had some really more clear evidence, that in some ways Jon resented his father's not being around, and there's an amount of transference going on with the mother...I think he kind of resented her too. She was a possessive woman all right.

R: I gather that she was possessive and also a very strong woman. She always impressed me as a very...soft-spoken, yes... but a very determined woman. She would have her way. Well, witness the fact that she went back to school to teach after all these years, and it was terribly hard for her, and a woman of her age, to go back and take these courses and teach french. A witness of her determination and will to do it. And she was not a very successful teacher, you know, but by God she was

going to do it. No, I think she ruled with an iron hand around there, and I don't doubt that Jon resented it.

S: You have to have a kind of respect for her, and, certainly... that's clearly the case...Well, anyway we were talking and I want to go on with this because it is a fairly crucial area with Ann and Jon and the family relationship. And I was saying that one thing that I noticed, or at least it seems to me that happened, was that there was some considerable regression in Ann, that is, she, her letters were very simple during this period. It was almost as if she were a very childlike figure.

R: Was this before...? She had a shock treatment herself, didn't she, before that or after that?

S: This was while she was in Concord, I believe.

R: She had shock treatments, because I remember she was very defiant about it and said, "Oh, they think they've knocked out my memory but they haven't, and I can remember everything...Ha Ha, Ha..." You know,... But I don't know, this might have been even before that...I don't know...

S: What effect on Jon did you see?

R: In the Emily business? Oh, it was a terrible burden to him, I think. For what...I mean, what the inner aspects of it were... I mean, he must have realized that...In the first place, he must

have known what had gone on...that what was going on with her might seem to go on with him, or had gone on in the family... And that business about the family I had in the back of my head. I can't verify it, but I think you would find, if you looked back in the family history, a history of this. This must have been a greater burden to him than came out in conversation because he would have realized this aspect of it. As far as what I saw, it was mainly the mechanical burden of having to support...I mean, having to stop his schooling and go home and work in this cruddy job which he didn't like. If it hadn't been for he would have had a terrible...She was his only respite, I guess. Although he liked teaching--I think he taught Sunday school that year. He liked that all right. But, he had to go back and work to support the family, and he had to worry all the time about her and pay her bills--and, of course, at St. Luke's the bills were tremendous. This is why he moved her, presumably against her will and I think perhaps against her mother's...Here, again, I'm faking...I know there was some discussion about whether she ought to be moved, indeed, to Concord which is much cheaper. And I have the feeling that it was his decision, and he just decided it, and, sure enough, that's what happened. Because he felt that she was not trying to recover. Now, whether this is true and how much of her breakdown was...Well, I don't know anything about these things...How much of her recovery was slowed down

voluntarily, I don't really know. But, no, the effect on him was basically, from what I could see, that it was a great yoke that he had to bear. Of course, I think family matters were always a yoke for him. This business about the grandparents... There is some set of grandparents up in Vermont, I don't know which...or grandmother or something...

S: Her mother. She's now living with her there.

R: Oh, really! Then that's the old lady, then, whom we know. We met her...This was always a great problem to him because I can remember he would...They would have to take trips... obligations, and he'd have to take this great long drive up there. And, then, there was a time when he'd drive up there for a visit, and he'd have to drive to see Emily, and there was a lot of...It was a great strain on him. And all I ever heard about these family affairs was that they were a bother to him...That's not to say he didn't like his grandmother or anything like that, but that these were a burden. He refers to the chaotic nature of the house...Now whether that means... Of course, Emily wasn't there at that time. That was that year that he was working which was...

S: How did this look chaotic? I mean...

R: Yes, it has always looked...Because that room that is completely storage as far as I can see. And that room I

remember got fuller and fuller. And every time I would go over there I'd think we'll never make the kitchen through this pile of stuff but...

S: And the kitchen!...

R: Yes, once you get there...That strange ketch-all of a middle room where you sort of...

S: And every cupboard just covered...with boxes...and bags and groceries. I never had the nerve to ask if it's always been there.

R: Yes! As far as I can remember that dining room, that middle room, has been useless because it's so full of stuff. I don't think it always was as bad as it got toward, you know...later. I think after Dr. Daniels died, it got worse. I think it did. I don't know. Maybe it was always like that.

S: Well, the cleaning lady keeps coming in, and I keep wondering why.

R: What does she do and?

S: And how does she get around? How does she figure what to...?

R: Yes,...What to clean and...

S: The upstairs hallway...Have you ever been up there? You have to sort of slide along there against the wall because the

hallway just is piled full of stuff. And there's a little aisle...to get through...

R: We almost stopped there when we were home...We should have...

