

FOREWORD

Transcript Warning:

All written transcripts are imperfect abstracts of spoken conversation. Variations in sound quality and in the aural acuity of listeners can and do produce wide variations in what is heard. Even though transcripts may be prepared at great effort and with great care, many points of ambiguity are inevitable, and erroneous interpretations from transcripts are always possible. Therefore, to ensure full confidence in any and all quotations from the presidential recordings, users are strongly urged to check all transcript renditions against the actual tape recordings before publication.

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Punctuation:

The following conventions are used throughout the transcripts:

- * * * To indicate a pause in the recording while the speaker listens to the person speaking at the other end of the telephone. Used when only one side of a telephone conversation is recorded.
- [?] When the transcriber is not certain of what is said on the recording.
- To indicate a sentence which the speaker trails off without completing it.
- . . . When a speaker is interrupted before a sentence is completed.
- _____ To indicate the speaker's emphasis.
- [/] Used to enclose editorial comments of the transcriber such as /Meeting appears to be breaking up/ or /Several speakers speak at once and none of the words are intelligible./

Names:

The first time a name is mentioned, the full name is provided whenever it is known. "JFK" and "RFK" are used for President Kennedy and Robert Kennedy, respectively. When the identity of a speaker is unknown, "Speaker?" is used; when the identification of a speaker is uncertain, a question mark follows the name. The heading of each transcript gives the names of all participants listed in the President's Appointment Books as scheduled to attend the meeting.

Preparation:

These electronic documents were created from transcripts available in the audiovisual research room in the John F. Kennedy Library. The transcripts were scanned using optical character recognition and the resulting text files were proofread against the original transcripts. Some formatting changes were made.

Dictabelt 21A, Item 21A1

June 3, 1963

JFK: Hello.

Operator: [The?] president.

JFK: Hello, yeah.

Davis¹: Hello.

JFK: Governor?

Davis: Mr. President, how you feeling?

JFK: Well, I'm, uh. . . . [Laughs.] We're getting rained on up here, but otherwise I'm all right. How are you?

Davis: Oh . . . [Tape skips and repeats itself.]

JFK: . . . all right. How are you?

Davis: Oh . . .

JFK: . . . all right. How are you?

Davis: Why don't you send some of it down here.

JFK: How are you?

Davis: I'm o-. . . . Well, I had a rough night. I had indigestion all night for the first time in a long time. I ate a bunch of stuff yesterday . . .

JFK: Yeah.

Davis: . . . that got me.

¹ James H. Davis, governor of Louisiana.

JFK: Well, I hope that, uh. . . . I appreciate the chance to talk to you, governor. I'm concerned on this, uh, independent electors because, uh, it always seemed to me that, uh, when we go down there we end up, uh, I don't know maybe in the House and then everybody has a helluva time.

Davis: Yeah, well, I'll tell you. Here's what's up. I talked to Russell² this morning, he called me up, we've been missing each other. Now he may call you and ask that you, uh, call me, but disregard that because I decided to go ahead and call you.

JFK: Well, I'm delighted to talk to you. As a matter of . . .

Davis: [W-] . . .

JFK: . . . fact I, I knew Larry³ had talked to you and I didn't like to call you unless you felt it was, uh, agreeable. We, uh . . .

Davis: It was. This, uh, [unfortunately?] down here, I'm going to get hurt in the thing myself, but I'm going to handle it.

JFK: Oh, well, that'll make a helluva difference, I tell you that.

Davis: And, we can, uh, I'll handle it one way or the other, but I'm not, nobody knows it but you.

JFK: Yeah. Well, I must say, governor, I'm most, uh. . . . I can't imagine it. Because I think if Louisiana went, then we'd have a helluva time in Florida and, uh. . . .

Davis: Well, that's the point, it's going to spread all over. Now I'll tell you another, another day when it came up in the House, we had colored people, just a few radicals, down here marching around, all that kind of stuff, you know.

JFK: Yeah.

Davis: And I don't know [about you?], but I hope [words unintelligible]. . . . People don't know how good a relationship we do have among most of them, it's so fine. That's all I have. . . . I have one managing my own farm, you know.

JFK: Yeah.

² Russell B. Long, senator from Louisiana.

³ Lawrence F. O'Brien.

Davis: And I, I hope that something happens sometime, either we have federal orders to stop some of these demonstrations, marches, and if we don't, I think it is going to spread until it gets really, uh . . .

