



“You Got Lots of Guts”

Date: 1964-06-30
Conversation: WH6406-19-3967
Participant: Lyndon B. Johnson
Participant: Edward M. Kennedy
Start Time: 17:35
Duration: 01:49
Place: Oval Office

SCENE SETTER: On 19 June 1964, Sen. Edward M. “Teddy” Kennedy’s [D–Massachusetts] airplane crashed on its way to the Massachusetts Democratic state convention. Kennedy suffered severe injuries and remained hospitalized for the next six months. On 30 June, while recovering with help from a spinal support device, Kennedy phoned President Johnson from the hospital.

President Johnson: Hello?

Edward M. “Teddy” Kennedy: Oh, Mr. President?

President Johnson: My friend, I’m sure glad to hear your voice.

Kennedy: Well, thank you so much. Listen, I wanted to call and tell you how much we appreciate it. Joan [Kennedy] appreciates everything you’ve done, and your—

President Johnson: Haven’t done anything. I haven’t done anything, but I’m sure ready and willing.

Kennedy: Well, no. Well, you sent all those wonderful people up from the [U.S.] Army, and . . . Secretary [Cyrus R. “Cy”] Vance did. And they’ve made a great deal of difference, and everyone’s been so, so kind down there, and they’ve taken great care of me. [*President Johnson acknowledges.*] So I’ve been really, really coming along now, making progress.

President Johnson: Well, you got a bad break, but it’ll . . . My mother used to tell me that things like that develop character. It’ll make you stronger when you get older.

Kennedy: Well, I don’t know about that. [*President Johnson chuckles.*] You know, you’re ready to trade a little of that for a few weeks right now, I should say. But anyway, that’s what I keep reading in all that mail. They say, “Well, you’re going to . . . after all that, you get down on that back a little while, and think and do a little suffering, you’ll be a better man.” So, I guess I’ll take my chances with that, anyway.

President Johnson: Well, you're a good guy, and you got lots of guts, and stay in there and pitch, and anything we can do, we're ready.

Kennedy: Well, really appreciate it, Mr. President, and Joan wants to thank you for everything. Mrs. [Lady Bird] Johnson called, and you've been awfully kind during this, and we're very much appreciative, and my parents are, too.

President Johnson: You just tell them we're ready to do anything and everything that you want done. And we'll elect you by a bigger vote than you got before.

Kennedy: I know it. God, now we're really going to have to . . . you're going to have to pull me through up here.

President Johnson: Well, just tell them that I'll fill your speaking engagements.

Kennedy: [*Laughs.*] Well, I certainly shall. That was awful kind of you, but we'll be looking forward to getting back down there.

President Johnson: Thank you. Give Joan a hug for me.

Kennedy: Certainly will, Mr. President.

President Johnson: Bye.

Kennedy: Thank you very much.

President Johnson: Bye. Thank you for calling.

End of excerpt.

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