I was never clear...You see, my relationship to her was not close and was not a warm one. We always got along very well and all that, but she usually wasn't there. In fact, we'd plan a time to have our bull sessions when she wasn't going to be there, because we didn't think she'd care much for our theological , as we used to call them. But, they were always very good to me. They gave me a Savings Bond once, I remember. That was when Dr. Daniels was alive. But I never was close enough to her so that I feel now that she'd want to see me. I don't feel, on the other hand, that seeing me would bring back a lot of bad memories or that she would react negatively either...I just don't think she'd care, that's all. Although, otherwise I would certainly make an effort to go to see her. But I had the feeling that she--my subjective impression is that she didn't care that much about Jon's friends. Now, maybe that's not true. Maybe there were those that she did care about. But I don't think Jon's social life was anything more than a pain in the neck to her. She never knew what he was going to do next, pretty much, from high school right on. You know, he raised a lot of hell in high school. Now, whether he did when he got to college...Of course, this whole thing about going to

college...going to a military school...We threw up our hands, you know...Why? Why VMI. He obviously got a good education there, but why VMI...A guy of your standing could go anywhere. And, he felt he needed the discipline. He said so in as many words. "I need the discipline." I think he was, in this sense, insecure, and knew it...or at least felt that there was an element of him that would...Yes, he would go running off on a...Now, I don't know about the binges, how much he drank in high school. I know there was a group--Max Young, the fellow that was later killed, a friend of ours--he was always raising the devil in high school, and Jonny was friendly with him. I know on band trips, Max's suitcase was always rattling for the beer cans. It wasn't all clothing, we knew that. And whether Jon...I can't say that Jon actually drank much in high school, but he certainly was always raising the devil. He was always out riding around in cars with people and late at night. And she wouldn't know where he was, and she would...I can't say now that she would confine him to his room...That's not true...but I don't know that, for a fact, but that night that he sneaked out, he didn't feel that he could just go out. But, in any case, I think basically she was not awfully...I don't think she cared...She's a funny woman...I don't know her...I can't get very close to her. She's not warm and friendly and autobiographical the way Jon is. I think part of Jon's real sensitivity for other people, don't you think, comes out

of his depth of insight into himself. I mean, you read these letters and they, to me, are the most unselfish documents, but if you analyze them word for word, he's talking about himself most of the time. He's "Peering into the opacity of his own semen," as he says in one of these things. I think through this, as his father must have, he had a tremendous sensitivity for other people. I think he would just go out of his way to help them, to understand them.

S: VMI had that same authority and paternal image to him that it doesn't...At first it surprised--I was the chaplain at VMI and at Washington and Lee before I came here, so I know that institution very well, and pretty much from the inside. And when I was first put in touch with Jon here, I didn't know him there, it was through a mutual friend we had at the Institute and so I met him almost the first week I came to Cambridge, because this person had said go see him. And, I hadn't been with Jon very long before I said, you know, "I just don't understand why you were at VMI." And he said, "Well, I'm not sure I understand why either," but he said, "I think it had to do with certain fantasies that I had." I'm not sure "fantasies" is the right word, but it had to do with certain images, and if you want to equate those two terms, that's all right. But, I think, with the army background, initially with his father again, and that connection...and VMI is a very paternalistic institution and is also a very structured hierarchical institution

and you know your place, and discipline is, of course, a prime factor in the life of that institution. And, I don't think Jon liked it there...for some reasons very well...Yet, Jon stayed there, and there was a kind of a...almost as if he couldn't, even if he wanted to leave, he almost couldn't leave, that there was something, there was a need in Jon that this place was meeting, even though he wanted to react against the place for certain other reasons. And now it doesn't surprise me that he went to VMI really at all.

R: It doesn't me, now, from this point of view. No, he's had a certain feeling...Yes, a need for authority...Yes, that's interesting.

S: But you think, you know, the Church, VMI...You can look at motivation, and I'm not sure that it was just an appeal or a call for him or a conversion that Jon had that directed him to the Seminary, but I think that it was a lot of these other things too that played their part. Of course, that's part of being Jon...

R: This all reminds me too of what he says in this little letter here. We, apparently had had a talk at this time. I had been reading the Gospels, and I was very caught up in this. And, I thought, oh, this is it, you know...And particularly this matter of authority...And I think this ties in. He says here in this letter, July 12, 1962, "As ever, I am gratefully

astonished at the concrete and, therefore, unquestionable(?) simplicity of a certain kind of truth, like 'Follow me,' etc." I think, as he says earlier here, "Thanks to you," (well, it may not be thanks to me but thanks to the conversation) "a very specific direction and goal has occurred to me." And I think this was the point at which, yes, he needed a direction, and he needed a goal. For example, the whole matter of...I'm wondering about how much of it could be assumed under what we call discipline. Maybe this is a little irrelevant, but, for example, you know...You know everything, but...He was at Harvard trying to graduate in English and...

