

THE REVEREND WILLIAM HAZELETT

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KEENE, NEW HAMPSHIRE

Hazelett: ...At the funeral and all...I remember hearing about Jon when he decided to go down to Selma last March. I was not at all overly sympathetic to this type of demonstration with men and women going down for free stays and making some sort of a demonstration and going back home in twenty-four to forty-eight hours...felt it was a waste of money. It could surely be used in other areas. When I heard that Jon had made his decision to remain in Alabama and work, I was at once pleased that he decided that this was his job, his calling to do...concern that he may be losing out on his theological education, and also fearful of his own personal safety. We were happy when he finally returned to New Hampshire and came home for final examinations at the seminary. I was distressed to find that Jon was going back to Alabama to work for the summer but realized that nothing could shake him from his real desire to do this work. I made the best of it and gave him God's Speed.

S: Did you talk to him about it?

Hazelett: Very frequently, but felt that there wasn't any sense in pursuing it any further. Jon was a strongminded person, and when he felt that this was the thing that he must do, then that was what he must do. And he felt very strongly that there was

job to be done in Alabama and that he could do it. I didn't receive any letters from him, any communications from him from Alabama except at Easter--Easter message--but the young lady that he was dating at the time and writing to, a member of this parish, Mary McNaughton, did have correspondence with him and shared his views with me. This way I kept in touch with Jon while he was going through these ordeals in Alabama.

S: Never talked to him before this?

Hazelett: Oh yes, we had several conversations, theological matters. We found that our views were a good deal alike. I visited him down at the seminary and we talked...shop talk. Had several occasions at social functions.

S: Do you remember what your shop talk was about?

Hazelett: Things that seminarians usually talk about: Way of conducting services; grievances with the church because they wouldn't take a stand on this and wouldn't take a stand on that. The church should be doing this; the church should be doing that. Things that sometimes seem to be a little foolish after you have gotten out of seminary for several years. And also on theological matters...holy orders...just shop talk. Things that you try to avoid while you are in seminary...get tired of it there. Every once in awhile you have a craving for it. But Jon's intellect was a great deal better...far advanced than mine. I'm afraid

we couldn't discuss philosophy together...because Jon really outshone me...

S: How did he move around Keene?

Hazelett: Quickly. You never knew where Jon was going to be... go quickly from place to place, but would never hesitate to stop and talk to anybody he knew on the street. I've seen him many times just talking to people on the street, young and old. He was just so genuinely friendly to everybody. There was a function in Church around Christmas...great crowds of people around for one reason and another. Jon couldn't move through the halls of the Church without stopping and talking to just about everybody, just as if they were some long lost brother or sister; whether he knew them casually or not, he extended a warmth of friendship to them. I'd say that the best way to describe Jon's movement around Keene was a friendly movement...quickly but never in so much haste that he couldn't stop and talk with people in a friendly way and, shall we say, in a very professional way... concerned in many different spheres.

A:

S: ...recommendation...seminary?

Hazelett: As a rector recommending a boy to seminary? Jon was very devout. He led a devout life, holy life, yet he was still a devil. I think he liked to pull pranks and probably did in seminary...everywhere. He enjoyed life so much that...he wouldn't

do anything serious--but there have been pictures I've seen at the Daniels' house and especially in younger years during college. He just seems to have a little of the devil in his eyes. In no way to take anything away from him, but a real enjoyment of life. I guess this might be interpreted as a devil in the eye. But I think he really enjoyed life, and he enjoyed seeing other people enjoy life. We had a New Year's Eve party here last year. Jon came and several other young people about our age, and he just had one hilarious time, just fooling around and dancing and laughing. I remember we were trying to teach him how to twist. He couldn't do it. He really enjoyed life. I think he'd do anything to see other people enjoy life also. This was his gay side. He could be very serious and was, I'm sure, on many occasions as he was with the Alabama affair, very serious and had his mind made up.

