

CAROLINE HOWARD

KEENE, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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Howard: Well, I've been thinking about that, and it's been about ten years ago. Jon was pretty mixed up at the time I did go with him...very. It was brought back to me when I read his letters. I don't think there would be anything...well, you might be interested in them, I don't know. You can read them if you want to. I think it was about three-and-a-half years I went with him...approximately.

S: What are some of the things you would consider to be character revealing?...things he did...liked to do.....

Howard: He was unhappy a lot of the time...very moody. He wasn't happy at home.....unhappy more than he was happy. He didn't get along well at home. I don't know whether you've heard this from other people. I imagine you will if you talk around. He and his mother didn't get along an awful lot. He was very strong in his feelings, and they clashed with hers many times. His father was very easy-going, and he didn't run the family at all. Mrs. Daniels did. Church has always meant a lot to him. Music he liked, singing. He played the tuba...for awhile.

S: Do you think his relationship at home remained the same after his father died...as it was before his father's death?

Howard: I think he tried to get close to his mother after his... of course, I didn't know him either. His father died '58 or so wasn't it? I didn't see Jon much at all after I went with him. I would like to have, 'cause I really enjoyed his company, but it was just difficult, with me going with someone else. My husband used to be his friend, and they were no longer friends after I started going with him. So I didn't see much of him at all. But he and Emily were quite close...in growing up. I think they had to be because they weren't with their parents. They weren't close to their mother either one of them. So I don't know how he was at home actually after his father died. I don't know.

S: What did you do together? Where did you go? What kinds of things did kids in Keene do?

Howard: Well, we usually went to the movies. That was the main thing we did. Or dances at the high school. And proms. Many times, he'd just come over and sit in the evening with my mother, because he liked my mother quite well. And my father died while I was going with Jon, and he was a very big help at the time... so understanding...knew just what to say, which would have helped him I think if he could have been a minister. I think he would have been good at this. In fact, this Julie Canfield, her father died too while we were going together. And he was over there most every day and helped them an awful lot. He just knew what to say. What did we do? Parties, movies. He didn't have an

awful lot of friends. The ones he had were close friends, like Gene Felch. Gene was his friend all through high school and then remained his friend. But I don't think there are many others....Well, Carleton Russell.

S: Was Jon, would you say, generally well regarded by the kids in high school, or was he a loner or was he isolated?....

Howard: No. Well, like my friends never liked him. They couldn't understand why I would ever want to go with him. He was very polite, and at this age, kids don't really go for it. Like pulling out your chair and opening the door and jumping out of the car to open your side of the door. Kids just don't do that. But he was brought up to do it, and he did it whether the kids liked it or not. It was right to him, and he was going to do it. But he was laughed at...for doing this. No, he really wasn't too well liked. I think by older people he was, like his teachers. Most of them liked him. I think Mrs. Collins...Have you talked to her at all? She might be able to help you, because he was in the Dramatic Club, and she was head of it. Mr. Cook would have been a good one too, but he's not around any longer. He was the music director. He knew Jon quite well.

Well, one summer his mother thought he ought to go to New England Music Camp. Jon didn't want to go at all. He had no interest in going, because it's a camp but it's a lot of work too. It was a lot of studying. He just wanted to have fun in the

summer. He worked all year, and he didn't want to go to camp. But she wanted him to go so he went, and he had a miserable time. I've got every letter he wrote me there, and he was just so unhappy. He just hated it.

S: And yet he liked music.

Howard: Yes. But I think half of it was he didn't want to be told what he had to do. Now, if he had come home and said, "I think I'd like to go up there this summer. Do you think I could?" Now, that might have been different. But it was their idea, and they told him that he had to go. So, it just started him off on the wrong foot. This is the way I feel. I might be wrong.

He didn't know whether he wanted to be a doctor or whether he wanted to be a minister, the whole time I went with him. And I think it was more--I think he wanted to be a doctor more at the time. But that could have been because of his father's influence. His father was very well liked. Everyone just loved him, and I think that might have been why Jon wanted to be one. I can see in every letter he wrote, he'd say at the end, "God bless you," or "May God take care of you." Something in every letter like this. He was really quite religious at a young age. He went every Sunday to Church. We sang in the choir together. And I think he was President of Pilgrim Fellowship. I'm pretty sure, one year. And we were in Crusaders before that.

S: Well, you said your friends couldn't understand how you could go with him, and you must have had reasons. I mean, you must have thought something about him as a person. I wonder what your impressions of Jon as a person were.

Howard: Well, I had never gone with anyone before I went with Jon. I think this is why I started going with him, just to go out. The other kids were going out, and I wanted to, and Jon wanted to take me. That's how I started going with him. Why I stayed with him that long. I did love him, and I went with other boys while I was going with Jon, but I always came back to Jon. We didn't...We had a lot of fights, and the next day he'd be over knocking on the door. He'd be right back. He didn't want to give up our relationship at all. And I know I kept thinking, if anyone could love me this much, then, you know, I might as well stay with them...There's no one else that cares this much for me.