S: Not very successfully...

R: No...And I remember talking about this, and I said, "Well, you were there four years, and are you going to get some kind of degree." I at that time was more degree oriented than I am now. But, I thought it a shame for him to go and put in a year of hardwork and not have anything to show for it. I said, "Can't you get an M.A. or something out of it?" And he sort of didn't think he had a need for an M.A., if he went into the ministry. But he said, "Yes, I could if I just completed a couple of papers, term papers, and I'm going to try and do that this year while I have this job and pass them in." And he would have fulfilled the requirements. But he never did. I know that he fiddled around with those papers, and whether

he ever passed them in or not, I don't know, but he never got a degree. And, I admit, okay, his mind had turned to other things at that point like , the difficulties in his family and the ministry, after all. But there still was... He needed the pressure and, if you will, the authority of some kind of higher, institution or person, to, yes, point him, and make sure that he went. Not that he couldn't see the goals. I mean, he was perhaps more perceptive about where we're going in life than most people. But, to achieve them, and not get sidetracked in some, maybe, sensual activity or something, which was always tempting him, to be able to do that with some kind of direction, he did need, and he was aware that he needed a figure of authority to push him--to keep him in line.

S: Yes, and I think one of the problems that Jon was facing in Selma was the conflict with authority that was going on and beginning to assume authority himself, beginning to sort of realize that he was not only a man under authority but that he was also authority. And, therefore, as you know, Jon had a terrible fight over at the Seminary. A really bitter fight over seminarians going to the South. And stood up (and this was before he ever went) and said, "You cannot go and do this unless your Bishop allows you and unless the Bishop at the place at which you go--to which you're going--allows you."

R: Jon said this?

S: Yes. And then, not long thereafter, he was going without

the permission of the bishop. And there was a battle going on within him. Jon was fighting this strong need that he had in the hierarchy and what it was meeting in him. And, on the other hand, the yoke that he was bearing, first in the family, in having to assume the burdens that were represented, and then going and taking on the yoke of the negro, the burden of the negro people in Selma. And, the conflict here in the Seminary between the authority which he needed and, at the same time, his sensitivity and real love for these people, which won out. That is, that that took precedent over his own need for the other, and, therefore, he went. And, then, it comes out that he not only went but he stayed. And this intenseness, that you pointed out in his life is present here certainly, because other seminarians who went, came back, but not Jon. Jon went...to go back again. It was either all or nothing. It couldn't be part way. But, I remember, I had a long, long talk with Jon--we had many long talks in that living room. He'd usually come over about 11:00 at night, and at 1:00 in the morning he'd leave--about six scotches later--or more maybe. And I was very anxious, in a sense, that he not go back to Selma in the summer--Well, that's not true, actually, because the discussion centered around his going back to Selma immediately--the third time, in other words. And I told him that I felt--my reasoning was based on a second meeting that had taken place at E.T.S.

that I had been present at and which was gruesome, because there was very little comprehension on the part of most of the seminarians of what was going on. They were too simple-minded, and they're the most dangerous people, I think. Simple-minded people who don't have to be simple-minded because their abilities are there...And so John had had an awful time. He'd come back from Selma. He'd spoken, and the question period was just dreadful. And so I went up to him because I knew he was upset, and I was upset, and so I said, "Do you want to talk a little bit," and he said, "Yes, let's get out of here." And so we went to the john (it's the only place where there wasn't anybody else) and we just stood and talked there for a little while and then came out and he said, "Look, I've got to talk some more, but I've got a few obligations; can I come by later." And I said, "Sure, of course. Well it was midnight before he ever came. And then we just talked for just hours, and I said, "Jon, the need here is so incredible, and the people that you are dealing with here are going to be leaving soon and going all over the country as leadership people, and I think you really ought to get in here and do some work. And you have the experience now that you can bring to bear here." I wasn't against him going back to Selma. I just felt that this was really a priority almost at this time. And a number of other people, I think, tried to get him to think about this. But, after this conversation he did think about it. He went around and saw and asked a lot of people. And I gather a good many of

them reported my own thinking,...some of it. And, then, a couple of days later he came back, and he said, "I've got to go back." And I said, "Well, you've got to make that decision. It has to be your decision because I can't tell you what to do." But, he said, "I've got promises to keep. I promised these people I would return. And they gave me their trust. And, if I don't come back, why should they ever trust a white man again." And I said, "Okay." And that was that. And so, the real commitment he had, I think, at this point--not just for the movement...for the people he'd gotten to know--sort of won out over.....