But Jon had a strong feeling for the Church. I know he toyed--He had a great respect, shall we say,--for the Roman Catholic Church. And this influenced his thinking greatly. But, within his own realm of the Episcopal Church, he was very serious and devout, and when the Church didn't provide what he was desiring, I know on occasion he did go to the Roman Catholic Church. I know of one Sunday, he walked out of his own parish--Trinity Sunday of last year when he found that morning prayer was being read rather than the Holy . He walked out, went down to St. Bernard's

to Mass, because he thought this was the proper way to celebrate Trinity Sunday. Instances like this...He was strong-headed. He knew what he wanted, what was right. He was not hypocritical, not in the long run. If he felt something was wrong, disagreed with you on something, he didn't tell anyone else about it; he told you....

S:

Hazelett: You mean psychologically? As far as weaknesses are concerned?

S: That's important. I mean, it's important that he be a human being, and no human being is all strength.

Hazelett: Well, maybe I didn't know Jon well enough to know his weaknesses. Perhaps a weakness could be from his strength of liking people. I don't know how exactly to express it.....

Jon liked people, and he wanted to be liked as we all do. But sometimes in liking people you can--I won't say let your guard down--It's really hard to say exactly what I mean by that... liking people might be a weakness. Maybe I was just reading my own personal experiences into it where you get so involved in the individual you can't see the masses. I can't pinpoint any specific instances where he really was so outgoing with people. Maybe we could say that Jon had a little bit of a temper, maybe more so than I ~~have~~ of. This instance of him leaving St. James

Church to go to St. Bernard's on Trinity Sunday--I know he was just about in a rage over that. He came up to see me that week. He just thought it was a disgrace to the Church that such a thing could be allowed to happen. On several occasions he found his way up here to Walpole to attend Saints' Day celebrations because they didn't have them at Keene, and came somewhat in a rage--mild rage...I imagine that he could have a temper and did....

S: Were you surprised he went to Selma?

Hazelett: I was hoping he wouldn't; I didn't even think that he was going to when he came home...

S: Were you surprised when he took the time off from seminary to go down?

Hazelett: Yes, in a way. As I say, I was concerned about his theological education. It seemed that this was his drive. He wanted to be a priest so badly, and yet he would neglect his study to go to Alabama. And it seemed to me that he was going to throw it right out the window. I couldn't see how he could possibly keep up with his studies and do the work that he wanted to do in Alabama. So, therefore, I questioned--'well, does he really want to be a priest or not. And, if he does want to be a priest, what is he doing running off someplace else.' We

thought this was just going to be a quick trip down and back. I didn't approve of this. I thought it was a waste of money and energy just to run off somewhere. When he did go back, I sort of had accepted it by then that this is what he was going to do, but still wondered if he was going to go on to finish his studies or if he was going to take up a role of a social worker. The summer before that I know he had had clinical training and was all set--on the bandwagon--for psychology. That was going to be his field. This is from talking to some of his fellow students. I felt well, maybe this is what he is going to do now. This experience. He's going to get all hepped up over it and think that social work was what he needed to do. It's becoming a little bit confused as to what his calling was. I felt that his attitude about going to Selma--it seemed to me that he went there with the idea, "well, I'm going whether anyone likes it or not. I'll ask permission to go, and if I don't get it, I'm going anyhow." Which I thought was a little strange for Jon because of his feelings about the Church. I would have thought that if the Bishop said no, don't go, that Jon wouldn't go, but he was determined to go. And the Bishop, of course, gave his blessing on the trip and so did the seminary. But Jon's attitude towards it all...I think didn't jibe with what I had thought of him before. His real loyalty to the Church. I guess, as things have turned out, that this was loyalty to the Church--to the greater Church... his actions...but again being strong-willed as he was, he was

going to do what he wanted to do...what he felt called to do.

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

Hazelett: No, he never did. The only thing that I know about that is what I have read at the Daniels' household in letters. I know he felt very strongly about it. It came at an age when it was a real experience for him. But I didn't know Jon before two and a half years ago. I met him for the first time in May of 1963 when I was up to Keene for my interview for my job. And then, of course, he went away in the Fall when I started work here. And I didn't meet him again until that Christmas. The matter never came up about his experiences before his reconversion. I knew that he had been a Congregationalist when he was a child, but I didn't know anything else about why he strayed away from the Church and then came back strongly for it. All I know is what has been told me by other people now since his funeral--during his funeral....