S: If somebody were to ask you to write a character sketch of Jon and said, "What do you think his strengths were? What do you think his weaknesses were?" What would you say in an objective fashion? When you say he was polite, do you mean this in a complementary fashion or that he was being artificial?

Howard: No, I don't think so. I think Jon meant it. This is the way he was brought up. This is how a gentleman acts, and he was at all times. He was a gentleman. My mother has said that she

never worried whenever I was out with Jon. She just knew that he'd take care of me, and that I'd be fine...never had to worry at all, which was a big relief to her. At this age, kids get into trouble. He'd never take me anywhere that wasn't...If there was a rough party going on, we wouldn't go. Jon wouldn't take me.

...Yes....very smart. He didn't always get the best marks. I know he didn't. He had a couple of 'D's' and a couple of 'C's'. If he had a term-type paper to write, he'd spend weeks on this, so it would be perfect...as good as he could possibly do it. Which means, he'd let other things go. And so in other subjects he might not get as good marks because he spent all his time on this. But what he turned out was really good. These stories in the Enterprise. There's one in there that says it was dedicated to me or something. But he'd go over what he was going to write and say it to me first and we'd kind of talk it over, and then he'd go and write it. It would make it a lot easier for him having talked it over with someone first.....

Ann Lang might be another one you could talk to .

S: I've never heard her name before.

Howard: Well, she's down in Greenfield. I don't know how far you want to travel on this, but she comes to Keene about once a week or so to see her mother. She's still here. I think she's a relative, not close at all but...Yes. because both . She could tell their grandmothers are in Lindenville, Vermont

you what she and my other friends thought of Jon, probably better than I could, because she was always saying she couldn't see what I saw in Jon, why I would want to go with him. Because we didn't have an excellent time every time. In fact, most of the time we didn't. We had a lousy time, because he was in a mood or his mother would make him do something so he'd be late coming over. A lot of the time it just wasn't fun; we just didn't have fun together. But also, at this time I was also quite young. I was only fourteen when I started going with him, and I had problems at home, so I thought, adolescence... between the two of us, we were quite unhappy most of the time.

S: How did your friends, then, react to Jon's death?

Howard: I think most of them have felt--now, maybe they haven't read as much about it as I have--but I think they thought that Jon had no business being down there. They figured that with his mother being home and where Emily wasn't close to her mother that she kind of needed Jon and that Jon kind of had an obligation not to take a chance like he did. He knew he was in danger down there, I think, from what I have heard, and I think they feel as if he should have been a little more careful and stayed around here just so that his mother could have him around. (END SIDE I)

S: Well, how did you feel about it? About his being down there? Did it surprise you?

Howard: No. I think knowing Jon as I did that he felt he had

to be down there.

S: Why do you say that? I mean, you wouldn't expect just anybody to go down there and into a dangerous situation.

Howard: I think Jon felt he could really do some good down there...help the people.

S: Do you think this was characteristic of him?

Howard: Definitely. He always wanted to help people.

S: Even if people didn't like him?

Howard: I think older people did. I think his friends didn't.

At this time. Because they weren't. I think he was more mature than the kids his age. He had just different ideas about life...

No, I wasn't a bit surprised that he would go down. I sure

wish he hadn't now. It was typical of him, I think, to take a

chance. Like, one time he wasn't supposed to go out of the house--

supposed to be studying or something--anyway his parents said he

couldn't go out, but he wanted to anyway. So (details of accident left out).....but he was taking a chance.

S: I understand he was always sort of running into scrapes in school of one kind or another.

Howard: Jon would get caught at anything he did. He did get into a lot of trouble.

S: Can you recall any of the incidents other than this one?

Howard: There were band trips and choir trips that we'd go on. We went to New York one time, and he and a bunch of guys went out and had a real good time, which wasn't permissible at all. They weren't even supposed to be out of the hotel, and the director found out about it...punishment for what he'd done or something. If there was any trouble, Jon was usually there.

S: So that he wasn't a prude?

Howard: He wanted people to like him, but he didn't know the way to go about it. He wasn't one of the gang. He wanted to be, but he just really didn't know how to act.

S: Did he ever talk to you about death?

Howard: He wasn't afraid of it, because he used to tell me this. He said I was. Have you read that In Memoriam? It's really good and it is so much like what happened to him that it's really remarkable. I don't think he had--I don't know...in some of his letters, the kind of thoughts that I have read since, I can see that he thought he wouldn't be around too long. Now, why this is, I really don't know.

He didn't think much of himself, at the time I went with him. He had a very low opinion of himself.