But Jon's motives were very mixed, I think...This letter I have shown to nobody. It's going to be published...I think it's a very important letter...And he indicates here...He says, "I've got some stewing to do and some praying. But I suppose the question won't be answered for some time. Yet I have a hunch I have a little more learn of radical obedience and of poverty and chastity too, for that matter. It is so hard to give oneself up, and yet so essential. I think I used to want to be an academic to feed my pride or perhaps only my vanity. Which-ever, I'm beginning to have second thoughts. The Gospel is less and less a matter primarily for the intellect and more and more a matter of and living anew. I don't know whether I will ever again have the energy or the patience to play games. I haven't grown less sophisticated, I guess, but have grown simpler. Maybe because I'm tired and hungry most of the time.

A day comes when the sinner sees himself in the mirror and the old pretenses and sophistries which used to function don't anymore. Conversion occurs again and again, and one is never quite the same even if the old man looks pretty well-preserved. If it were not for Jerusalem, I think I should nearly be ready for the trappists or some such. I'm not, and yet I know now as I only have known before, that I must learn to pray. Jerusalem. I'm wondering again..."

I think he was quite radical.

R: Yes.

S: Ready to go to die and...The death business is interesting. Have you read Markings, by ?

R: No.

S: Well, Jon had very much...Well, you could put this in several different ways, I suppose. You could say, as I would say now, at least toward the end of his life, that he had a very strong sense of the imminence of his own death. We talked about it. We talked about it a lot. Someone else could say that Jon had strong suicidal tendencies, and, after all, you could say that about Jesus. Or you could say that he had a strong sense of the imminence of his own death. I mean, what a strong sense of destiny. And sometimes, you got

with Jon, and I'm not sure that there wasn't this suicidal tendency that itself became transformed into something else... into what I would then call the sense of the imminence of his own death...Not that he was out to kill himself, anymore. I don't think that he had that need. But that he was going to die, and that it was going to be sometime soon...he was quite sure of. And I think being killed in Haynesville would have been a terrific shock to him. I don't think he ever expected to die there. But that he died that summer I don't think would have been a surprise to him...someplace. But not Haynesville. You know, just like would have said, "yes, I'm going to die, but not in a plane crash in the jungle...Somebody's going to assassinate me, but I'm not going to die that way." And I think that Jon expected to die somehow...I mean, that it was going to happen to him...He wasn't going to . He said, "I may get killed, but it's not going to be because I wasn't careful about it." And I believe that. I don't think he was...

R: I gather...about the car...yes, right...That time...I mentioned where the people were following him with a shotgun and he had to finally...He notified somebody...

S: Well, we were sort of talking about the Selma experience, and I had been asking you if you'd seen any characteristics or elements in Jon's life that were kind of precursors of this event. I wonder if you could maybe comment about Jon in terms

of his development, that is maturity and this kind of thing.

When you saw him after his first experience in Selma prior to his going back, did you notice any changes in him?

R: Well, I don't think so. Not in terms of...There was not a change in attitude, but I think there was a change perhaps in the subject matter of his conversation. In other words, clearly he had a goal, and something which was of vital concern, which he had, I guess, never had before...had been searching for in all his various escapades...his converting...joining the church, and going to military school, and various love affairs and so forth. But none of these had ever...going to graduate school in English, indeed...but none of these had ever gripped him clearly the way this had. So, now, he had something to talk about. As far as attitude, I wouldn't notice any change. He was just as jovial...that business about "keeping your mouth shut, but your bowels open,"...just as much kidding with my sister as there was at Christmas time and as there was when he visited us in the Fall. No, I couldn't say that there was a change in him that would show.

Russell's wife: But, of course, he only saw Jon for, what, twenty minutes, and other people were there, in a large group.

. It wasn't an intimate conversation. My sister was there. My father. You were there. And my parents were floating in and out, and the three of us, you, my sister, and I, were all bomb-

barding him with questions...you know...about what he was doing and why he was doing it...

S: I don't quite remember, but you mentioned that he had come to see you two after you were married. Now, was this that time, or was this...?

Russell's Wife: No, this was much earlier. This was a year ago October.

R: Early October of 1964, before he had thought about Selma, presumably, at all. In fact, even before Selma had become a focus of interest. That was when he came to see us. And, at that time, as I say in one of those letters, he was thinking about being ordained a deacon in the Spring and going up and serving in New Hampshire. That's what he wanted. He had even thought of the Chaplaincy at Dartmouth, I guess, or some part... But I put this all in a letter.

