

WH6406-08-3743_scroller

Date: 1964-06-15

Participant: Lyndon B. Johnson

Participant: Jack Valenti

Participant: Floyd Boring

Start Time: 17:50

Place: Oval Office

SCROLLER TITLE: "Y'all Can't Keep a Secret"

SCENE SETTER: A frustrated President Johnson used strong language to berate Secret Service agent Floyd Boring about a leak of information regarding an upcoming trip to New York City. The next evening, Johnson attended a John F. Kennedy Memorial Library dinner there, landing at JFK International Airport, riding directly to the event, and then returning to the airport immediately afterward to arrive back at the White House in time for bed.

President Johnson: [*speaking aside to Jack Valenti*] Who did you tell on Secret Service we was going?

Jack Valenti: The only man, Floyd Boring, the only one I talked to.

President Johnson: Who is Floyd Boring?

Valenti: He is one of [James J.] Jim Rowley's men on the White House detail.

President Johnson: All right. See if you can get the son of a bitch on the phone here. Those bastards, I'm going to have to quit telling you I'm going [*unclear*]

White House Operator: I have Mr. Boring on the line for you.

President Johnson: [*speaking to Boring*] Mr. Boring?

Floyd Boring: Yes, sir.

President Johnson: Why in the hell do I have to be humiliated by giving y'all a day's notice I'm going to New York? You've had the mayor announce up there publicly now that I'm going.

Boring: Oh, my God, [*unclear*]

President Johnson: And I'm not going to tell you a goddamn thing, because y'all can't keep a secret. You've got to tell every cop in the world. Now, I'm going to start leaving at 4:30 in the afternoon if you keep doing me this way.

Boring: All right, sir.

President Johnson: I just—How do you expect me to operate? The mayor got up and made a public speech today at lunch announcing my arrival in New York. And I told Jack Valenti to tell y'all and keep it just as confidential as you can.

Boring: I know that, sir.

President Johnson: Well, call the chief of police up there and tell him you damn near got fired on account of it.

Boring: All right. I certainly will, sir.

President Johnson: And just tell him that we cannot do it. And if he wants to keep us out of New York, keep out. And quit announcing how many men he's assigning to me.

Boring: All right, sir. I'll do that.

President Johnson: It's causing trouble all over the country, and I'm just going to get a law passed or something that, by God, will make it a felony for you fellows to tell this.

Boring: All right, sir.

President Johnson: I give you a little notice and then you, by God, you just go wild: you'll have 5,000 up there standing man-to-man with a gun [*unclear*] and drawn. And it's the damndest disgrace I ever saw with all those little tin soldiers lined up there. I asked [Robert F.] Bob Wagner [Jr.] the other day, "Why have you got 200 men here at a helicopter?" [*Slight pause.*] They're liable to fall down and let a gun go off and kill themselves. But, now, when he gets up and starts announcing it in a public speech, because I wanted y'all to have a chance to tell your wife or get a suitcase tonight—

Boring: Yes, sir.

President Johnson: —if you need it, and then y'all go tell them, and then they tell the mayor, and the mayor tells the world.

Boring: I'm going to call—

President Johnson: So I'm going to try to cancel my trip out. Tell him there's nothing definite on it at all and that I'm in the humor of not going at all if you have to tell him.

Boring: I'm sorry this happened—

President Johnson: And you just—well, you just tell him—I'm sorry, too, but it keeps happening. This is not the first time.

Boring: Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

President Johnson: Last time they had 5,000—they gave out an announcement—5,000 police to guard me. [*Boring acknowledges.*] I don't want stuff like that. [*Hangs up.*]

Boring: Yes, sir.

End of excerpt.

CITATION: "Lyndon Johnson and Floyd Boring on 15 June 1964," Tape WH6406.08, Citation #3743, *Presidential Recordings Digital Edition [Mississippi Burning and the Passage of the Civil Rights Act]*, vol. 7, ed. Guian A. McKee] (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2014–). URL: <http://prde.upress.virginia.edu/conversations/9070101>