

FRED FOX

Cambridge, Massachusetts

January 21, 1966

FOX: Well, we were four years separated, and actually Jon was probably closer friends with my sister. We were initially friends as children of physicians... family. That's the way the acquaintance came about and was sustained through the years. Actually I think, well, Jon and I spoke some the last couple of years before the summer, and I think it was then that the friendship was closest. Actually I didn't consider myself one of his close personal friends. I didn't go to school with him...was equally close to both Jon and his mother, and I think they were close to me in that same respect...He was also a very good friend of my first brother-in-law...He was a friend, yes. They used to raise hell together in high school...

(Fox says to get in touch with Bob McFarlan. He has his address.)

Jon was a year older than my sister. And families would get together... social affairs and a play and what-not. First instance when I can remember Jon raising hell, which is quite typical of Jon. It was just an amusing anecdote, kids five or six years of age told what areas of the house were restricted including such areas as the upstairs and the garage. Typical of Jon and my sister, they were found up in the garage chopping a hole through the floor to see just how safe it was. Sort of thing I picture as characteristic of Jon, and I don't think he ever lost that either. He still had it with him. He was about six or seven.

And then in high school even, there was the time Jon and my brother-in-law were out driving around--probably drink or something but mostly driving--raising hell at night, and Jon snuck up on the back roof...

.....

Always seemed strange that Jon would go to VMI...

His relationship with his mother and the family briefly...Jon and I think his sister--but his sister to a less extent, I think--rebelled a little bit against

his mother. She was quite a bit more distant from the children, I think, than their father was. She seemed wrapped up, so to speak, in her affairs and clubs and this, that and the other thing and was very independent. I don't know what she expected of them...the children, really. I know that she gave the appearance of being quite apart from them sometimes. I know that Jon's father, I believe, did go fishing with them and got together with them in what little time he did have away from the office...particularly his being in obstretical practice. Very well liked in the community, themost well liked of the physicians there in Keene. I think both Jon and his sister were a little less than happy the way his mother kept house, seemed not to keep house, disorganized and laissez-faire attitude toward housekeeping and homemaking. I don't really know how close Jon and his sister were. I don't think it ever came up in my discussions.

Well....When you called and said Connie had referred to me as a close friend, said something to you then--I didn't put it in that category--as it happened, the last couple of years Jon had very strong sympathies to few events in my life and my sister's life and we shared a few ideas about that. I saw him on an occasional vacation, but we had no ongoing correspondence particularly. We knew each other from the same background through the years. It was that sort of friendship. I feel as close to his mother as I did to Jon. So, it's a bit misleading..... Over all family picture perhaps, but not Jon particularly....

Did not surprise me that Jon went to Selma....Jon was the type who would go on stronger conviction than martyrdom...This was what I understood...that Jon would want to help in the education of some of the less fortunate people who happened to be in the negro district and Jon wanted to work through the church as much as possible. I know that he said that he tried around...the chapel also to speak with some of the Episcopal personnel I believe in the other churches in town to try to work from this viewpoint. I think was frustrated, thworted in some of his --many of his--attempts--to do it through the congregation because they were pre-

dominantly...It would be an adventure, a challenge to Jon. It would be certainly more than a lark, but he had spirit and courage and would do this and would have the convictions that would take him down there and he would stay on with this conviction. He certainly was aware of the dangers down there. He told me that he'd been followed on many occasions. I don't think he mentioned that he'd been shot at--I think at Christmastime he spoke just briefly outside of his house to the effect that he was extremely aware that it was extremely hazardous for him to be down there and for anybody else to be down there. His car was known and followed. And yet he certainly felt that he had to be down there. It was a mission for him and he enjoyed working with children. That date must have been wrong. It was after Christmas. In March...

...He knew that his mother...had misgivings, but he also knew--felt confident--that this was what she would want him to do really. She wouldn't withhold him or restrain him from going down there. She was perfectly aware of the dangers and yet she wouldn't consider speaking to him about not going...She felt it was that important to him.

S: Can you reconstruct any of that conversation?

FOX: That was really...we happened to be talking about one of the psychiatrists in Keene and the way he handled physicians and it got on to his going back. It was a very brief conversation naturally...quick exchange. He was certainly serious enough and realistic enough to appreciate what his presence meant and whatever danger it might have been in the South for him. Yet, he didn't dwell on it by any means. It was not a major concern. It was minor to him. He was much more concerned with education of the people he was working with, trying to work some understanding with them and through his church work.

S: Can you quote him?

FOX: No, I can't on that occasion.

What I would like you to do is sit down and try to reconstruct that conversation?

FOX: It was very brief. The only thing I can remember--it has nothing to do with the South, but it was typical of Jon...down to earth. At that same time... in talking about this incident in Keene about psychiatrists and the way psychiatrists have handled some patients. He was perfectly able to call a psychiatrist an out-and-out bastard and be very vehement about it too. So, Jon was far from being lost in the clouds.

S:

FOX: Jon had a very analytical mind, oriented toward psychiatric understanding. How much studying he'd done in the area, I don't know, but he could still react very spontaneously to the behavior of other people in terms of judging other people. Now whether this was an off-guard moment...He'd be very free and open in the way he spoke about other people.

S: Did you notice any changes in Jon over the years?

FOX: None, that I could say really because I wasn't that close to Jon...

S: Where is your sister?

FOX: She's in Exeter, New Hampshire. Her name now is Helen Fox Sanborn. She's remarried. I'm not sure it would be any more helpful to speak to her than to me in a sense. We knew the family about the same...I'm sure that whatever my first brother-in-law did with them was on a frivolous level, quite sure of that, Bob McFarland, who's in the service.

S: How would you characterize Jon?

FOX: Well, roughly, an affable, out-going individual, strong interest in dramatics, excellent in the acting that he did do, of high ideals, principles. He never lost his sense of humor, flair for living was conspicuous whenever you met Jon. I never did have a chance to hear from him in the pulpit. I know he did preach in Keene and the sermons were well-received. I didn't hear critical comment on them as to the content.

S: How about weaknesses?

FOX: Well, I think I knew Jon only through his strengths...I wouldn't call it a weakness but I know that he was very critical of the home situation with his mother, and I think his sister was also at the time very critical of the family. I think her emotional difficulty was in great part was the relationship--the strain on the relationship with their mother...And yet Jon was I think devoted to her. He came back willingly from Cambridge and had her down to Cambridge. From everything she has said to me...had a good time. But I don't think he felt tied to Keene or to his mother. He felt a responsibility there which is in a sense an obligation, but an appropriate responsibility...

S: How would you characterize Jon?

FOX: Well, roughly, an affable, out-going individual, strong interest in dramatics, excellent in the acting that he did do, of high ideals, principles. He never lost his sense of humor, flair for living was conspicuous whenever you met Jon. I never did have a chance to hear from him in the pulpit. I know he did preach in Keene and the sermons were well-received. I didn't hear critical comment on them as to the content.

S: How about weaknesses?

FOX: Well, I think I knew Jon only through his strengths...I wouldn't call it a weakness but I know that he was very critical of the home situation with his mother, and I think his sister was also at the time very critical of the family.

I think her emotional difficulty was in great part was the relationship--the strain on the relationship with their mother...And yet Jon was I think devoted to her. He came back willingly from Cambridge and had her down to Cambridge. From everything she has said to me...had a good time. But I don't think he felt tied to Keene, or to his mother. He felt a responsibility there which is in a sense an obligation, but an appropriate responsibility.