S: Yes, I remember that. I just wondered if there had been any indications at that time of any directions that he thought he was going to be taking that might bear on Selma...

Russell's Wife: I don't think so, but I don't remember...

R: No, I think he showed interest in his course work and in taking over the bookstore, and in his ordination...in completing in other words, his studies, and his ordination as a Deacon, and

serving up somewhere in New Hampshire...No, I can't think of anything that would have implied this specific direction except this whole atmosphere. Jon was always a person who would go off on a tangent like this, if the moment arose and he was convinced this was what he had to do. He would go off the deep end, as my sister put it. And I think this is probably a valid way of talking about it, that he would go off the deep end.

S: I have a queer impression that sex was a pretty big part of Jon's life, and a very troublesome one and was right up until the end...And I think WHI ties right into that somehow. I mean, I think that that was a real search for masculine identity, and there was a lot of that there...being a he-man school.

Russell's Wife: This is right. Both you and Jonny were sort of...

R: Effeminate?

Russell's Wife: Not effeminate...I don't mean effeminate...

I would never use that word...but, you know, the skinny intellectually type.

R: Yes, there was certainly this. Jon was always very sexually oriented. I think his humor...

Russell's Wife: Well, his conversations were real...

R: You should have seen these two go at it!

Russell's Wife: His conversations with us...He had a real wit...was tremendous...It was always obscene somehow underneath...It may have been far, far under, but there was a stream of insanity.....I got along with him tremendously from the moment that I met him. I had an instant sort of rapport with him, maybe it was on this level, I don't know...

R: I wish we could reconstruct for Bill. Isn't it awful how we can't...this conversation that we had there in October. Because it just went on and on. It was terribly funny. We got talking about Emily Shaw who was a girl out of our past. She was in my class in high school, and was a local figure. And there was always a lot of kidding about her because she was sort of--I won't say frigid--but she certainly wasn't very sexy. And she caused a lot of merriment. How did this conversation get on to Emily?

Russell's Wife: I don't know, but it went on for just hours, I think, about Emily, and Jon's experiences forcing himself to take her to dances.

R: We had both forced ourselves to take her out.

G: Why was that? I mean, why did you bother?

Russell's Wife: She was very smart.

R: She was socially...Yes, she was smart and not an unattractive girl...

S: Nice girl...made her own clothes...

R: Yes, very attractive...Rich...

Russell's Wife: Very dramatically oriented...carries herself... very clean...

R: I was trying to think...Jon and I had a lot of conversations about--there was this obscene business which was kidding, of course--but, then, I think also sex was a great...yes, a very strong factor in his life. His attraction, for example...I at one time was dating a girl who was considerably younger than I, and we talked about this some, and he too had this attraction for younger girls, and I know he spoke at that time-- Well, he speaks in a letter here about some girl in the choir-- and he was always forming what to him, anyway, and perhaps he was feeling guiltier about it than he needed to--but he was always looking at the members of his youth group, for example, as potentially sexually attractive to him...He refers to his relationship to these people...Brown and Pembroke students... and so forth and that mission south of Providence there... and what-does-he-call-it- tenuously pastoral relationships. I think he was very aware of this. I remember we talked over there one time with a good deal of sympathy (I had just broken

my relationship with this girl, not finally, but for the first time anyway, and I remember I got a good deal of sympathy from him about this. He cited an example of a younger girl that he had found himself falling in love with and had said, you know, "none of this...forget it." So, this was a mutual problem certainly. Just one very small aspect of it, and I think...

on either his part or mine, but it was there, and we shared common views on it...And, then, of course, yes, this relationship with this girl I speak of... Do you remember that girl's name that he went out with? I must have spoken about it. Remember that sort of...that girl with the sort of doubtful reputation? It doesn't matter. I can find out at home. This relation must have been almost totally sexual as far as I can see. Except for his...I mean, I just don't see how he could have communicated with her, or maybe I'm thinking too much of him in the intellectual and not in the spiritual sense. I don't see how he could have communicated with this kind of girl, with this particular kind of girl, indeed, on any but a physical level. I'm sure he did try to and in fact, thinking that he could communicate with her in some other way, probably kept him dating her avidly for, as I say, at least a year...

I wonder about this...Now that we're thinking about this business of authority, security, and so forth, one might consider that relationship that he had during high school with

this Carolyn Pierce as also perhaps...I mean, he always went for the same girl, and there was a certain security in this relationship...and perhaps this would in some sense tie in too... There was never any question about...I don't know how that got started...I don't know of how much...Well, you can't predict when you are going to get married. You get married pretty much when your senses dictate. Jon didn't at any point, and I don't know whether this was just because he didn't happen to run into the right girl or whether he always had something that interested him more or whether...whether what?...I don't know. Maybe he just didn't have the chance.