JFK: Well, it's going to, it's going to be up north, is where. . . . You know, this isn't any more just a southern matter, and, uh. . . .

Davis: When it gets up there, I'll tell you, now if, it will be black against white. Down here they have the ties that bind, I mean they're a lot of them that are very close, like that's all that I have on my farm. A colored man runs it. He sells my cows, he buys and he does everything.

JFK: Yeah.

JFK: Yeah.

Davis: And a very fine person. And if, that's true with so many people. And, uh. . . . Of course, the demonstrations are the bad thing.

JFK: Well, I know. That's the problem we're dealing with up here now. And, of course, it isn't just Jackson. It's it's Philadelphia, and it's going to be Washington, D.C. this summer, and, uh, we're trying to figure out what we can do to put this stuff in the courts and get it off the street because somebody's going to get killed and it is going to get . . .

Davis: It's going to be the bloodiest thing. It's going to be a civil war. Now there's a colored woman called me--I know the difference in the voice--from Washington. She said, "For God's sake don't do what we did up here in our city, because, you know, I'm a mother of thirteen children," and, uh, said, "I've lived here" but, uh, she said, "We can't handle it among ourselves. Our race never could," and so on and so forth without going into a lot of stuff.

JFK: Yeah.

Davis: But that's the problem. I know that you're concerned about it just as much as I am and I, it really gives me a lot of worry. Now on this thing down here, I've been up day and night, I made myself sick. But anyway between you and me, I'm going to handle it one way or the other.

JFK: Well that'll be. . . . Governor, when is the matter going to come up?

Davis: Well, it'll be up for Tuesday.

JFK: Yeah.

Davis: But, uh, like I told Russell, no use him getting hurt, let me get hurt.

JFK: Yeah.

Davis: Because I'm going out.

JFK: Yeah, well, listen, governor, I'm most appreciative because it'll make a big difference.

Davis: It will make a big difference because [of the pressure?] so much, all these other governors are calling me, you know, but I'm not talking to 'em because some are friends of mine.

JFK: Yeah. Yeah.

Davis: Now I'm a personal friend of Ross Barnett. I've known him for a long time. He had a law suit one time, I was on one side and he was on the other.

JFK: Yeah.

Davis: But, I mean, we're, nevertheless, we're friends.

JFK: Yeah.

Davis: And a lot of the other fellows, some of the fellows, and, uh, but, uh, [wouldn't?] go into all that, but I know what they're calling about. But I've got to handle this thing down here and I don't think that, uh, I'll get hurt any myself, a little bit maybe. But, nevertheless, I'll, just, just, uh, just forget it, between you and me.

JFK: Governor, that's very good. I appreciate that very much. How about coming up here later on?

Davis: Well, I hope I can. I'm, I'm gonna try to get up there. I haven't had a vacation yet. I have been working, uh, I've been here over three years and I've been battling [laughs] all kinds of, going at it and I know how [you are?]. I'm sitting here, I had a fellow in this room and he said, "I want to eat in, sit in the,

uh"--one of the LSU⁴ board members--"I want to have a seat in the Kennedy rocker." You know, the one you sent me.

JFK: /Laughs./ Yeah.

Davis: I have it here in my bedroom.

JFK: /Laughs./ Yeah.

Davis: How's, how's your family?

JFK: Oh, they're in good shape.

Davis: How's your back? I mention back because I'm a back guy and can write a book on the backache.

JFK: Well, I, it's, it's, you know, when it's, these days when it rains, it's not so good, but I'm getting along pretty well.

Davis: Uh-huh. Well, it's nice to talk to you, Mr. President, and, uh, so, uh. . . . So far as this part of it, I mean, just you rest easy. And if Russell should call, why you can tell him you talked to me.

JFK: Okay, governor. Well, listen, I'm most, uh, this is, uh, I appreciate very much because it's a big help. And I hope we get a chance once you get this out of the way, I want to talk to you anyway about some other stuff.

Davis: Well, that's very fine. I'll be happy to see you and I appreciate getting a chance to talk to you.

JFK: Okay, thanks, governor.

Davis: Tell your folks, "Hello."

JFK: Very. . . . Thanks an awful lot.

Davis: Bye, bye.

JFK: Righto.

⁴ Louisiana State University.