S: I think he was worried about this, and I think he wanted to.

R: I think he would be the kind of person who would have wanted to get married.

Russell's Wife: Well, you remember that letter that he wrote about that wedding...the one he got to...and he didn't get to ours...and the girl... Roman Catholic, and he thought this would make him very happy. Immediately, probably when you react that way, you are thinking more in the marriage situation and not the dating because in the dating situation....doesn't matter, but it might matter in the marital status...But it seemed to indicate that he was perhaps thinking very strongly about girls as possible mates instead of dates.

R: He says something about this in one of his letters, when he was talking about ours...

S: He made some comments to me about, you know, he wished to find the right girl, and it wouldn't be too long before he did, and this kind of thing.

R: And he says, "You know you have my warmest and fondest good wishes, and I suppose I don't need to say my God-given envy."

S: Did he ever talk to you about E.T.S.?

R: Yes, to a point...Any particular?...

S: I wondered what he might have said about the school to you. I mean, we certainly talked about it. I just wondered if...?

Russell's Wife: We had some discussions about seminaries that week-end he was with us, because we talked about the minister at our church...And we talked about Berkeley...Now, I can't remember what it was but we did have some discussion about seminaries that day...

R: And that day that we came here to visit...

Russell's Wife: That was earlier than that...that was the first time I ever met him, that day we were in Cambridge.

R: He must have said something then. He says in one of these

letters...He talks about his courses, and he seemed very excited about them. I guess nothing that would be of any help to you unless I think of it later. I don't know why he chose E.T.S. and not...Well, I suppose, being at Harvard...another seminary...

Q: Largely it was because he was here, and also because this area of the country, it pretty much is E.T.S. oriented.

R: I keep thinking of little fragments, but I'm trying to think of things he actually said...specific...not just a lot of...

specific things and remarks. You remember that remark he made about the chapel? Remember when we came into the

and I was talking to him, and I said we had looked at the chapel while he was in class...That's right, he was in the bookstore...

And we went in and looked at the chapel and I said something about

we'd been looking at his psalm book, and he said something about

it, that we'd probably found it a bit strange (we hadn't yet),

compared with the Gregorian, that is. And, then, we also said

something about liturgy and whether...practices...what they did

in the way of feeling and so forth. And he said that they were

very liberal, and his expression was something like, "They don't

care if you 'something' in the chapel." Was it "scream" or some-

thing?...probably worse than that, knowing Jon...but they don't

care if you do something-or-other, the idea being that the

Chapel isn't per se a holy-of-holies. There are places where they would worship in the chapel itself, but this isn't one of them. But he must have said--you know, that day we came to visit him--a lot of things. That's a conversation that just completely has left me, but he must have said a lot of things. What did we talk about at lunch, for example?

Russell's Wife: I think mostly trivialities...You hadn't seen him in a long time, and he had never met me, and it was one of those days. We didn't have long with him because I had a class, and he had a class. We went up to his room...We kidded some about drinking because I had sort of put you on the wagon, and he said, "Come in and I'll treat you to a drink and dinner. And I said, "Well..." We had some kidding about that.

R: Some kidding about drinking, too, in the seminary context. Oh, yes, he said something about the parties being pretty rough.

Russell's Wife: And that he remembered staggering up those stairs up to his room...He gave the impression that the seminary hadn't made him stop drinking.

R: Yes, that didn't make any difference. The parties were pretty wild. And his comment about...I think that was mostly Dick Ullman, you know him? He was a friend of mine at Amherst. He was a year behind me and in my fraternity. And it was so

funny. We were walking in to find Jon in the bookstore, and we walked by the john, and out of the john came this sepulchral, familiar voice. And I said, "My heavens, it's Ullman." I didn't know he was here. And, sure enough, he was. Then I told (I said "Hello" to him), and then later I told Jon about it and Jon related that incident about how Jon had preached a sermon in class about birth, the beauties of childbirth.

Russell's Wife: And Ullman said, "What do you know about it?"

R: Yes. Ullman got up and said, "Your sermon made me sick."

And then, he proceeded to tell him about...

Russell's Wife:...That he'd had children and what did Jon, a bachelor, know about having children...the beauties of birth, or something like this. They had a bit of an argument about it.

R: But that actually is more an anecdote about Ullman than about Jon. I'm just trying to think what he said that time... She's good because she has a much better memory.

Russell's Wife: Yes, but you see I don't have anything to remember. I only saw Jon four or five times.

R: That night he was at the house we talked about his future.

Russell's Wife: You kidded a long time about old friends and acquaintances...

R. About Emily...Great jokes about Emily. This business about the Kent Fellowship came up in the kitchen when we were out there, and he was a little mislead. He didn't realize that I was virtually finished with my degree, and he thought that I was eligible for a Kent Fellowship the following year, which turned out not to be true, but he went ahead and nominated me. But we did talk some about that.

Russell's Wife: We talked about your going into the ministry.

R: Yes, that's right. I was still toying, much to her dismay, with the idea of going into the ministry. There was a lot of talk...shook her up...because he was talking about collars. This being the symbol of ordained ministers. And he was trying to tell her, as he said to me once...Oh, I remember now. This all relates to when he had been talking about this girl he had been going out with, and I said, "How does she feel about marrying a minister. And he said, "Well, I try to tell her that you marry the man and not the priest." And, then, this came up again. We were talking, and he was trying to soothe Lorna a little bit. Lorna does not want to be a minister's wife under any circumstances. Well, you can sympathize with this.

S: My wife can.

Russell's Wife: My image was a little limited.

R: She thought of the ministry as only the parish.

Russell's Wife:...Being the superintendent of the Sunday school, head of the women's guild...

R: But Jonny kept talking about...would such and such happen if he was in a collar? And Lorna sort of pricked up her ears... "What's all this collar business?"..."What's this all about? Because he was assuming, carrying this farther than we had, perhaps vicariously, in actually considering the fact that I might go into the ordained ministry and considering it a lot more seriously than we had.

S: You said he talked about his future.

R: Well, I pretty much covered it, I'm afraid, except about that business. He thought that clergymen in New Hampshire were a very sharp bunch of guys. He was very impressed, and he wanted to go up there. He had mentioned this Dartmouth thing a couple of times. Now, whether he actually had some kind of foot in the door up there, I don't know, but I have a feeling this opportunity might have come up for him, if he wanted to do it. So, I don't know whether he was thinking more in terms of the parish. I think he felt in one sense that being unmarried would make it a little awkward for him in the parish because he'd get in all these love relationships...youngsters in the congregation and so forth. In fact, I remember his talking about this. So,

perhaps the chaplaincy--college chaplaincy--was not only something he'd like to do per se, but was also perhaps a more nearly live option for him at that point, being unmarried.

Russell's Wife: We also talked that night about something we were going to ask Jonny and, of course, never could. That remark he'd made to you about the need of the laymen in the church...

R: Yes. I asked him quite simply...See, I never could think about being an active christian other than in the ordained ministry for some reason. I had a mental block about this. Maybe because the laymen were so lethargic in any church I had anything to do with. The clergy did all the work. I asked him something about what can a layman do, after all...And, what did he say? How far did we get with that?

Russell's Wife: It was one of the things we never resolved. Because we talked about it more, and we said the next time we see Jonny, we'll have to ask him...And, of course, he was killed...

R: Well, all I can remember is trivial things, like his being... rushing off in the morning and his being late. The breakfast was nearly cold by the time he got through shaving. Then he got to the train, and the train was just about to come, and he didn't have any cigarettes. So, I ran over to Green's Supermarket

and just barely got back.

Russell's Wife: He just barely got down to see us too. He had something wrong with his knee...and he called and said "I'm not coming on this train. I'm coming on the next train. I've got to go to the hospital or the clinic or something." One of the problems with you two is that a lot of your conversation time was spent in this bantering...this very high level kind of...back and forth.

R: Very rapid fire kind of things that you just can't re-create.

Russell's Wife: Back and forth...that a lot of it was pretty light, though underneath it probably was a more profound thing.

S: I wish you could reconstruct at least one of those conversations. Maybe if you think about it long enough, one of them will come back. It would be very nice to be able to put in just a little repartee.

Russell's Wife: The only one I can remember--even the subject matter of it--was that one when he came over to give us our belated wedding gift.

R: I told Bill part of that one, because I could remember it pretty well. It's nice to have a little warm thing...And a little hot thing...Laura started it by looking at his hat and saying, "It's nice to have a little warm thing."...And then

your skunk coat came up. She has a fur coat...An old ratty thing...

S: Were you wearing that coat.

Russell's Wife: Yes, I was wearing that same coat. And he came just as we were leaving bearing the gift.

R: So I gestured to your coat and said, "Yes, It is good to have a little warm thing..."...looking at you, and he would guffaw.

Russell's Wife: And it went on and on.

R: But that's the one I bet that we could try to reconstruct, if any.

S: That's probably not the one for the book.

R: No, that's right...That's the trouble. Most of these would involve satire of some living person, or obscenity.

S: Well, satire is all right. But the thing that I have to be very careful about in the book is that I don't want to use examples and illustrations that can be misused by certain people who like to get their hands on anything they could to disparage the character of this person. So that, while I know there are certain things that are true about Jon, and that it's important that they show up in the book, I want to pick the right place for it to show up, that is, I may have ten examples in which only

one would be suitable in the book, and the other nine would be easily distorted...You know, this is the kind of person he was and no wonder, etc...

Russell's Wife: Yes. It seems it would be very complicated with Jon from that point of view...of things that people could misinterpret...misconstrue. As you say, he could have had a feeling of his imminent death and yet you could also say he was suicidal. There is a very big difference.

S: You could take an example like the one you have just given which in the context of Shakespearean dialogue, this is marvelous, but put in the context of this book is just the kind of thing that certain people would like to find out about him. And they develop this whole character as being a beatnik with a dirty mind...Well, a lot of people would like to make him out to have been because of the way they can defend themselves.

Russell's Wife: We'll have to think about that.

S: Think about it, even if you only come up with six lines.

R: Well, how about that one we had on the porch before he went back? Might there be some interesting things in that? Or do you...?

Russell's Wife: There was a lot of baloney about Gamble Lee.

What was that? That was what Emily named her first child.

R: Yes...but you can't put that in the book. Apparently, her child is named Gamble? Is this true? Because they didn't know whether it was going to be a boy or a girl? I didn't know whether Jon was kidding or not.

Russell's Wife: You couldn't tell. He loved to kid his sister. Laura is a very matter-of-fact kind of person, and Jon would lead her on.

S: Well, the name of the child is odd, and I believe that's it. I'll have to look in my files. Have you met her husband?

R: Yes, I met him in the hospital when we went...when Mrs. Daniels was in for observation...They were afraid she had cancer or something. Back at the same time I was in for kidney stones, when he speaks of in that letter. And Vinny was there with Emily and I met him. He didn't say much.

S: I gather that marriage was not particularly a happy thing for the family.

R: I don't know how it could be, given the circumstances. What did the two of them have, at least here again, from the societal standpoint, to go to marriage on? Maybe on the other hand...No, anyway, Laura was asking him what about Emily, and what about her baby, and all this sort of thing, and what did

they name it? And Jon said, "Gamble." And she said, "Come on, you're kidding me." "No I'm not, they did." "Why in the world would they name a baby Gamble?" "Well, they didn't know whether it was going to be a boy or a girl." Of course, you can't do this sort of thing without the facial expressions...

Russell's Wife: And Laura didn't believe it. I don't think she ever believed him. There was again a sort of repartee... He was leading her on and she was trying to wheedle out of him what his mother was going to be doing that summer, and he said something about her going to summer school. And Laura was trying to pry the information out of him, and he was being very, very cozy.

S: Well, Jon did enjoy a good time with people. And, a lot of the people didn't enjoy the times he had with them.

R: It was hard to get out of a certain kidding. I could get out of it all right by letting him...He realized when you were being sincere and wanted to stop hacking around. But it was also...Just the slightest remark...I remember that day, in fact, when we were in the hospital room with his mother, I wasn't trying to be funny, but I was making some remarks to Mrs. Daniels about people we'd known...like Gail Ford, and some people like this....And he was interpreting these things. You know, he would sort of chuckle over there, and I'd realize that what I'd said could have been interpreted in a certain way.

He was so acute this way. Sometimes it really got beyond me. Things that I hadn't meant to be funny would strike him funny. But we could work on trying to reconstruct...I can think of a lot of specific remarks, such as, "Are you in Selma as a representative of the Episcopal Church?" And he said, "I'm there as a christian." I know he says that point blank, word for word. So that, I think, would be the only conversation I'd have a chance of reconstructing. And I could work on that. And I don't know exactly what aspects of it you, if any, would be interested in. The conversation that would be ideal would be one that showed both his perspicacity and also his interests, because so often his keen wit came out in these trivial material things. He wouldn't want to go into print either, I'm sure.

Russell's Wife: You might tell that conversation we overheard that we found so striking...

R; Oh, yes. I direct a chorous up near where we live, and during the, one of the breaks, one of the girls in the front row was telling the lady next to her, a freshman in college, she had to write a term paper. And I overheard the name Jonathan Daniels, and I sort of asked her more about this.

Russell's Wife: Well, what we overheard was she said, "I'm going to have to write about a certain word..."